THE POSSIBILITY OF APPLYING RELIGIOUS MULTICULTURALISM POLICY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN INDONESIA

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Abstract: This study investigates local government's opportunities for implementing religious multiculturalism policies, which refer to the regional autonomy system. The subject of this research is Tangerang City, Banten Province, which has an urban and pluralistic image of society due to its location as a buffer for the city capital. Data collection in this study used a qualitative method which refers to in-depth interviews of 15 respondents who came from representatives of the government and religious leaders. In addition, secondary data in this study relates to observations, field notes, documentation, and relevant literature. The result of this study indicates several indicators that lead to the possibility for Tangerang City's local government to apply a religious multiculturalism policy: government institutions in strengthening harmony and handling religious conflicts. The Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) promotes religious harmony, a grant program to accommodate the needs of religious groups, a supportive and open-minded Mayor, cultural and religious festivals, successful resolution of religious conflict, and intensive dialogue between religious leaders.

Keywords: Religious Multiculturalism Policy, Society, Local Government, Tangerang City

Abstrak: Studi ini mengkaji peluang pemerintah daerah dalam menerapkan kebijakan multikulturalisme agama yang mengacu pada sistem otonomi daerah. Subyek penelitian ini adalah Kota Tangerang Provinsi Banten yang memiliki citra masyarakat urban dan majemuk karena letaknya sebagai penyangga ibu kota kota. Pengumpulan data pada penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif yang mengacu pada wawancara mendalam terhadap 15 informan yang berasal dari perwakilan pemerintah dan tokoh agama. Selain itu, data sekunder dalam penelitian ini berkaitan dengan observasi, catatan lapangan, dokumentasi, dan literatur yang relevan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan beberapa indikator yang memungkinkan pemerintah daerah Kota Tangerang menerapkan kebijakan multikulturalisme agama: kelembagaan pemerintah dalam memperkuat kerukunan dan penanganan konflik agama. Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB) menge-

depankan kerukunan umat beragama, program hibah untuk mengako-modasi kebutuhan kelompok agama, Walikota yang suportif dan berpikiran terbuka, festival budaya dan keagamaan, keberhasilan penyelesaian konflik agama, dan dialog intensif antar pemuka agama.

Introduction

Unlike western countries, where plurality comes from the experiences of immigrants (Kymlicka, 2012: 14), Indonesia has a unique plurality that comes genuinely from multi-indigenous ethnic groups. Each group has its culture, beliefs, religion, norms, food, and language. Furthermore, religion plays a vital role in the lives of these ethnic groups, both majority, and minority. "Belief in One Supreme God" is stated in the first pillar of Pancasila (the five pillars) as Indonesia's national ideology. As the largest Muslim country, Indonesia was established as neither a secular nor Islamic state or what Menchik calls 'Godly nationalism' (Menchik, 2014). However, the Indonesian government's policies in accommodating diversity across different regimes are reactionary. For instance, Soeharto's regime accommodated diversity through assimilation, affecting discrimination against the Indonesian-Chinese community (C. Y. Hoon, 2017; Ahnaf, 2018). After the collapse of Soeharto's government, the Reformasi era transformed Indonesia's governmental system from centralistic to decentralisation. It distributes central government power authority to regional governments to regulate and manage their own government affairs based on the aspirations and needs of their people (Akbal, 2016: 101). Decentralisation led to majority identity politics implementation, such as Sharia law in many Muslim-majority regions. Around 422 majority identity-based regulatory policies restrict minority religious groups (Fauzia et al., 2011; Fauzi, Ihsan Ali. Mujani, 2009; Muhtada, 2014). Since the Reformasi era to the present day, Indonesia has been facing various religious diversity problems. Religious education unintentionally limits religious diversity practice (Sakai & Isbah, 2014). Furthermore, Wahid Institute and Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI)'s surveys confirmed that religious intolerance significantly increased above 50% in 2018 and 2019 (Wahid Institute, 2018; LSI, 2019). Another research indicated the rise of radical Islamism is

on trend (Arifianto, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic impacted economic inequality and contributed to Indonesia's religious harmony index's rise and fall (MORA, 2021). In 2021, Human Rights Watch reported that implementation of the majority religious regulations in public spaces is detrimental to minority religious groups (Human Rights Watch, 2021). In 2022, there were some cases where minority religious groups continue to face difficulties in building houses of worship due to the inflexibility of requirements in the 2006 joint regulation on houses of worship. Additionally, the 1965 Blasphemy laws was actively enforced with a majority of charges, and religious extremists threat against religious minorities (Human Rights Watch, 2022)(USCIRF, 2022). Likewise, Setara Institute reported the three dominant cases of infringement belief and religious freedom in 2020 and 2021, namely banning the religious minorities group activities, disturbance of houses of worship, and accusations religious blasphemy (SETARA Institute, 2022). This concerning trend begs the urgent policy to respond and accommodate appropriately the religious diversity in Indonesia.

Accommodative policy for religious minority groups is a critical discussion to be explored. Many Western countries apply multiculturalism policy to tackle inequality for minority groups. There are three targets of multiculturalism policy; immigrant groups, national minorities, and indigenous people. Based on the Multiculturalism Policy index, the MCP trend continued to expand and strengthen in twenty-one countries between 1980 and 2020 (Queen's University, 2022). Several scholars believe multiculturalism is the strategy to address the imbalance of minority rights in public space (Taylor, 1994; Kymlicka, 1996; Parekh, 2006; (Modood, 2013; Busbridge, 2017). Multiculturalism is an empirical fact, an ideology or philosophy, an official policy, program, practice, and counter-hegemony (Fleras, 2009). In the 1960s, Kymlicka observed that multiculturalism replaced a distant ethnic and racial hierarchy that conforms to democratic citizenship, as Friedman (2015) calls it, as an ethnic reinforcement. According to Taylor, multicultural studies discuss how the policy could construct new civic and political relations to quell inequalities in minority rights or what he calls the 'Politics of Recognition' (Taylor, 1994).

However, religion has not been part of the discussion wherein religion and politics are kept separately in distinct spheres. It has been long ignored compared to identities such as

race and sexual orientation. In the West, many scholars do not see the significance of religious cards. Therefore, it fails to see cases that come from the imbalance of power of these minority groups, such as the lack of accommodation and recognition, and becomes a euphemism for religion (Levey, 2009). Likewise, Parker and Hoon argue that the absence of religious discussion in the theory and practice of multiculturalism policies contributed to the failure of multiculturalism in several secular countries after the bomb attacks by terrorists. Thus religious citizenship in the multiculturalism framework could be an alternative to respond to diversity effectively (Parker & Hoon, 2013: 160). Furthermore, other scholars reveal that religion is essential in multiculturalism because of the growing influx of Muslim migrants in some secular states (Modood, 2003; Song, 2009; Modood, 2010; Beaman, 2012).

Besides, multiculturalism is contextual and relies on the government's ability to cooperate with various cultural interactions in laying a universal framework (Nye, 2007; Hage, 2016). Recent studies show that multiculturalism practice in Asia differs from Western countries because most Asian states are post-colonial countries (Nagy, 2014; Yusuf et al., 2018). Thus, laying multiculturalism in Asian countries need to suit the needs and demographic context. Several scholars studied multiculturalism in Indonesia by considering that Indonesia, as abovementioned, has a unique contextual diversity that does not mainly relate to immigrant groups as the religious difference does. To emphasise, religious diversity is a more pronounced identity than in other contexts; as Kymlicka suggests, religious intolerance is rising. When it comes to studies on multiculturalism, there have been studies on education and multiculturalism (Asrori, 2016; Zarbaliyev, 2017; Raihani, 2018). In policy discussion, some studies examine the opportunities and challenges of multiculturalism implementation in Indonesia (Lan, 2011; Wattimena, 2011; Parker & Hoon, 2013; Hoon, 2017; Ahnaf, 2018). However, most multiculturalism studies in Indonesia generally focus more on the Indonesian context. They have not comprehensively discussed how multiculturalism as a policy can tackle the inequality of religious minorities group at the local level. Thus, this article places religion as a part of multiculturalism discussion and investigates the opportunities and challenges of local government to implement multiculturalism policy to balance inequality of religious minorities group in public space.

This research puts Tangerang City, province of Banten, as a hot spot to be explored. As an industrial city and a buffer for the capital city, Tangerang City depicts Indonesia's plurality's diverse culture and religion. It also has a unique Chinese group that assimilates significantly with the local culture, called Cina Benteng. Tangerang City government annually celebrates the Pecun as a Confucian religious holiday of the Cina Benteng group in the Cisadane Festival (Haryani, 2020). In contrast, Santa Bernadet Parish in Tangerang City has struggled to get a permit to build a house of worship for more than 26 years (Santa Bernadet, 2015)(Ali-Fauzi, 2011) (Nisa, 2020a). This contradictory situation indicates Tangerang City is an interesting object for further research.

This research applies a qualitative method by combining primary and secondary data. It helps the researcher get in-depth data comprehensively. It also allows a researcher to understand the context and processes of the phenomena more deeply because it relates to cause and effect. Furthermore, the qualitative method can uncover sensitive issues and describe the complexities of interactions between government and civil society in local regions. Primary data sources come from in-depth interviews with 15 respondents from a variety of resources; The National Unity and Politics Agency for the local government of Tangerang City, the Social Welfare Section of the Tangerang City government, the Ministry of Religion of Tangerang City, religious leaders in the FKUB (Forum for Religious Harmony) Tangerang City, Chairperson of the Interfaith Youth Forum for Tangerang City. A purposive or criteria-based selection technique was used to determine the respondents at the initial stage, and then the following respondents were determined using the snowball technique. Data were collected from July to September 2021. In addition, the secondary data comes from observations, field notes, documentation, and relevant literature. This article explores the possibility and the challenges of religious multiculturalism policy implementation at the local level that applies a governmental decentralisation system.

Diversity and Multiculturalism Policy

Bhiku Parekh, in his book *Rethinking Multiculturalism,* commences defining multiculturalism by differentiating it from the word multicultural. Multicultural refers to cultural diversity, while multiculturalism refers to the normative response to diversity fact (Bikhu Parekh, 2006). Thus, multiculturalism

discusses how cultural diversity is responded to and addressed normatively. Then the question arises, what kind of normative response is appropriate to respond to the fact of diversity? In answering this question, two opposing perspectives come from liberalist and multiculturalist groups. Liberalists argue that neutrality is a prerequisite for realising justice in diverse societies (John Rawls, 2000). It emphasises that the state does not need to guarantee or be responsible for the continuity of any cultural group, mainly because democracy is a strategic way for the government to provide equality and recognition to all individuals (Appiah, K. Anthony. Habermas, Jurgen. Rockefeller, Steven C, Walzer, Michael. Wolf, 1995). Contradict responses come from multiculturalist groups; they believed that recognising and providing cultural accommodation to all cultural groups is the best solution for the state to respond to diversity (Taylor, 1994) (Will Kymlicka, 1997). This second perspective is used in this article to define multiculturalism.

Charles Taylor-a philosopher from Canada-explained that the core value of multiculturalism is a struggle for recognition as a basic human need. This point was also the basic impetus of many political movements until the end of the 20th century. Democracy opens space to fight for recognition politics. For Taylor, there are two concepts of the politics of recognition. First, at the individual level, the creation and development of one's self-identity occur in a dialogic form, and the process of struggle involves recognising others. Second, on the social level, a person's full recognition revolves around the way of life of a unique and authentic group. The ability of a group to develop depends on how people outside and within the group give proper recognition. Taylor emphasises multiculturalism as a politics of recognising difference that extends from a politics of equality. The politics of equality refers to neutrality towards all cultural differences in human beings and merely focuses on realising universal basic rights. At this point, the politics of equality ignores values that are not universally recognised. It led to the political presence of recognition of differences to develop recognition of differences in one's way of life culturally and made it a basic point of political policy (Taylor, 1994).

Will Kymlicka defines multiculturalism as politics and law, which refers to recognising and accommodating diverse identities. Multiculturalism is based on public and constitutional values that depart from tolerance, equality, and individual

freedom. He uses the abbreviation MCP to refer to Multicul-turalism Policy (Kymlicka, 2012: 68). Kymlicka offers three forms of cultural accommodation that the state can make. First, self-government rights for sub-state national groups. Second, anti-discrimination rights for ethnic minority groups (polyethnic rights). Third, special representation rights for minority groups so that they can be involved in making public policies (Kymlicka, 1997). From the abovementioned three accommodations, the second and third forms have opportunities for implementing MCP in Indonesia.

Kymlicka also explained that there are two factors to measure how much a country can facilitate or hinder the successful implementation of MCP. First, the ability of the state to view minority groups as an issue related to social policy, not as a threat and an issue of state security. Minority groups are often seen as a threat if the state is concerned that they will cooperate with outsiders to take state power. For example, after World War II, several countries such as Italy, Denmark, and Belgium feared that minorities who spoke fluent German would be more loyal to Germany than to their country. They were considered to support the German attack to invade and annex them. Israel also believes this perspective to the Arab and Turkish minorities in their country as potential collaborators with their external enemies. What happens next is that in the name of state security, minority groups often do not get their rights to participate in politics and have a voice. It can threaten the implementation of multiculturalism policies. Second, there is a commitment agreed upon by the state that providing accommodation to cultural and religious groups is an implementation of human rights. The state guarantees the rights of individual people not to receive discriminatory treatment because they belong to a minority group. Prejudice towards minority groups also contributes to opportunities for implementing multiculturalism policies. If the level of intolerance is low, the greater the chance for the policy (Kymlicka, 2012: 93-95). It can be said that applying multiculturalism policies requires awareness and seriousness from policymakers to integrate dialogue at the community level to confirm the prejudices that grow in a multicultural society.

Kymlicka criticises applying the multiculturalism model, which only refers to ethnocultural diversity celebrations, such as cultural festivals that introduce culture through music,

cuisine, traditions, and customs. Alibhai-Brown in Kymlicka calls this multiculturalism model "3S" (Saris, Samosas, and Stell drums). For Kymlicka, this model fails to understand the goals of the multiculturalism struggle, such as inequality in the economic and political sectors for minority groups (unemployment, inadequate education, segregation of residences, the lack of language skills, and political marginalisation). Besides, cultural celebrations also ignore the process of how culture adapts and emphasises that minority groups are those who are different, thereby reinforcing the impression of inequality and cultural restrictions among minority groups (Kymlicka, 2012: 72). Basically, the aim of the MCP struggle is not to emphasise claims of differences, but rather to filter these differences through the framework of human rights, civil liberties, and democratic accountability (Kymlicka, 2012: 74). As Benyamin Molan revealed that recognition of the existence of culture does not mean justifying all cultural practices, but testing them normatively (Molan, 2015: 31).

Other academics, such as Fleras, also present five levels of understanding of multiculturalism as a tool to identify how multiculturalism is implemented. First, empirical facts that describe diversity. Second is an ideology that respects cultural differences and promotes social equality. Third, official policies have programs supporting the identified mosaic of various identities and ethnicities. Fourth is a practice reflected in policies and philosophies at the community level. Fifth, preventing hegemony which challenges constitutional order which is racial towards Western values (Fleras, 2009).

In addition, according to Castles, the struggle for multiculturalism is in line with the concept of pluralism, an attempt to find out how different cultures and identities can live in harmony. However, multiculturalism fights for citizenship rights. For example, how can communities with diverse identities enjoy the expression of their cultural freedom? If placed in policy, multiculturalism seeks to fulfil the needs of cultural groups with their character and context. At the same time, multiculturalism also fights for individuals in groups to be able to enjoy equal rights as citizens (Castles, 1997). More broadly, multiculturalism measures diversity through public recognition, education, social services, law, public facilities, religious accommodation, and the media (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010: 3).

The multiculturalism policy discourse has long been discussed by Western countries for 40 years ago, since the 1960s. The diversity of Western countries has a different character from Asian countries. Unsurprisingly, the study of multiculturalism in the West does not merely involve the accommodation of minority nationalism or indigenous people, but it also accommodates immigrant groups (Kymlicka, 1997 & 2012)(Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). Through his observations, Kymlicka admits that minority rights in the West cannot be equated with the Asian context. Therefore, certain factors must be discussed further in the multiculturalism discourse (Kymlicka & He, 2005). Likewise, Stuart Hall also revealed that "Just as there are different multicultural societies, there is very different multiculturalism" (Hall, 2000). It can be interpreted that multiculturalism is not a set of doctrines that can be followed directly but refers to a process. Malory Nye revealed that multiculturalism is contextual following the place and experience of cultural diversity (Nye, 2007).

Religious Multiculturalism Policy

Religious diversity is the focus of this study. Although religious studies are not discussed in depth in existing multiculturalism discourses, this research attempts to place religious diversity in the analysis of multiculturalism policies. One academic who believes in the importance of religious multiculturalism in the Indonesian context is Chang-Yau Hoon. According to Hoon, Indonesia's demographics differ from other multicultural countries such as America, Australia, and Singapore. In Indonesia, the immigrant context is not very popular. However, transmigration policies contributed to the diversity of society in some areas. During the New Order era, the assimilation policy was used as an option to respond to diversity. Unfortunately, a policy like this was inappropriate for the Indonesian demographic context. Thus, Indonesia needs a multiculturalism framework that is adapted to the needs and demographic conditions of Indonesia. Hoon believes that the concept of post-colonial multiculturalism belonging to Goh and Holden (2009) can contribute to the framework of multiculturalism in Indonesia, which departs from the struggle for class and racial structures inherited by colonialists (Hoon, 2017: 486-487).

Hoon argues three things need to be conceptualised to introduce multiculturalism in Indonesia. First, multiculturalism must guarantee a balance between unity and diversity. Ac-

cording to Ien Ang (2010) in Hoon, unity in diversity is ambiguous, and the pressure between the concepts of unity and diversity can never be resolved. Likewise, Nye (2007) in Hoon argues that multiculturalism is not the opposite of nationalism policies because multiculturalism refers to problems and processes embedded in the structure and development of national identity. Second, multiculturalism must give recognition to the cultural diversity that does not only exist within cultural groups but also the diversity that exists at the individual level. Thus, the state's diversity accommodation leads to individual and social levels in Indonesian society. Third, Indonesia needs a policy of religious multiculturalism to protect minority religious groups against the freedom of expression of some majority groups who tend to be exclusive and radical after the Reformasi era. The policy of religious multiculturalism complements and perfects Pancasila and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Hoon, 2017: 487-488). Hoon also emphasises the importance of "religious citizenship", which is not only related to legal status and administrative matters but also must lead to the political participation of religious groups in public life. Participation of religious groups in religious community organisations is included in this religious citizenship (Parker & Hoon, 2013).

Tariq Modood is an academic who also considers the urgency of religious multiculturalism policy. It is a basis for the state and religion to continue promoting tolerance to realise a harmonious life. Furthermore, this policy involves the state protecting religious groups, especially minority ones. The regulation of multiculturalism policies is important for disseminating ideas about respecting diversity. At the same time, this policy also shows the existence of cohesion and shared identity as a common ground where the state and society could cooperate to achieve harmony (Modood, 2013). The policy of religious multiculturalism leads to state involvement in guaranteeing protection for minority religious groups and promoting tolerance in the public sphere, where the political participation of minority religious groups is an important element in realising equality in diversity.

Possibilities of Religious Multiculturalism Policy Implementation in Tangerang City

Tangerang City has several indicators that lead to implementing religious multiculturalism policies. *First*, the local

government of Tangerang City has a Political and National Unity Agency. This institution plays role to strengthens harmony and handles conflicts, including religious groups. The presence of this institution refers to Mayor Regulation no. 64 of 2019, which aims to strengthen ideology and national insights as well as vigilance in dealing with conflicts. This institution focuses on national unity, domestic politics, and community organisations. This agency facilitates and cooperates with several forums related to diversity, such as FKUB (Forum for Religious Harmony), FPK (Forum for Cultural Reform), FKDM (Forum for Early Community Awareness), Interfaith Youth Forum, PAKEM (Supervision of Beliefs and Religions in Society). In addition, these institutions and forums hold various activities aimed at broadening society's national insights, such as discussions, harmony dialogues, seminars, carnivals, and village programs themed on the pillars of Pancasila (Pujahendra, Interview, 8 September 2021). Furthermore, the Head of the Community Organization Sub-Division of the National Unity Agency and Politics of Tangerang City stated:

> "The National Unity and Politics agency has the Pancasila Pillars Village program. There are 24 RW points. Each representative is from 13 districts. Pancasila Village wants to remind the younger generation that we are religious through murals competitions. We have been independent for 76 years and are used to diversity." (Agung, Interview, 12 August and 8 September 2021).

The Chairperson of the Interfaith Youth Forum for Tangerang City stated his program:

> "There is an interfaith youth forum in Tangerang City. We are more concerned with establishing interfaith youth relations to maintain harmony. The interfaith youth forum was established at the initiative of the community. The activities are more concerned with social matters, for example, futsal tournaments and national dialogues, which are held in 5 regions in 13 sub-districts where we consider the potential for conflict to be the greatest. We carry out dialogues on harmony with interfaith youth from representatives of 6 religions. We also carry out national workshops and cultural arts activities." (Fakhrurozi, Interview, 12 Agustus 2021).

Referring to the multiculturalism concept described by Fleras, the existence of a Political and National Unity Agency with its various activities shows that the government believes in the diversity of Tangerang City as an empirical fact. The government, through its apparatus, seeks to instil an ideology

of strengthening diversity while promoting social equality (Fleras, 2009). It shows that Tangerang City has large capital to support the implementation of multiculturalism policies.

Second, FKUB (Forum for religious harmony) strongly promotes religious harmony in Tangerang City. FKUB mediates between the government and the community, especially in building houses of worship issues. Furthermore, FKUB is an implementation of the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religion and Minister of Home Affairs No. 9 and 8 of 2006 to maintain religious harmony in Indonesia. FKUB has a strong relationship with the National Unity and Politics Agency because FKUB's funding is budgeted annually by this institution. The role of FKUB is to engage in dialogue with religious and community leaders, socialise state regulations related to religious harmony, provide recommendations for the construction of houses of worship, and act as a mediator when religious conflicts occur. In addition, FKUB administrators are representatives of each religion who are qualified in their religious knowledge. FKUB can solve various problems with the houses of worship construction problems because the administrators can have meaningful dialogue, coordinate and verify complex problems properly (Pujahendra, Interview, 8 September 2021)(Agung, Interview, 12 August and 8 September 2021) (Yunianto, Interview, 14 August 2021). It was illustrated in the following interview.

> "There are four functions of FKUB. First, dialogue with religious leaders, community leaders, and all related elements. Second, accommodate the aspirations of the community and channel them through meetings. Third, socialising the Joint Regulation of the Ministers of Religion and Home Affairs No. 9 and 8 of 2006. Fourth, providing recommendations for houses of worship. Almost every district has its problems. But thank God, step by step. We're done." (Amin Munawar, 12 Agustus 2021).

"We think FKUB Tangerang is quite solid in dealing with problems. After founding the FKUB, Tangerang City was actually quite safe. Problems can be overcome" (Harmanto, Interview, 28 August 2021). The presence and role of FKUB show that the local government and religious leaders address religious diversity in Tangerang City normatively. It aligns with the basic definition of multiculturalism concept explained by Bikhu Parekh, that diversity is responded to normatively (Bikhu Parekh, 2006). Joint efforts between the government and society in preventing religious conflicts emphasise the importance

of shared ideas as a common ground where the state and society work together to achieve harmony (Modood, 2013). FKUB is a reinforcement that Tangerang City has an opportunity to implement religious multiculturalism policies.

Third, the Tangerang City government provides a grant aid program for religious, artistic, cultural, educational groups and small and medium business actors. This program implements Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 39 of 2012, which applies to all local governments in Indonesia. The grant funding program is sourced from the regional revenue and expenditure budget. Furthermore, the Tangerang City Government makes detailed grant funding rules in Tangerang Mayor Regulation No. 21 of 2018 concerning Procedures for Providing Grants and Social Assistance. The Tangerang City government has implemented this policy since 2014. Then, it underwent several revisions adjusted to the revenue capacity of the Tangerang City government. Through the Sabakota application, submissions for grants are open annually to the public. Grant recipients are based on the gradual selection and verification results coordinated by the Tangerang City People's Welfare Section of the Regional Secretary agency (https://diskominfo.tangerangkota.go.id/, accessed 15 October 2021). The local government works transparently and avoids forms of fraud and extortion. It was conveyed in the following interview.

> "After they submit, we will check and survey. We make an agenda. We take a photo and communicate what we need, whether it suits us. We match it with the proposal. After that, the thawing process. There is an integrity pact, and the inspectorate also reviews it. There is a statement according to the rules. The process is very strict. After disbursement, there is a name called NPHD (Regional Grant Agreement Manuscript). The first part is the local government, and the second party is the beneficiary. There it is recorded. There is an agreement between the two parties. Timely report. After the disbursement, there is twice monitoring whether the grant is used based on the proposal. Then we asked for a report offline and online on the Saba Kota website. The public could access it." (Juhri, Interview, 19 Agustus 2021).

> "We serve and conduct surveys based on proposals. We don't see the colour. We assess the development of what they are doing. We check. The important thing is to meet administrative requirements. Regardless of religious background." (Saari, Interview, 19 Agustus 2021.

Likewise, the government supports religious groups through the Ministry of Religion under the Honorary Religious Extension Scheme.

"We are invited to participate in an activity called PAH (Honorary Religious Extension), which exists in every religion. Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. Under the auspices of FKUB and the Ministry of Religion, we are included. From a budget of 200 thousand rupiahs to a million, there are already honorary religious counselors. There are four activity reports in one month for activities such as sermons, funeral ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, inauguration ceremonies for new houses or offices, or whatever. Twenty-five people received this assistance in Confucianism." (Seng, Interview, 5 September 2021).

A grant program of the Tangerang City Government shows an important indicator in implementing multiculturalism policies. It does not merely go to the majority religious group. Minority religious groups also receive this assistance. According to Kymlicka, multiculturalism is politics and law which refers to the recognition and accommodation of various identities. The provision of accommodation needs for religious groups shows the ability of the state to see minority groups as an issue related to social policy, not as a threat and an issue of state security (Kymlicka, 2012: 68, 93). This context shows that the Tangerang city government has taken significant steps in implementing multiculturalism policies.

Forth, the majority of respondents believe that Tangerang City's people can represent a multicultural society that has inter-religious harmony (Munawar, Interview, 12 August 2021)(Lontaang, Interview, 18 September 2021)(Harmanto, Interview, 28 August 2021)(Mujana, 2021). This belief of religious leaders about the empirical fact that the people of Tangerang City are diverse and harmonious is an important indicator in the initial steps towards a multicultural society. Regarding Fleras' first-level definition of multiculturalism, understanding diversity must be considered an empirical fact. However, multiculturalism efforts require policies that lead to social equality. Unfortunately, the government articulates religious harmony more in terms of setting up places of worship. It can be seen from the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religion and the Minister of Home Affairs No. 9 and 8 of 2006 concerning the maintenance of religious harmony. Moreover, the implementation of that regulation often triggers conflict (Yunianto, 2021),

(Harmanto, 2021), (Lontaang, 2021). Likewise, Hoon argues that Indonesia has a natural plurality but has not yet been called a multiculturalist society. It lacks multiculturalism practice, particularly in public policy, civic awareness, and minority rights. Therefore, he offers the concept of religious citizenship to apply religious multiculturalism (Hoon, 2017: 488).

Fifth, the attitude of the mayor and government of Tangerang City is responsive and open-minded to religious activities and community. Several respondents revealed that Tangerang City has a leader supporting ongoing religious activities (Pujahendra, 2021)(Lontaang, 2021). Furthermore, the government responded to the suggestions from the Protestant Christians group, such as planting 1000 trees in urban forests and granting cemetery land to Christian religious groups in 2020 (Lontaang, 2021). In addition, field notes show that Mayor Arief Wismansyah has significant action compared to the prior mayor. As a Mayor for the tenure 2009-2013, Wahidin Halim displayed the majority of symbols in public spaces significantly, such as setting *akhlaqul karimah* (the noble character) as the vision of Tangerang City, putting *Asmaul Husna* calligraphy along the city's main street, implemented Muslim dress regulations every Friday for government employees and public school students, established al *Azhom* mosque as a city icon (Nisa, 2020), while Mayor Arief displayed more universal city symbols on the core roads of Tangerang City, such as the big clock and the thumbs up statue on MH Thamrin street, the Sudirman statue on Jalan Sudirman and so on. These policy practices show the transition of exclusivism policies towards more inclusive policies. Mayor Arief tries to represent the politics of equality through city symbols without referring to an identity that can be seen as a form of progress. However, many serious efforts still need to be made to achieve a multiculturalism policy. It leads to the struggle for equality through political policies that can fulfil recognition at the individual and social levels (Taylor, 1994). However, an open-minded attitude of mayors and leaders towards the needs of minority religious groups should be appreciated. It becomes an initial indicator for the development of the further implementation of multiculturalism policies. Furthermore, multiculturalism is a struggle oriented toward recognition as a basic human need (Taylor, 1994), and it needs government involvement and accommodation (Kymlicka, 2017). Broadly, multiculturalism can respond to diversity through public recognition,

education, social services, law, public facilities, religious accommodation, and the media (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010: 3).

Sixth, the local government of Tangerang City organises the Cisadane Festival in the middle of every year to maintain the diversity that has taken root in society. The government promotes cultural acculturation that has long existed in Tangerang City, such as Betawi, Sundanese, Javanese, and Chinese. During this Festival, the Government celebrates the Pecun celebration as a Confucian holiday by performing several religious rituals, such as the Blessed Water Ritual, Twan Yang Prayer, and Raising Eggs. Besides, the government held many competitions as well at national and international levels, including the Duck Catching Contest, the Dragon Boat Rowing Contest, and the Uleg Contest. Likewise, traditional cultural performances from the City of Tangerang, such as the Sangego Colossal Dance, Boat Parade, bazaars for hundreds of small and medium business stands, Pencak Silat festivals from 18 institutions in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi also enlivened the Festival. Furthermore, The Ministry of Tourism appreciates the Cisadane Festival by including it in 100 national event calendars, mainly because it has high cultural and creative values. Around 60,000 more people visit this Festival annually (Merdeka, 2019). Additionally, several respondents believed the Cisadane Festival Celebration promotes cultural and religious diversity in Tangerang City. It aligns with the statement of a Hindu religious figure, "The celebration of the Cisadane Festival shows that the government provides a forum for religion to contest in the public space"(Mujana, 2021). Likewise, the Confucian religious group felt touched and appreciated because their group's religious holidays were celebrated with the people of Tangerang City. It was illustrated in the following interview.

> "The Pecun celebration is a Confucian holiday and has become an annual event and a tourist attraction. MAKIN (Indonesian Confucian Religious Council) was also involved in the event. It was the agenda of the Tangerang City government and accommodation from the government. The government wants to review the past. When Pecun, foreign tourists from Hong Kong and Singapore arrived. With the celebration of Pecun at the Cisadane Festival, the Confucians felt they were Indonesian." (Seng, Interview, 5 September 2021).

This accommodation for minority religious groups significantly shows the government's recognition of the basic needs of

minority religious groups. Charles Taylor (1994) states that the basic value of multiculturalism lies in the government's attitude to presenting the politics of recognition through a political policy. However, Kymlicka criticises the multicultural model celebrations mainly because cultural performances emphasise that minority groups are those who are different. Thus, it reinforces the impression of inequality and cultural restrictions among minority groups (Will Kymlicka, 2012). Despite applying the multiculturalism model in Tangerang City still not meeting the ideal form, the underline point is that the Tangerang City government has begun to recognise and appreciate diversity growth in Tangerang City.

Seventh, Santa Bernadet Parish finally obtained an IMB (Building Permit) after 32 years of struggle in 2021. FKUB (Forum for Religious Harmony) Tangerang City provides recommendations for the construction of churches and ensures that there will be no more rejection and conflict from opposing communities. Santa Bernadet Parish was able to fulfil all the requirements for the construction of a house of worship in the Joint Ministerial Regulation No. 9 and 8 of 2006 (Munawar, 2021)(Harmanto, 2021)(Yunianto, 2021). Furthermore, one of the crucial challenges in implementing multiculturalism policies is the rejection of basic religious needs. In Tangerang City, it leads to the rejection of the establishment of houses of worship. There was a change in the opponents' attitude, and they ultimately supported the establishment of a church. It was valuable and should be appreciated. Besides, this situation stimulates the opportunity to implement a more serious religious multiculturalism policy in Tangerang City. This fact shows conformity with Fleras's definition at the fourth level of multiculturalism application that multiculturalism relates to a practice reflected in policies and philosophies at the community level (Fleras, 2009). Indonesia's plurality has been supported strongly by the state's collective goals - Pancasila as a state ideology, Bhineka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity) as the state's motto, and Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution- which affirms that every citizen has the right to practice and express their religion freely. Therefore, rejecting worship houses should not be a critical issue in Indonesia's plural society, provided that referring to the state constitution. Unfortunately, the lack of communication and dialogue between religions and the inflexibility requirements of the Joint Ministerial Regulation

No. 9 and 8 of 2006 tend to harm the religious minority groups (Harmanto, 2021)(Yunianto, 2021).

Eighth, several respondents stated that the government's accommodation of religious groups' needs is crucial and should refer to the needs of each religious group. They revealed that accommodation is not always related to finances. Still, it goes to government facilities that support the convenience of worship and proper recognition of the existence of minority religious groups (Harmanto, 2021)(Lontaang, 2021)(Seng, 2021). Like-wise, a Hindu religious leader shared his opinion: " Maybe we need to underline the notion of accommodation. In this case, the accommodation is in a financial sense. Yes, for me, material facilities. It is either important or not important. The most important accommodation refers more to social interests so that our existence is respected, protected, of course that is very important" (Mujana, Interview, 20 August 2021). This perspective supports Will Kymlicka's notion of multiculturalism, which defines that the recognition and accommodation of diverse identities refer to politics and law (Will Kymlicka, 1997). Castles also argues that multiculturalism policies strive to fulfil the needs of cultural groups that have their own character and context. Besides, individuals in religious groups can also enjoy equal rights as citizens (Castles, 1997). Accommodation of cultural groups' needs is applicable and fundamental in all multicultural policy practices in developed countries (https://-www.queensu.ca/mcp/). The desire for religious groups' accommodation is significant in applying an ideal implementation of religious multiculturalism policies. It is a strategic way to achieve appropriate real equality.

Ninth, religious leaders in Tangerang City have taken the initiative to carry out tolerant and open-minded dialogue even before the ratification of Joint Ministerial Regulation No.9 and No.8 of 2006. A Catholic Christian religious figure conveyed it:

> "Before FKUB, there was a forum for communication between religious leaders initiated by Muslim leaders. Then they took the initiative to invite other religious leaders to dialogue, so when the PBM was issued, FKUB was formed from elements that had been formed informally by community groups, especially from religious groups, and the process was easier. It can be said that the religious leaders in Tangerang City have started a dialogue that is quite tolerant and open with a multicultural spirit." (Yunianto, 2021).

The religious leader from Protestant Christianity stated the same thing.

> "There were programs carried out with other religions. We had coffee together and had fun. Several events were organised by the Tangerang City of National Unity and Politics agency, Walubi (representative of Indonesian Buddhists), and other religious associations. There was a presentation from the resource person, and we enjoyed it. That was what happened in Tangerang City. Meetings are held almost every 3-6 months. There are regular programs from the government and the police. While eating, we even talked a bit about tolerance. The point is that the diversity condition in Tangerang City is very welcome, and we feel comfortable." (Lontaang, 2021).

Likewise, some National Unity and Politics agency respondents revealed, "Especially if we look at the diversity in FKUB itself, if we look at the meetings, it's very cool, where there are religious leaders from one religion to another. It seems that there is no difference in religion" (Ma'rifullah, 2021)(Hamzah, 2021)(Agung, 2021). This situation shows that dialogue is important in eliminating prejudice and resolving conflicts between cultural groups. Furthermore, dialogue between religious leaders in Tangerang City could be a solution to minimise incompatibilities between groups. As Kymlicka states, if the affordability level is lower, then the opportunities for multiculturalism policies are greater (Kymlicka, 2012: 95). The dialogue established between religious leaders has strengthened the possibility of implementing a policy of religious multiculturalism in Tangerang City.

Conclusions

This article reveals that religious multiculturalism policies might be implemented at the local (regional) level in a decentralised system. In the context of Tangerang City, several indicators lead to opportunities for implementing religious multiculturalism policies (1) The local government has a National Unity and Political Agency, which significantly plays a role in strengthening harmony and handling religious conflicts. (2) Together with the National Unity and Politics Agency, there is the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) which consists of representatives of both majority and minority religious leaders who promote religious harmony at the local level. (3) The regional government has a grant program to accommodate the needs of religious groups. (4) The belief of religious leaders that the people of Tangerang City can represent a harmonious society.

(5) The mayor supports and has an open-minded attitude to the activities and needs of religious groups. (6) The local government holds cultural and religious festivals. (7) The Santa Barnadet Parish conflict can be resolved properly. (8) The desire of religious leaders for the government's accommodation of the needs of religious groups. (9) Regular dialogue between religious leaders.

The scope of this research is not very broad in digging up more comprehensive data related to opportunities for implementing multiculturalism policies in Tangerang City. For example, this research has not yet come to the point of investigating data on several important actors in religious groups, such as youth and women activists in each religious group. In addition, this research has not yet captured data from the legislative members in Tangerang City. Their opinions are important, mainly because they are a policymaker in a decentralised system. Referring to these limitations, the researcher recommends developing this study of religious multiculturalism policies into several further studies, including research on the representation of minority religious groups in regional-level legislatures.

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