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On being a religiously tolerant Muslim: discursive contestations among pre-service teachers in contemporary Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the constitution of religiously tolerant subjectivity among Indonesian Muslim pre-service teachers. Complementing existing studies in religious tolerance education which were mainly survey-based and experimental, this qualitative research employed a discourse analysis methodology which connects individual-level analysis with the larger socio-religio-political situations in contemporary Indonesia. Specifically, this study aims to explore discourses drawn upon by young Muslim pre-service teachers to understand religious tolerance in the context of contemporary Indonesia, a Muslim-majority Southeast Asian country struggling to navigate its history of moderate Islam and a recent surge of conservatism. The findings exhibited three key discourses through which participants' religiously tolerant subjectivity was constituted, namely, a discourse of spiritual Islam, a discourse of postmodern sensibilities, and a discourse of concern over the growing conservative, Islamist, and radical groups. The implications were discussed in relation to how religious tolerance education can be advanced by drawing upon these key discourses.

Introduction

The current study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge on religious tolerance education in at least two ways. Firstly, the study adds to the growing epistemological and methodological diversity within the field by employing a discourse analysis methodology. The majority of studies in this field has drawn upon a realist paradigm (Willig 2013) which mainly took the form of quantitative surveys aiming to identify psycho-social mechanisms underlying tolerant attitudes (e.g. Bertram-Troost and Miedema 2017; Sumaktoyo 2018), and experiments which evaluate the impact of tolerance education programmes (e.g. Al Sadi and Basit 2012; Berger et al. 2016). In recent years, a growing number of studies have also employed qualitative methodologies, including mixed methods, to investigate religious tolerance education (e.g. Bertram-Troost, Schihalejev, and Neill 2014). Underpinned by constructivist epistemologies like Jackson's (2011) interpretive approach, these qualitative researchers sought to explore a more complex, in-depth dynamic of religious tolerance education. More recently, there have been calls to further diversify the epistemological and methodological approaches in this field, such as Wijaya Mulya and Aditomo's (2019) call for more contextual, critical, and discursive forms of analysis on religious tolerance education – which the current study is responding to by employing a discourse analysis methodology.

Secondly, the current research complements existing studies on religious tolerance education at the macro (e.g. national policies and curricula) and meso levels (e.g. school policy, classroom strategy) with a micro, individual-level (e.g. student, teacher) analysis, but without disconnecting it from the larger operations of power in a given society. At the macro level, scholars have argued for educational policies and institutional strategies which are supportive of religious tolerance, such as non-confessional, non-theological religious education (RE) (Parker 2014), confessional but pluralism-oriented RE (Van Der Walt, Potgieter, and Wolhuter 2010), and a whole-school approach to religious tolerance (Raihani 2011). At the meso level, curriculum contents and delivery methods effective for fostering religious tolerance have also been examined, including using resources for tolerance from one's own religion (Al Sadi and Basit 2012; Baidhawy 2007; Schweitzer 2007), facilitating positive interfaith interactions (Bertram-Troost, Schihalejev, and Neill 2014; Sumaktoyo 2018), and providing information about the religious Other (Windle 2011). At individual level, skills and competencies necessary for religious tolerance have been investigated, among others, epistemic cognition (Aditomo 2019), empathy (De Silva 2011), perspective taking (Berger et al. 2016), intellectual humility (Kraft and Basinger 2016), and dialogue competencies (Morris 2011). In these studies, the contact hypothesis – a now-classic term coined by the social psychologist Allport (1954, 281) – has repeatedly proved itself accurate, in which 'equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals . . . and common humanity' significantly reduces prejudice and fosters tolerance. Seeking to (re)connect these ostensibly universal educational-psychological mechanisms with religio-political-ideological contestations in a specific context, the current study draws upon the notion of discourse to demonstrate the inextricable relationship between power, knowledge, and subjectivity (Foucault 1982) in the constitution of religiously tolerant subjects.

Specifically, this study aims to explore discourses drawn upon by young Muslim pre-service teachers to understand RE and religious tolerance in the context of contemporary Indonesia, a Muslim-majority Southeast Asian country struggling to navigate its history of moderate Islam and a recent surge of conservatism. Occupying a position between a student and a teacher, participants' subjectivity as both an Indonesian youth, a religious person, and a future teacher provided a unique window into the exploration of contextual, relevant, and effective ways of teaching religious tolerance. A focus on future teachers is crucial in this regard, because changes in educational policy must necessarily be translated into classroom practices by teachers, whose (un) willingness, (in)abilities, and (mis)interpretations will influence the impact of those policies. Therefore, by identifying these Muslim pre-service teachers' ways of being tolerant, we seek to offer insights for advancing religious tolerance education through a better understanding of the discursive 'logics' which are intelligible for these future teachers.

Theoretically, the current research is informed by discourse theories, particularly feminist readings of Foucauldian poststructuralism (Davies 1991; Weedon 1987). Discourse is a set of interconnected ideas through which an individual gives meaning to their social worlds and guides their actions. Since there are multiple and shifting discourses in any field of knowledge, there is always a range of possibilities to think, talk, and act differently about/on a specific phenomenon (Willig 2013). Depending on the availability of discourses in one's situation, an individual may exercise agency in drawing upon certain discourses and not others (Davies 1991); these discourses then enable different forms of subjectivity and action. Here, subjectivity refers to one's sense of self which is always-already discursively constituted (Weedon 1987). For instance, understanding religious minorities like Ahmadiyya groups through a discourse of heresy – as campaigned by some Indonesian Islamic hard-line groups – has resulted in incidents of persecution (Irawan 2017). There are other discourses to be drawn upon which may result in more tolerant attitudes and behaviours, such as a discourse of rights or citizenship. The circulation of these competing discourses in a society is not a 'neutral' process, but always-already political as it is a part of the operation of modern power in governing the society. Here, politics is about discursive contestation, a competition to 'fix' meanings into individual's subjectivity (Weedon 1987). Identifying and circulating alternative discourses and subjectivities are, therefore, acts of political resistance. This is precisely our agenda in the current

research, namely, to identify and circulate discourses that may enable religious tolerance among contemporary Indonesian youth against the backdrop of growing conservatism. Since discursive constellations in a society are always shifting, contextual, and continuously contested, the next section briefly introduces contemporary Indonesian contexts vis-à-vis religious relations and tolerance education.

Post-authoritarian Indonesia: public religiosity, *pancasila* citizenship, and tolerance education

As the world's fourth most populous country and home of the largest Muslim population, Indonesia has demonstrated both promising and disheartening moments in terms of religious tolerance throughout its 75 years of independence. In 1945, Indonesia's founding fathers and mothers expressed a commitment for religious tolerance in the formulation of the state ideology, *Pancasila*. Literally translated as five principles, *Pancasila* includes (1) a belief in one supreme God, (2) humanity, (3) national unity, (4) democracy, and (5) social justice. The first principle initially included the clause 'with the obligation for Muslims to carry out the Islamic law.' However, after considering religious diversity in Indonesia, particularly non-Muslim-majority regions, the leaders of two largest Islamic civil organisations (i.e. Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, more below) agreed to erase the clause, preferring a more religiously inclusive wording (Intan 2006). With the phrase 'unity in diversity' inscribed on the country's symbol of the Garuda bird, this promising beginning gave rise to Indonesia's frequently mentioned self-identification as 'not secular nor Islamic, but a religious, *Pancasila* country'. Although atheists, agnostics, and indigenous religions were largely silenced, *Pancasila* at least provided an official-ideological foundation for the possibility of a multicultural, tolerant, religious citizenship (Fearnley-Sanders and Yulaelawati 2008; Hoon 2017).

During Suharto's authoritarian regime (1966–1998), Islamists suffered repression as Suharto was quick to eliminate any threat to his ruling, including from political Islam. As result, moderate Muslim organisations like Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah flourished. State-funded Islamic Institutes (IAIN) were established across Indonesia, where progressive Muslim thinkers such as Abdurrahman Wahid and Nurcholish Madjid became influential and had significant impacts on Indonesia's civil Islam (Hefner 2019). The 'fragile but functioning balance' between NU and Muhammadiyah (Schäfer 2019, 238) also successfully prevented a single version of Islam from being adopted or endorsed by the state. Nevertheless, the fall of Suharto in 1998 marked the beginning of Indonesia's democratic era which eased both militaristic and social repression on political and conservative Islamic groups (Fealy 2019). These groups have grown exponentially ever since, and influenced various fields from politics (e.g. Islamist-leaning parties), the economy (e.g. *sharia* banking, *halal* certification), entertainment (e.g. *hijra*/born-again celebrities), to urban spatial development (e.g. *sharia* residential complexes, Islamic-branded consumption spaces). Public expressions of religiosity, most noticeably women's veil, have become increasingly fashionable. After the 1998 democratic reformation, the number of terrorist bombings (e.g. in Bali, Jakarta, and Surabaya), large-scale religious conflicts (e.g. in Ambon and Poso), and persecution of religious minorities (e.g. against the Ahmadis, Shi'ites, and Christians) have also increased. One of the high-profile cases led to the imprisonment of Jakarta's Christian ex-governor Basuki Tjahja Purnama over a blasphemy criminal charge in 2017, where conservative and Islamist groups successfully demonstrated their mobilisational power in massive rallies against the ex-governor.

Scholars have examined these worrying transformations of Indonesia's religious landscape and offered at least two main suggestions: reviving *Pancasila* citizenship as the framework for Indonesia's democracy (Hefner 2019; Hoon 2017), and reinvigorating the moderate Islamic groups (Afrianty 2012; Fealy 2019). Each of these approaches has its own challenges. As the official ideology unifying Indonesia from the outset, *Pancasila* has enjoyed a wide socio-political acceptance across communities (Intan 2006). While it was re-appropriated by Suharto into an apparatus of oppression against his enemies and formally imposed on young generations in a top-down manner, there have been

recent efforts during the Jokowi presidency to revive Pancasila as fashionable for the millennials, particularly in responding to Islamist anti-democracy movements (Kuwado 2017). However, shifting its long history of tokenistic taking up by the young generation into a living, tolerant everyday philosophy might not happen overnight.

Similarly, the second suggestion – reinvigorating moderate Islamic groups – also requires substantial and consistent efforts to be able to compete with the new conservative groups. Enjoying dominance for too long, traditionally moderate groups like NU were not ready to adapt and compete with the more tactical, media-aware, and capital-accumulating conservatives who have gathered a large number of followers, including from among the new middle-class (Fealy 2019). Coupled with the lack of new progressive figures of the calibre of Abdurrahman Wahid and Nurcholis Madjid, scholars were not very optimistic when envisaging Indonesia's future vis-à-vis religious tolerance. Nevertheless, the result of 2019 election showed that grassroots support for moderate Islam was far from gone (Hefner 2019); Indonesia's religious discursive contestations will continue for years to come.

Complementing these macro-level suggestions and identification of challenges, the current study explores how the contemporary Indonesian young generation thinks about these discourses and in what ways such discourses might give rise to a more religiously tolerant subjectivity. Do Pancasila and moderate Islam still have appeal for them? Is conservatism considered 'sexier'? How do young people make sense of religious tolerance against this backdrop of contemporary Indonesia?

Corresponding with the aforementioned suggestions, educational studies on religious tolerance in Indonesia also proposed at least two key recommendations: fostering religious tolerance through Pancasila-based citizenship education, and drawing upon resources for tolerance from within religions themselves. Parker (2018), for example, investigated the current Indonesian curriculum and identified how Citizenship Education is based on Pancasila and strongly promotes tolerance, but in contrast, RE is confessional and advocates piety. She suggested Indonesian RE policies be non-theological, non-confessional, interfaith, participatory, and focusing on everyday religious co-existence and the rights of minorities based on the Pancasila citizenship framework (Parker and Hoon 2013; Hoon 2013). While Indonesian Education law requires students to be taught Religion by teachers of the same faith, and in practice, RE is largely confessional (Leirvik 2004), there have been initiatives by some NGOs (Parker 2010), individual teachers in specific schools (e.g. Parker 2014), and universities (e.g. Wijaya Mulya and Aditomo 2019) which experimented with such forms of RE without breaching the law or provoking protests from parents. One key element is drawing upon resources from students' own religion which promote tolerance (e.g. Rahmat, Firdaus, and Yahya 2019; Wijaya Mulya and Aditomo 2019). Examples of such resources are Baidhawy's (2007) Islamic multiculturalist theology which was built on concepts like ummah (living together), tafahum (mutual understanding), takrim (mutual respect), and salam (peace); and Christiani's (2005) proposal of Christian RE based on a liberation theology of religions, which she called 'RE behind, at, and beyond the wall'. However, by focusing on policies, curriculum content, and specific projects/schools, these studies have inadvertently positioned young people as passive recipients of educational initiatives and left their voices unheard. Our research, therefore, sought to complement these existing studies by listening to pre-service teachers' voices, recognising their agency (and its underpinning discourses), and, therefore, building religious tolerance from the bottom up. Listening to pre-service teachers would significantly contribute to designing and implementing effective tolerance education, and may avoid future bureaucratic compliance to policies or cosmetic adoption of curriculum content – which has been a common secret in Indonesian educational practices.

Methodology

The data in this article came from a mixed-method study on teaching religious tolerance in Indonesia. This current article reports on the qualitative part, while the quantitative part is reported elsewhere. The participants were students in teacher education from two public universities (one

Islamic and the other not religiously affiliated) in Surabaya, the second largest city in Indonesia. Surabaya was also the city where a family of six carried out suicide bombings at three churches in 2018.

After ethics clearance was granted, we contacted the Heads of Early Childhood and the Elementary Education Departments in these faculties, and all welcomed the project. They then distributed questionnaires to their students following an ethics-approved procedure (e.g. letting students freely choose whether to participate, and signing a consent form after being fully informed about the study). At the end of the questionnaire, there was a question asking whether or not the respondent was willing to participate in an audio-taped, semi-structured one-hour individual interview about religious tolerance. Those participants who indicated willingness were then contacted, completed another consent form, and interviewed at a public space at their campus according to their preferred schedule and availability of the interviewer (the first author). All interviews were conducted in the participants' and interviewer's first language, Bahasa Indonesia. The interview guide included questions on participants' religious backgrounds, experiences with the religious Other, views on Indonesia's religious relations, and plans for teaching tolerance in their future work as teachers. A small amount of money (approx. USD 3.5) was given at the end of the interview as a token of appreciation for participants' time. As many as seven Muslim students were interviewed; four from the non-religiously-affiliated public university and three from the Islamic one, two males and five females (all five wearing a hijab). All but one of the participants were raised in a moderate Islamic tradition (NU or Muhammadiyah), which was unsurprising as Muslims from these groups are usually more willing to participate in an interview about religious tolerance. All participants' names in this article are pseudonyms, and data excerpts presented in this article were translated to English by the authors.

The data were analysed using a discourse analysis method (Willig 2013). The researchers read the interview transcripts over and over again to identify a set of ideas, assumptions, or 'logics' (i.e. discourses), which constitute participants' ways of understanding religious tolerance. These discourses were then categorised, reviewed, articulated, and discussed in the Findings section below. The credibility of the data and the analysis is not predicated on traditional criteria such as representativeness and generalisability, but instead on methodological integrity, authenticity, and the insightfulness of the findings for the advancement of knowledge in the field of religious tolerance education. The methodology emphasises the immediacy and verisimilitude of participants' narratives for the wider Indonesian audience and relevant readers; not sample size or its statistical representativeness.

Findings

In this section we discuss at least three dominant discourses through which the participants gave meaning to religious tolerance in contemporary Indonesia, namely, a discourse of spiritual Islam, a discourse of postmodern sensibilities, and a discourse of concern about conservative, Islamist, or radical groups. While participants' views about religious tolerance presented here might not always be explicitly spoken in relation to their future teaching roles, we believe that a tolerant teacher (including their tolerant religious beliefs) is the first step towards effective religious tolerance education in Indonesian contexts (Suryani 2017, 2020a, 2020b). Therefore, understanding how preservice teacher participants personally took up a religiously tolerant subjectivity and the discourses they drew upon are crucial for advancing religious tolerance and tolerance education.

A discourse of spiritual Islam

As opposed to conservative groups, which tend to emphasise (religious) truth claims, obligations, morality, and external expressions of religiosity, some pre-service teachers in this study understand their religion as a personal spiritual journey in which they seek existential meaningfulness,

cultivation of inner peace, and embracing uncertainty. We call this a discourse of spiritual Islam, and we argue that it is one of the key discourses through which religious tolerance was constituted in the ways participants understand themselves as a religious person.

During the interviews some participants' expressed a lack of interest in (religious) truth claims in preference for the more affective and spiritual aspects of religion, which in turn, shaped their approaches to the religious Other. Helmi (male, 7th semester, Islamic university), for example, narrated:

> I once listened to one of those (conservative) preachers. He has a doctoral degree. But his words did not enter (touch) my heart. He can answer all questions, knows all (theological) bases of Islamic jurisprudence, but he was not pleasant to be listened to. It's very different with a preacher, like, a graduate from a *pesantren*. The face (of preachers graduated from *pesantren*) already radiates peacefulness, which is very calming, even before the sermon begins.

Helmi was referring to the new generation of Indonesian conservative preachers who are becoming popular; many of them were educated in the Middle East. Helmi contrasted their preaching style, which is centred on theological truth claims, with the traditional style of local preachers who graduated from *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools, mainly affiliated with NU and located in rural areas or small towns). For Helmi, 'debating doctrines' and 'vilifying other preachers, like calling them stupid' do not connect with his ways of understanding and practising Islam; it does not bring peace to his heart. Growing up in *pesantren*s himself, Helmi understands Islam as 'refined' and 'tolerant', which then translates into his attitudes to other religions although he had very limited contact with non-Muslims throughout his life. Counter to Allport's contact hypothesis (1954), Helmi's very limited exposure to the religious Other did not necessarily result in prejudice, most likely due to the nature of Islamic teachings commonly taught in *pesantrens*. As Afrianty (2012) and Sirry (2020) noted, Indonesian *pesantren* graduates are traditionally moderate, therefore being relatively tolerant to the religious Other. In contrast, most of the new conservatives are the urban middle-class who were not traditionally religious and then found new religious enthusiasm in conservative teachings.

Constituting tolerance through a view of Islam as spiritual rather than doctrinal also implies an emphasis on internal processes of cultivating oneself, as opposed to overt rituals, symbols, identity, or other external expressions of religiosity. Arif (male, 7th semester, non-religiously-affiliated university) spoke about how he had enough of his friends who debated whether or not Muslim men should grow a beard and wear flood pants, which they believe are recommended in the sacred texts. Arif considers Islam is 'much deeper' than such superficial debate about external appearance. Helmi also used similar language of depth and interiority when discussing the incident of flag burning in Garut in 2018, when a group of youths burnt a flag of an illegal Islamist group with an Arabic word *tauhid* (literally translates 'Oneness of God' and often used to refer to God) on it, which then sparked outrage among Muslims. Helmi said:

> It is okay to glorify the word *tauhid*, but what's more important is to let it sink deep into your soul, no need to overly glorify its printing on a flag. Islamic law becomes unimportant when you prioritise the more spiritual aspects of Islam. Islam does not need to be too controlling, because it is already, kind of, *tasawwuf* (Sufism/Islamic mysticism) for me.

The rhetoric of defending Islam has been effectively deployed by Indonesian Islamic hardliners to justify intolerance and persecution (Irawan 2017), such as against the Ahmadis or Jakarta's ex-Governor Basuki Tjahja Purnama. Contesting such rhetoric, Arif and Helmi drew upon the discourse of spiritual Islam to position intolerant attitudes in the name of defending Islam as superficial and missing the whole point of being religious, which for them, is mystical in nature. This understanding reflects the Sufic or mystical understandings and practices accommodated within NU traditions with which Arif and Helmi were affiliated. Correspondingly, Helmi added that he 'do(es) not feel comfortable with the new *sharia* trends' which emphasise compliance to Islamic law and external expressions of religiosity including in one's attire, consumption, and public morality.

Strict adherence to *sharia* or Islamic rules/recommendations has become a new trend in the last two decades in Indonesia, particularly since it was co-opted by businesses and industries. While it has been legally enforced through local regulations in some regions like Aceh, it also manifests in the wider economic contexts through products and services brandishing a *sharia* label, including fashion, food, banking, and gender-separated spatial designs. As Arif said during the interview, even glasses and toilet paper are now sold using '*halal*' as the tag line. In youth social life, *sharia* trends develop into a tendency to 'correct' other Muslims who do not strictly follow those rules/recommendations and, to a degree, positioning them as sinful. Contrasting this tendency with a more spiritual version of Islam, Mutiara (female, 5th semester, Islamic university) said: 'I don't like to give (religious) advice to others, perhaps, I think it is more meaningful if someone finds the *Way* themselves.' Mutiara observed that her *hijra*/born-again Muslim friends like to give advice about what is right, what should be worn, or with whom a Muslim girl should not accompany. However, although gentle advice was given, it still made her 'feel sinful'. Mutiara does not feel comfortable with those comments, as she believes religion is more about her personal journey of finding meaningfulness rather than obedience to authoritatively imposed rules. In a similar vein, Arif gave a powerful story about tolerance and not being too quick to judge others.

> There is a story in a *Hadist*[1] about a prostitute who went to heaven because she kindly gave food and drink to a hungry stray dog. You know, she lived in sin everyday [because of her work] and dogs are considered unclean animals, right? So, then, who am I to decide who is sinful and will go to hell? Yes I pray five times a day, but it is up to God to receive or reject my observance.

The story Arif told contrasts kindness with religious observance/obedience as the criterion for salvation, with the former being prioritised but without abandoning the latter. Instead of truth claims, enforcement of rules, and judging others, a discourse of spiritual Islam espouses kindness, uncertainty, and humble submission to God, which all foster more tolerant attitudes towards the religious Other and even the socially-stigmatised, like sex workers and transgender people. The late former President and NU Chairperson, Abdurrahman Wahid, for example, attended a transgender beauty contest, gesturing support and acceptance of their gender identity (Pandia 2006). Later, this affirming position was adopted by the Wahid Foundation (2016). Through a discourse of spiritual Islam, transgender communities, which have frequently been persecuted by hardliners for deviating from conservative religious interpretations, become more possible to be tolerated and welcomed. Like Helmi said, spiritual Islam reduces gender identity into 'an external shell irrelevant for one's religious life'.

Perhaps, a crucial question is in what ways may this discourse of spiritual Islam be appealing for contemporary Indonesian youth, particularly the new conservative urban middle-class? As Fealy (2019) identified, the traditional style of NU preachers with long and reflective discussions may not be as appealing to contemporary urban audiences as compared to conservatives' highly effective use of websites, social media, emotionally charged language, and snappy images to incite intolerance. In order to rejuvenate the moderate groups, we propose that spiritual Islam might have potential appeals for contemporary Indonesian youth. As urban youth becomes more aware of and pays attention to their mental health and a deeper sense of meaningfulness, some participants' narratives in this study (like Arif, Helmi, and Mutiara) illustrate a possibility that popular appeals of conservatism may just be momentary, and youth may soon be tired of the self-righteousness, negativity, and *sharia* demands imposed upon them; evidence of this has been reported in a recent study (i.e. Sirry 2020). Akin to Bass (2013) vision of spiritual Christianity, it is within the contemporary contexts of the global environmental crisis, political conflicts, and the ethos of neoliberal hustle culture that a spiritual version of Islam might offer a consolation – a slower, gentler, friendlier, and deeper way of making sense the world. This in turn may better fulfill young people's psychological and existential needs. The increasing popularity of yoga and meditation, for instance, is a promising example of how a traditional spiritual practice (and worldview) can be re-appropriated, commodified, and widely accepted by some segments of middle-class Indonesians.

A discourse of postmodern sensibilities

'That's just no longer suitable for our era now.'

Irma (female, 5th semester, Islamic university),

on a claim of single religious truth

The second discourse underpinning participants' ways of being tolerant relates to postmodern sensibilities, where a sense of inevitable multiplicity of (grand) narratives results in a more careful and tolerant attitude for the religious Other. In their increasingly connected worlds, it is almost impossible for Indonesian youth to avoid encounters with the religious Other. These encounters have sometimes resulted in epistemic humility with regard to their own religious beliefs (Kraft and Basinger 2016), and at other times working on an affective level by familiarising participants with and humanising the religious Other (Wijaya Mulya and Aditomo 2019); both give rise to a more religiously tolerant subjectivity. As Irma's words above illustrate, most participants in this study take for granted the multiplicity of religions and religious truths, and consider it impossible in our time now to deny such multiplicity.

While Indonesia is religiously diverse, the segregated patterns of urban sociality (e.g. going to religion-based schools or living in a homogenous neighbourhood) may hinder many Indonesian youths from having meaningful interactions with the religious Other. The data in this study showed that participants from the non-religiously-affiliated university have more opportunities to meet friends from different religions. Laila (female, 1st semester, non-religiously-affiliated university), for example, enthusiastically told her experience of having a Catholic roommate in the university dormitory, which is her first non-Muslim close friend. Studying in the Islamic university, Helmi has no non-Muslim friends, but Mutiara likes to hang out in cafés where she made friends with non-Muslims who were mostly friends of her friends. According to Allport (1954), the key point is that these interactions need to be equal and promote common humanity. In the current study, most of participants' encounters with the religious Other were positive and friendly, some include conversations about their differing faiths in a relaxed atmosphere like Laila's and Mutiara's experiences. Other participants who have no non-Muslim friends have non-Muslim neighbours, and those who have no non-Muslim neighbours have a relative who married someone who converted from another religion. During the wedding and subsequent family events such as funerals or cultural celebrations, guests came into contact with the family of the converted. This was the case in Annisa's (female, 3rd semester, non-religiously-affiliated university) and Icha's (female, 3rd semester, non-religiously-affiliated university) experiences. Outside friendship and family relations, participants engaged in meaningful interactions with the religious Other in their teaching internships (e.g. a Christian student in their class), part time job as a tutor, and campus activities like organising a camp with the regional Scout leader (who apparently is a Buddhist). However segregated Indonesian contemporary societies may be, participants' narratives in this study showed there are plenty of opportunities for Indonesian urban youth to have meaningful and positive interfaith interactions (Sumaktoyo 2018), which have then helped them to realise the existence of the religious Other and the multiplicity of religious truth.

Various (sometimes conflicting) groups within Islam itself have also played a crucial role in enabling participants to see religion and religious truth as neither singular nor monolithic. Annisa grew up in a village where NU and Muhammadiyah traditions co-exist. Therefore Annisa is aware of different versions of Islamic tradition, and that there are people who strictly follow one and those like her parents who follow both. Similarly, in Irma's village there are NU, Muhammadiyah, and the more conservative LDII (*Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia* or Indonesian Institute of Islamic Dawah); each has their own mosque/*musholla*. Growing up in an NU tradition, Irma has a memorable experience about when she once prayed at the LDII's *musholla*, as 'the place was immediately cleaned after I finished (praying), which made me think, am I dirty or what?' Experiences with different strands of Islam that have different levels of openness or tolerance facilitated participants to see the

intracategorical diversity within a religion, and as a result, they may see other religions as internally diverse too and not be too quick to overgeneralise. For instance, Mutiara was once 'treated not very nice' by the mother of her Chinese-Christian private tuition student and guessed it was because of her hijab; but she did not attribute the discriminatory gesture to Christians in general.

Another important consequence of the encounter with, and understanding of the multiplicity of religious truth, is that most of these pre-service teachers feel comfortable when disagreeing with religious authorities. Claims of a single truth and certainty, these pre-service teachers find, are no longer relevant. It was quite common among participants during the interview to begin a sentence with the phrase 'according to Islamic teachings, … ' and then continued with the phrase 'but according to me personally, … ' where they then expressed a different view. For instance, Mutiara explained that 'according to Islamic teachings, yes, all non-Muslims will go to hell; but my personal view, I cannot say it's true or false. I haven't died, so how can I know for sure?' Mutiara was confident to challenge one of the basic doctrines in Abrahamic faiths, namely, the doctrine of salvation, which often differentiates the exclusivist from the inclusivist positions. Other participants even took a form of pluralist position where all religions are seen as good, true in their own way, and even complementary. For example, Irma said several times during the interview that 'all religions are the same, they have the same objective' and 'my religion is not the only true one'. Also, Irma mentioned 'perhaps, religions complement each other'. Such pluralist view on religious relations, given rise by a sense of postmodern multiplicity, is a valuable discursive resource in the constitution of participants' religiously tolerant subjectivity because it fosters religious epistemic humility (Kraft and Basinger 2016).

How can the participants then translate these multiple truths into their everyday social living? If everyone exercises agency to differ from authority, how does authority then keep society together harmoniously? This is where the notion of *Pancasila* citizenship came onto the scene. Asked such questions, the participants drew upon ideas of democracy, citizenship, and *Pancasila* as regulatory frameworks, which hold all different (religious) groups together. Like Mutiara said,

> I am fine with friends who wear burqas, or go to nightclubs, or even who are lesbians, I treat them all well. I don't judge their morality. As long as they don't disturb me or my privacy, I am anti-judging (laugh). But if they threaten me or violate my rights, I will fight back.

In explaining her tolerant position about those who are different and even stigmatised, Mutiara drew upon ideas of respecting rights, individuality, freedom, and ethics of reciprocity, all of which are features of liberal democracy. Other participants appeal more specifically to Indonesia's contexts, history, and foundations of democratic citizenship, such as Arif who spoke against Islamist groups enforcing their own truth using threats and violence: 'We should not betray our founding fathers [sic], those who fought for Indonesia's independence were not only Muslims. We need to do democracy better.' Similarly, Annisa takes for granted the unity of Indonesia as non-negotiable: 'They (the Islamists) should not do that, Indonesia would be broken. I don't understand why they are like that.' These participants' narratives substantiate Parker and Hoon's (2013) suggestion for religious tolerance education and citizenship education to be conjoined, where *Pancasila* becomes the basis for peaceful religious coexistence and protection of religious minorities. By drawing upon the notion of democratic citizenship, these pre-service teachers' sense of postmodern multiplicity does not necessarily result in relativism nor anarchism, as often presented as fear mongering by the conservatives (e.g. 'MUI Fatwa Haram' 2019), but instead as respect for individual freedom and tolerance for the religious Other.

A discourse of concern over conservative, Islamist, or radical groups

The final key discourse identified in this study relates to concern over conservative, Islamist, or radical groups, in which religious tolerance is constituted as being constantly haunted by the threats of hard-line Islamism. As can be seen in previous sections, most participants have a sensitive awareness

about the growing existence of conservative and hard-line Islamic groups. Participants who came from other towns to study in Surabaya like Laila, Annisa, and Irma were repeatedly warned by their family to avoid any invitations to join a suspicious Islamic group. As Annisa explained, these groups are infamous for aggressively recruiting new members that include offering support such as emotional, food, money, helping hands, and a strong sense of community (see also Sirry 2020). Most participants have at least one friend who had joined an Islamic group with a tendency to be conservative, Islamist, or radical. Based on their experience with such friends, participants referred to these groups as 'close-minded', 'judgmental', 'fanatic', and 'backward'. Some participants themselves, like Irma, had been invited to such groups but they did not join, as they feared being 'brainwashed', 'radicalised', and 'unable to leave the community'. It is through this awareness of Muslims groups associated with intolerance operating around them that participants' ways of understanding tolerance were constituted.

Participants' undertone throughout the interview on this specific topic was 'we against them' or 'we are preyed on by them'. These participants realised that it is a difficult situation or even a paradox: How far should we tolerate potentially intolerant groups? While showing concerns and fear, some participants also believe that these groups should not be discriminated against nor frowned upon before proven guilty of radicalism, like those wearing burqas, as it could be over-generalising and judgemental. Annisa argued that 'we should not see women in burqas negatively. I have a friend who now wears a burqa. This friend joined such a group at the time her parents were divorcing and she was provided with support and is not a radical.' Annisa drew attention to situations that may lead someone into such involvement and invited us to be considerate of the reasons behind their decisions.

One of the participants in this study, Icha, associated herself with conservative Islam. Icha, who was studying at the non-religiously-affiliated university, narrated difficult situations that led her to become a conservative:

> It all begins at Year 7 [±13 years old] when I went to a school camp. You know, in a forest like that, there are [invincible] creatures/spirit, you know, who disturb people. It was my friend who got [possessed], I just tried to calm her, but it was angry or something so it followed me home. Every day it told me 'you are useless, you better kill yourself', every day for seven years! I was then too afraid to go out, go to school, I was just afraid. When it possessed me, I hurt myself, banged my head, sliced my skin. Other times, when I walked, it pushed me down, or choked me. Local Muslim people [in her hometown in Central Java] believe we should make friend/peace with it, like give offerings. But how can I make friend with someone who told me to kill myself? So my father had a friend who had been *hijra* [born again], and he took me for a *rukiyah* [spirit cleansing], and it was better. That was the beginning of our *hijra*. We then moved to this town [in the metropolitan area of Surabaya], so I can enroll in an Islamic school, which is more supportive. My [former] teachers in the public school were not [supportive] and they accused me of lying and truancy. In my hometown people were shallow-minded, like when my Dad was wearing flood pants or me wearing a large hijab, they looked at us from head to toe. In big cities like Surabaya, people are more tolerant about such things. Now I am not afraid [to the ghost] anymore, it has not completely gone, still sometimes disturbs me, but I don't care, because I have Allah with me.

At the time of the interview, Icha was actively involved in a conservative Islamic group and she hoped to be able to wear a burqa without being discriminated against. Icha's transition has involved wearing a regular hijab and face mask (long before the COVID-19 pandemic). Icha wishes that Indonesians could be 'more tolerant' with conservative Muslims like her and her family and not associate them with terrorists. While Icha is against 'any forms of religious violence', she personally believes that 'it is better if all Indonesians are Muslims' and that '*sharia* law like in Aceh is ideal for Indonesia'.

In both scholarly publications on religious tolerance in Indonesia and the authors' experience with interfaith dialogues, a recognition of the voice of the conservatives like Icha's, beyond the context of deradicalisation is considerably rare, not to mention the complexity of dealing with it. A remotely relevant theorisation might be Mietzner's (2018) three strategies of democratically handling anti-democratic movements. The first is 'militant democracy', that is, defending democracy by aggressively criminalising and banning anti-democracy groups. While generally effective, this strategy, which

aggressively limits freedom of expression, may undermine democracy itself. Correspondingly, protecting tolerance by legally banning or socially repudiating intolerant groups may contradict the very notion of tolerance itself, like Icha felt. The second strategy is 'tolerating the intolerant', namely, accommodating anti-democratic groups with the hope of moderating their radical views. However, as evident in President Yudhoyono's (2004–2014) accommodation of Islamist groups (Mietzner 2018), it might have been radicalising the moderates, rather than vice versa. The third is 'concentric containment' in which anti-democratic actors are aggressively repressed, but issues driving their followers into anti-democracy are systematically addressed, such as poverty. In Icha's case, for example, if there are viable alternative solutions from moderate groups for her problem beyond the traditional animistic approach of befriending ghosts or modern psychiatry's heavily-stigmatised pathologisation, she might not need to resort to a conservative, less tolerant strand of Islam.

In line with the purpose of this article, we focused on the ways Muslim pre-service teacher participants in this study understand and respond to the growing conservatism in contemporary Indonesia. Within their everyday social contexts, it appears that most participants leaned towards the second strategy, namely, accommodation; and put the responsibility on individuals themselves to avoid being radicalised. Helmi, for example, did not like listening to debates between moderate and hardliner preachers on television or Youtube, such as on the ex-Jakarta Governor's blasphemy case. He said, 'I don't want to take sides, I just hope we all can get along well. The moderate leaders can *bersilaturahmi* (visit/befriend) the hardliners, and vice versa. Thus, people can feel at peace, instead of attacking each other like this.' Rather than politically banning or theologically addressing differences which give rise to (in)tolerance, elite diplomacy is considered more effective and peaceful for Helmi. Similarly, Irma was also not comfortable with the banning of radical preachers: 'If the government bans them, the people are not getting smarter. Young people must learn to be smart, able to filter out radical teachings themselves. Just don't follow messages you think are bad.' Living in an increasingly neoliberal Indonesia, Irma sees that responsibilisation of youth is a key to avoid radicalism and foster tolerance without being intolerant. In Irma's view, the ideal young people in the religious marketplace would be 'smart customers' who carefully choose from among various messages and ways of being a Muslim.

Coupled with the fact that participants in this study have a friend who is conservative, Islamist, or radical, their positions on these versions of Islam might have been caught up between fear, empathy, and a commitment to diversity. While we believe that the key is to strike 'a balance between state involvement in ensuring the protection of minority rights and tolerance of difference in the public sphere, while at the same time allowing space for civic participation and cross-cultural fertilisation to take place organically among the citizenry' (Hoon 2017, 489), it is indeed a complex and intricate task involving various actors and involves a significant amount of time to reach democratic maturity. Nevertheless, our argument in this section is much more modest, namely, to demonstrate that constituting religious tolerance in the contexts of contemporary Indonesia evidently and inevitably involves thinking through the tensions around the growing conservative, Islamist, and radical groups.

Conclusion: implications for religious tolerance education in Indonesia

This article has discussed three key discourses drawn upon by Indonesian Muslim pre-service teachers in understanding religious tolerance, namely, a discourse of spiritual Islam, postmodern sensibilities, and concern over conservatism, Islamism, and radicalism. A crucial question might be what the implications are in identifying these key discourses for religious tolerance education in contemporary Indonesia. The data showed that participants' access to discourses of religious tolerance was not through formal education. When explicitly asked during their interviews, most participants responded that tolerance was formally taught in Citizenship Education but had no real impact on their ways of being tolerant. They mostly learnt how to be tolerant from their own experiences. Unsurprisingly, participants' plans for teaching tolerance in their future work were vague and superficial, such as 'telling my students to be tolerant' (Laila).

As the authors, we propose that religious tolerance education may be more effective when connected to discourses which 'make sense' for students; some of which were identified in this study. While non-confessional, interfaith RE might still not be widely-adopted in the near future, the content of confessional RE can at least be more spiritual rather than doctrinal, such as stories or parables on kindness, empathy, uncertainty, personal journeys, and non-judgemental gestures, which are already available in each religious tradition. Learning assessments may not necessarily be written tests with one right answer, which implies single religious truth; but can be reflective assignments on experiential learning, such as spiritual pilgrimage to local sites, or positive conversations and experiences with the religious Other.

Facilitating students to encounter and discuss intra-categorical multiplicities within their own religion may also be beneficial to help students become less judgemental or overgeneralise about other religions. While opportunities for positive, meaningful interfaith interactions might not always be available, virtual experiences through movies or social media posts can also be incorporated into the classroom considering students' familiarity with such media. It may also be important for teachers to be supportive of students who disagree with them, as democratic spaces for critiques and multiple perspectives might be preferred by contemporary young Indonesians and could contribute to more tolerant subjectivity.

Finally, religious tolerance education in contemporary Indonesian contexts, particularly in universities, might need to include more complex discussions about conservative, Islamist, and radical groups, such as their politicisations, experiences of discrimination, and reasons for their distrust in democracy. At the classroom level, an accommodating approach might be seen as more tolerant whereby conservatives are considered as a legitimate 'option' of being an Indonesian Muslim, but simultaneously position them as one version of Islam, not the one and only. Here, *Pancasila* as a citizenship framework is still a valuable and powerful resource for teaching religious tolerance, but it needs to be taught in an inclusive, relevant, contextualised manner.

Note

1. Hadists are sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. In Islam, Hadists are considered to be the second primary source of Islamic jurisprudence, after the Quran.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

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