

## **The Construction of Interfaith Knowledge within a Family in Sukoreno Village, Jember Regency**

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### ***Abstract***

Religious difference remains a sensitive issue in Indonesia, often becoming a source of social tension and conflict. In contrast, Sukoreno Village is characterized by its religious diversity and relatively harmonious interfaith relations. This study aims to analyze the construction of interfaith knowledge within a family living in Sukoreno Village. The phenomenon is examined through the lens of Social Construction Theory as developed by Peter L. Berger. This research adopts a qualitative method with a constructivist approach. The findings indicate that religious diversity has become a normalized aspect of family life in the village, forming a social reality that has been sustained across generations. This reality emerges through a process of knowledge construction that involves the stages of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. Furthermore, religious difference within the family setting gives rise to a range of social meanings and interpretations.

**Keywords: construction, diversity, religion, family**

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## Introduction

Diversity or plurality is a distinctive characteristic that cannot be separated from human life. Plurality does not imply disorder or chaos; rather, it is a natural law that cannot be resisted ([Achmad, 2001](#)). Jember Regency, located in the eastern part of Java Island, is a region marked by various forms of difference, including language, ethnicity, and religion. In terms of language, several are used daily by the local community, namely Javanese, Madurese, and Indonesian. Ethnically, the population consists of Javanese, Madurese, and also Pandhalungan groups ([Zoebazary, 2017](#)).

In addition to linguistic and ethnic diversity, the religious beliefs of the population in this region are also highly varied, encompassing Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and the indigenous belief system of Sapta Darma. In recent years, religion has become a central point of attention among the public, and conflicts with religious overtones are frequently reported. Fundamentally, individuals cannot be blamed for interpreting the phenomenon of “religion” from various perspectives, as religion today is no longer limited to explaining the relationship between humans and their God, but also inevitably involves sociological, anthropological, psychological, and economic awareness ([Abdullah, 1996](#)).

In 2013, the Jember Branch of the Indonesian Council of Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI) recorded five religious conflicts occurring within the regency, such as the case involving Sekolah Tinggi Dirosah Islamiyah (STDI) and the conflict between Sunni and Shia communities in Puger Kulon Village ([Winarno, 2013](#)). Religion is frequently confronted with various social situations and ultimately becomes a point of conflict. Religious disputes often emerge due to excessive fanaticism or, alternatively, the presence of hidden interests held by specific groups. In several cases, religion is considered sacred and holy, and thus believed to be something worth defending at all costs. However, in principle, all religions, in the context of social life, uphold and teach positive values.

A situation in which society upholds tolerance and lives together in peace and harmony has now become a rare and valuable condition, one that is aspired to by people from various backgrounds. Surprisingly, such a condition is exemplified by the people of Sukoreno Village. Sukoreno is a village located in the Umbulsari Subdistrict, inhabited by adherents of three religions—Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism—as well as one indigenous belief, namely the Sapta Darma faith. The village can be referred to as a microcosm of Indonesia. Several houses of worship, including a mushola, a pura, and a church, are situated within the same alley and are separated only by a few hundred meters, making Sukoreno widely known for its religious diversity. According to Mr. Widodo, a representative of the Hindu community, Sukoreno was designated as a Pancasila Village or a miniature version of the nation by the Regent of Jember, Dr. Hj. Faida, in 2018 ([Rohimah, 2020](#)).

Various interfaith activities are regularly carried out by the residents of Sukoreno Village, including social services, community work, and religious events. Examples of such religious activities include the celebrations of Christmas, Eid al-Fitr, and Nyepi, as well as the Ogoh-Ogoh parade. These activities frequently involve multiple elements of the local community. In essence, the activities conducted by the people of Sukoreno proceed in a solemn, safe, and harmonious manner. Beyond these community activities, an even more noteworthy form of harmony is present within the

families of Sukoreno Village, specifically in the form of interreligious harmony within a family. Religious difference within a family is a common and accepted phenomenon in the village. According to Mr. Syamsul Huda, a representative of the Islamic community, such cases are considered normal and natural in Sukoreno. In fact, this phenomenon occurs in several hamlets, including Krajan Kidul and Krajan Lor. Religious diversity within families occurs in both nuclear and extended family structures.

The strong sense of tolerance that is deeply rooted in the society of Sukoreno Village represents a significant and notable social reality. Although religious differences exist within families, the members generally allow one another to carry out their respective religious practices in an atmosphere of safety and comfort, resulting in a socially conducive environment. This phenomenon is not only interesting and unique, but also worthy of academic study. Considering the socioreligious context of Indonesia in recent years, in which religion has increasingly become the focus of public attention and has frequently been linked to various conflicts, this case provides a compelling basis for further investigation. Therefore, this study aims to explore and analyze the construction of interfaith knowledge within a family in Sukoreno Village, Jember Regency.

## **Literature Review**

### **Knowledge**

“Knowledge” cannot be separated from the act of “knowing.” Just as every human action produces a result or consequence, the act of knowing likewise leads to the emergence of knowledge. Essentially, knowledge is the result of an individual's act of knowing concerning an object ([Wahana, 2016](#)). The purpose of knowledge is to achieve certainty and eliminate prejudice that arises from uncertainty. Nevertheless, knowledge is distinct from ideas, as not everything that exists in the realm of thought requires verification or truth. Some ideas may simply originate from individual imagination ([Soekanto, 2013](#)).

### **Family**

Family can be categorized into two types: nuclear family and extended family. A nuclear family refers to a unit consisting only of a father, mother, and their children—where the children in question are those who have not yet married. In contrast, an extended family refers to a group that encompasses more than one generation and constitutes a broader kinship environment compared to the nuclear family ([Khairuddin, 1997](#)).

### **Religious Difference**

According to Harold Coward (in [Achmad, 2001](#)), there are three general principles underlying such diversity. First is the notion of a shared logic or the One manifested in many forms. For instance, in Judaism and Christianity, there exists the idea that all people and nations are under one God, based on biblical perception. Second, religion as a means, where revelation and doctrine in each religion provide a path—such as in Islam, where it is referred to as Sharia—to approach the One. This implies that religious forms themselves should not be treated as absolute truths; what should be regarded as absolute is the One, not the diverse forms of religion. Third, the imposition

of legitimizing criteria, wherein each religion applies its own standards of validation. In Islam, for example, the Qur'an is considered divine revelation that legitimizes, there by becoming a foundational source. According to [Simarmata \(2017, p. 12\)](#), tolerance is an attitude that occupies a central position in the life of a plural or diverse society. In addition to the necessity of tolerance in creating social harmony, a principle of freedom is also essential. This principle of freedom includes both individual freedom and social freedom ([Hendropuspito, 1984](#)).

### **Social Construction**

Social construction is a sociological theory popularized by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. In everyday life, he observes the existence of a relationship between the individual and society as actions taken by individuals living within society. In such actions, Berger refers to acts grounded in subjective meanings, or meanings that emerge based on the beliefs of each individual in society and contain the goals they seek to achieve. Society, as an objective reality, provides a world for humans to inhabit. Within this world lies the individual's biography, which unfolds as a sequence of events within that world ([Berger, 1991](#)). According to Berger and Luckmann ([Poloma, 2007](#)), "The state of society is a pattern that has been systematically established as an orderly reality". One of the tasks of the sociology of knowledge, as conceptualized by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, is to explain the dialectical process that takes place between the self and the sociocultural world. This dialectic forms society as an objective reality ([Berger & Luckmann, 1990](#)).

According to Berger and Luckmann (1990), the process occurs in three moments: externalization, objectivation, and internalization. First, externalization is the process by which each individual adapts to their environment or sociocultural world as a product of human creation. In other words, it refers to the process in which individuals first observe the values present in their surroundings. Second, objectivation is a process in which individuals interact more deeply with the intersubjective world that has undergone institutionalization. In this phase, social reality appears to exist outside the individual, becoming an objective reality, while within the individual exists only subjective and objective realities. Eventually, these two forms of reality form an intersubjective network through institutionalization. This institutionalization process builds awareness or knowledge within each individual. Third, internalization is a process in which individuals identify themselves within their sociocultural world. Through internalization, each individual absorbs the values present in society. Two important aspects of this self-identification process are socialization. This socialization can occur through two channels: primary socialization, which takes place within the family, and secondary socialization, which occurs in organizations.

### **Research Method**

This study employs a qualitative research method with a constructivist approach. [Moleong \(2004\)](#) explains that qualitative research is intended to understand the phenomena experienced by the research subjects. [Creswell \(2016\)](#) states that qualitative research involves three primary data collection techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. The selection of informants is conducted using purposive sampling, where the researcher determines a group of participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research problem. This method involves identifying the

characteristics of potential informants prior to their selection ([Bungin, 2007](#)). The informants in this study are characterized as follows:

- a) Families with different religious beliefs living under the same roof in Sukoreno Village,
- b) Religious leaders in Sukoreno Village,
- c) Village officials capable of explaining the phenomenon of diversity in Sukoreno Village.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **The Social Reality of Sukoreno Village**

Sukoreno Village is often referred to as a microcosm of Indonesia, or a miniature of the nation. This is evident from the presence of various houses of worship—mosques (mushola), temples (pura), and churches—situated within the same neighborhood and separated by only a few hundred meters. Such spatial proximity has made Sukoreno Village well known for its religious diversity. The village was officially designated as a Pancasila Village. *“As for the title Pancasila Village, it was given when the Regent of Jember, Mrs. Faida, came and declared Sukoreno Village a Pancasila Village. (Widodo, interview, October 2, 2020).* The statement above by Mr. Widodo, a religious figure in Sukoreno Village, illustrates the prevailing harmony, mutual cooperation, and tolerance within the community. It is thus unsurprising that Sukoreno has earned the title of Pancasila Village. Today, the village is home to several religions and belief systems, including Islam, Catholicism, Hinduism, and the Sapta Dharma faith (a Javanese mystical tradition). Various beliefs and faiths coexist within the community of Sukoreno Village, which appears unique when viewed by those outside the village. However, the uniqueness of Sukoreno is not limited to the presence of diverse beliefs or religious denominations. Numerous activities are frequently carried out by the villagers, including social service, mutual cooperation, and even religious events. These activities often involve various elements of the village and are carried out by interfaith communities. One such example is the distribution of social assistance for those affected by Covid-19.

The distribution of aid for Covid-19 victims is one of the activities carried out by the people of Sukoreno Village, particularly by the followers of Sapta Dharma. This activity took place in August 2020 in front of the residence of Mr. Sunyoto, a prominent figure among the Sapta Dharma adherents. The event involved various elements of the community, including the village officials, village security personnel, religious leaders, and the general public of Sukoreno Village. In addition to its objective of assisting those impacted by the pandemic, the activity also served to strengthen harmony and tolerance among the elements of the community in Sukoreno Village, particularly among religious groups. Another routine activity is mutual cooperation (gotong royong), which is held every Friday in each hamlet of Sukoreno Village. This activity is commonly referred to by the community and village officials as Friday Clean-up (Jum’at Bersih).

According to Mr. Shohib, the Secretary of Sukoreno Village, one of the successful implementations of mutual cooperation is the provision of street lighting. In this initiative, various elements of the village participated in the construction process, both

Muslim and non-Muslim residents, working together hand in hand. As a result, the streets across the village are now brighter than they were prior to the installation of the lights. The project was carried out entirely through community self-help without any financial support from the government, demonstrating the solidarity, cooperation, and communal spirit of the people of Sukoreno Village.

The harmony and cooperation practiced by the people of Sukoreno Village are not limited to social activities alone. In religious activities as well, such practices are frequently carried out in a spirit of mutual cooperation. Within these religious events, the residents of Sukoreno Village readily support one another without hesitation, whether they are Muslims, Christians, or Hindus.

*“For the youth, members of Ansor Youth guard the church here. So the Muslim youth help with the security, then the Hindu youth join in. This happens during Christmas services. It is routine, always present. And vice versa, during Nyepi celebrations. Especially during the Ogoh-Ogoh parade, there are even more participants. As for Eid al-Fitr, people visit their Muslim relatives. That is why there are no interreligious conflicts here like there are in other places — it is maintained collectively.” (Sutrisno, interview, November 19, 2020).*

As conveyed by Mr. Sutrisno, a Christian religious figure in Sukoreno Village, religious events carried out by the community are essentially conducted solemnly and peacefully. This is undoubtedly the result of the active roles and cooperation of the people of Sukoreno Village, including both youth and adults who are involved in these activities. On a smaller scale, harmony and tolerance in diversity are also found within individual families in Sukoreno Village, both in nuclear families and extended families.

### **Understanding Knowledge Construction on Interfaith Differences within the Family**

In the context of Sukoreno Village, particularly within families, the phenomena of diversity, harmony, and interfaith tolerance are common and normalized occurrences. The institutionalized habits of harmony and tolerance within both society and families are consciously or unconsciously inherited across generations by the people of Sukoreno. In relation to this phenomenon, particularly among family members in Sukoreno Village, one of the tasks of the sociology of knowledge as proposed by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann is to explain the dialectical process that occurs between the self and its sociocultural environment. According to Berger & Luckmann (1990), this process occurs through three stages: externalization, objectivation, and internalization. In the externalization stage, some members of interfaith families understand that their area is religiously plural, as several family members were born and raised in Sukoreno Village—such as Mrs. Sriani, Mrs. Tyas, and Mrs. Sri Wahyuni—so they are able to adapt to such diversity. However, other members may require more time for adjustment, such as Mrs. Nining.

The second stage, objectivation, refers to the intersubjective world as a social reality within Sukoreno society. The awareness within interfaith families is formed through habitual activities (social realities) in their environment, such as interfaith security cooperation during Christmas celebrations, Nyepi (Ogoh-Ogoh parade), and interfaith social service events. These shared experiences help shape awareness and knowledge among members of interfaith families. For instance, Mrs. Sugiarti, Mrs. Tyas, and Mrs.



Pariyah expressed that all religions essentially share the same purpose: to reach God. The third stage, internalization, is where members of interfaith families in Sukoreno engage in respectful and tolerant behaviors. For example, Mrs. Sri and Mrs. Nining support one another during interfaith family celebrations; Mrs. Sugiarti often accompanies her grandchildren to Qur'an recitation sessions despite religious differences; and Mrs. Pariyah maintains mutual respect among family members during religious holidays such as Christmas and Eid al-Fitr. These actions foster harmonious relationships within interfaith families.

In addition, two essential components in the internalization stage are processes of socialization. In this regard, interfaith families engage in both imparting and receiving values through informal transmission or "getok tular" among family members. For instance, Mrs. Sri frequently guides her family to respect and show tolerance toward their grandmother. Such practices ensure the ongoing construction of interfaith understanding within the family. Following the internalization process, the society of Sukoreno emerges as a product shaped by earlier generations' constructions. In essence, the reality present within society is not something that forms scientifically on its own, but rather through the cultural construction shaped by the surrounding environment. It is important to note that internalization does not represent the final stage in the theory of social construction. The three stages—externalization, objectivation, and internalization—form a continuous and cyclical process within society. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that each individual internalizes values differently, and not all individuals are equally able to maintain balance in absorbing socialized norms ([Berger & Luckmann, 1990](#)).

### ***The Meaning of Religious Diversity within a Family***

Religious differences within a family in Sukoreno Village arise from various reasons and result in diverse interpretations and meanings held by each family member, as detailed below:

#### ***Diversity as a Form of Tolerance***

Interreligious tolerance is one of the tangible forms observed in interfaith families residing in Sukoreno Village. The existence of religious differences does not pose a significant issue within the community, particularly within families. Most interfaith families in Sukoreno live in harmony and peace in their daily lives. For instance, within the family of Mrs. Sri Wahyuni:

*"Yes, we live in harmony, Sir. I celebrate two religious holidays, prepare cakes twice, and hold communal meals twice as well. My mother is a Muslim. Honestly, I respect that, Sir. What matters most is mutual respect and harmony."* (Sri Wahyuni, interview, October 19, 2020).

The statement above clearly illustrates the form of tolerance within Mrs. Sri Wahyuni's family. Harmony is perceived as the most essential element in the family, achieved through mutual respect, so that religious differences are not considered problematic. The same applies to the families of Mrs. Tyas and Mrs. Pariyah.

#### ***Diversity as the Colors of Life***

Differences in religious beliefs among the people of Sukoreno Village do not merely manifest as a form of interfaith tolerance, particularly within families. Various other

interpretations also emerge within interfaith families, as illustrated by the statement of Mrs. Nining,

*"There is no need to overthink things or assume that if the father is Muslim and the mother is Catholic, they will be separated in heaven. There is no need to think like that. God is Most Just. Indeed, religions exist—some come from Jesus, and each has its own beliefs—but in the end, it is God who decides. In this world, even if different religions live under the same roof—an interfaith family—yet they are united, then in heaven. But if their hearts are united, even with different religions, then there will be another good side to it." (Mrs. Nining, interview, November 22, 2020).*

An extraordinary interpretation was expressed by Mrs. Nining, a member of an interfaith family in Sukoreno Village. Essentially, life is inseparable from differences, especially religious differences. These differences are seen as the colors of life, as interpreted by Mrs. Nining, who even believes that the religious diversity experienced in this world might continue into the afterlife in heaven.

### **Religious Diversity as a Habitus Within the Extended Family**

Differing from the previous subsection, which viewed religious diversity as a form of tolerance and the colors of life within the family, other interfaith families interpret such diversity as stemming from the environment within their family. One such example is found in the family of Mrs. Fenty,

*"Yes, my mother-in-law is a native of this village. I'm not originally from here. But my biological mother is indeed Protestant, and my father is Muslim... Just like this, so our whole family reflects Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. My mother is Protestant Christian, but she's from Manado, and my father is Muslim. Then my mother-in-law is Catholic." (Fenty, interview, November 22, 2020).*

In her daily life, Mrs. Fenty is already accustomed to religious diversity. Thus, the existence of interfaith differences in her extended family or in Sukoreno Village does not surprise her. Various religious activities within Mrs. Fenty's family continue to be carried out properly and respectfully. Essentially, religious differences are interpreted as something ordinary and commonplace in her family.

### **Religious Diversity as a Reflection of the Community Environment**

In this particular interpretation, there is no significant difference from the previous sub-section. Several members of interfaith families describe that religious diversity occurs as a reflection of the broader environment in Sukoreno Village, which is fundamentally composed of communities adhering to various faiths. One example is seen in the family of Mrs. Sriani, *"Yes, all my life, since I was a child, I was born here. The residents are mixed—back then, from the East to the West, there were Hindu people." (Sriani, interview, March 3, 2021).*

The surrounding environment is something that greatly influences daily life. This is also the case for the people of Sukoreno Village, as illustrated in Mrs. Sriani's explanation above. Awareness of religious differences from an early age has led such conditions to be perceived as ordinary and natural. Consequently, even within interfaith families, such diversity becomes normalized. Thus, each interfaith family carries out daily life just as any other family would, without making religious differences a source of conflict within the household.



## **Conclusion**

The social reality of religious diversity has become a common and accepted aspect of life within the community of Sukoreno Village. Various religious activities are carried out smoothly and solemnly, such as the celebration of Christmas, Eid al-Fitr, and the Ogoh-ogoh parade. What is particularly noteworthy in the celebration of these events is the active collaboration and involvement of all elements in Sukoreno Village, including religious leaders, village officials, security personnel, and the general public. Religious differences are also present within family members. This reality reflects a condition that has been passed down across generations in Sukoreno. It is inseparable from the social construction experienced by each individual, which occurs through the processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. On another level, religious differences within families in Sukoreno emerge from various reasons and are interpreted differently by each family member—whether as a form of tolerance, as the colorful fabric of life, as a habitus rooted in extended family traditions, or as a reflection of the surrounding community. As a result, they carry out their daily lives like any other family, without making such religious differences a source of conflict within the household.

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