

MAJORITY HEGEMONY IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the concept of majority hegemony in a multicultural society, with a focus on the dynamics of interaction between majority and minority groups. Through a qualitative approach and case study method, this research explores the perspectives of community and religious figures who represent both groups in a multicultural society. Data analysis was carried out by paying attention to the concept of hegemony in the theories of political sociology and ethnic conflict. The research results underscore the various manifestations of majority hegemony in daily life, encompassing public policies, cultural practices, and social dynamics. The implications of these findings are discussed in the context of a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities in building a society that is inclusive and just for all groups.

Keywords: Hegemony, society, multikultural

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi konsep hegemoni mayoritas dalam masyarakat multikultural, dengan fokus pada dinamika interaksi antara kelompok mayoritas dan minoritas. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif dan metode studi kasus, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi perspektif tokoh masyarakat dan agama yang mewakili kedua kelompok dalam masyarakat multikultural. Analisis data dilakukan dengan memperhatikan konsep hegemoni dalam teori sosiologi politik dan konflik etnis. Hasil penelitian menyoroti beragam cara di mana hegemoni mayoritas termanifestasi dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, termasuk dalam kebijakan publik, praktik budaya, dan dinamika sosial. Implikasi temuan ini dibahas dalam konteks pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang tantangan dan peluang dalam membangun masyarakat yang inklusif dan berkeadilan bagi semua kelompok.

Kata kunci: Hegemoni, masyarakat, multikultural

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian society is a society with a very complex level of diversity. A society with a variety of diversity is known as a multicultural society. Cuéllar et al. (2020) interpret multiculturalism as the diversity or differences that exist between one culture and another. Fundamentally, the formation of multiculturalism in Indonesia stems from the vast and diverse socio-cultural conditions of its geographical location. Geographic conditions dictate that Indonesia consists of numerous islands, each inhabited by a group of people who collectively form a society. This society shapes its own culture, which in turn

influences the emergence of numerous and diverse cultures. The concept of multiculturalism closely links Indonesia to the formation of a society based on *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which serves as a unifying national culture. However, in its implementation, there are still various obstacles that prevent the formation of multiculturalism in society. The founders of the Indonesian nation actually used this multicultural society model as a reference when designing national culture, as evidenced by Article 32 of the 1945 Constitution, which states, "National (Indonesian) culture is the pinnacle of culture in the region."

According to Nouman (2020), the multicultural society model posits that a society encompasses a widely accepted culture, akin to a mosaic pattern. The mosaic encompasses all the cultures of smaller societies that contribute to the formation of a larger society. Therefore, the key to understanding multicultural society is understanding how to integrate into the majority without oppressing or discriminating against minority groups (Schlesinger, 1995).

This multicultural society must be understood and interpreted in the context of the present and future, which must continue to be instilled. A multicultural society with the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* is one of the four pillars of state life, namely Pancasila, the 1945 Law, the Republic of Indonesia, and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. Pancasila is the philosophy and foundation of the state, which is the foundation of the ideals of the Indonesian nation. UUD 45 is the constitutional foundation that underlies the administration of life, society, nation, and state. RI is the unifier of the nation, and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* is the glue of unity in the strands of diversity.

Multiculturalism has two sides, namely the positive and negative sides. The positive side can strengthen unity, and the negative side can cause division (Supa et al., 2021). Yogyakarta serves as an example of a positive aspect. There, the people are multicultural and can live side by side in harmony. In Yogyakarta, there is Prambanan as a place for Hindus, Borobudur as a place for Buddhists, and in the surrounding area there is also a Muslim community. In Yogyakarta, there is also a large Islamic organisation, namely Muhammadiyah. In addition, Yogyakarta has earned the nickname "the city of education" due to its abundance of schools and colleges, drawing students from all over Indonesia.

Indonesia was formed based on a sense of togetherness, with a background of diversity in ethnicity, culture, nation, and skin color. The society of Indonesia upholds three values, namely moderation, tolerance, and dialogue, to address matters of a violent nature. In dealing with violence or crime, there are two approaches, namely law and cultural and religious approaches.

According to a continuous system of customs and a sense of shared identity, society is the unity of human life (Ryan, 2019). All members of society are human beings coexisting in a social setting, a situation that arises when individuals form relationships. We, as individuals, reside in Indonesia, which is a unified nation. There are many races, ethnicities, cultures, and languages. As Indonesian people, we are required to always uphold the values of unity by respecting every ethnic group. Therefore, we refer to Indonesian society as a multicultural society.

However, the downside of multiculturalism lies in its proven ability to destroy state threats (Supa et al., 2021). In society, there are many traits of individualism and egoism, whether in the name of religion, ethnicity, race, or politics. Individualism is a natural human trait, but if we persist without questioning or considering alternative perspectives, our country and society will remain divided. These characteristics can turn into exclusivism and ultimately trigger divisions in society, especially if coupled with economic, social, and cultural competition (Sadownik et al., 2021; Widastra et al., 2020). To overcome and prevent the above things from happening, first, there must be awareness in every society of the importance of multiculturalism. Second, cultivate a culture of mutual respect and tolerance within society. Our national ideology also instills in us the value of tolerance, particularly when it comes to maintaining the integrity of our nation through multiculturalism (Ong, 2022).

Characteristics of a multicultural society According to Pierre L. Van den Berghe, the characteristics of a multicultural society are: Segmentation into various social groups occurs. Diversity in society can cause people to form certain groups based on the same identity, resulting in subcultures that are different from other groups. This results in the division of the social structure into non-complementary institutions. A diverse society makes the structure of society experience differences between one society and another (Jay, 2003).

Social institutions that are not complementary reflect the differences in societal structure. Lack of developing consensus (joint agreement). Diverse societies have different standards of values and norms, which are manifested through people's behavior. Different communities adapt their characteristics to the physical and social environment. Conflicts occur relatively often. Differences in society are one of the triggers for conflict. The conflicts that occur can be very diverse, ranging from conflicts between individuals to between groups. Relatively speaking, social integration grows due to coercion and interdependence in the economic field. If a multicultural society can be well coordinated, then social integration is very possible. However, social integration in society arises not because of awareness but rather because of coercion from outside the self or outside the group. There is political domination. Certain groups in a multicultural society can have political power that regulates other groups. This is a form of control (domination) of one group over another group that does not have political power (Bunce, 2021).

Social actions in a multicultural society have norms or rules so that entities can accept the existence of other entities. In this social interaction, Paloma quotes George Herbert Mead's theory, which explains how the self internalizes or subjectively interprets a broader structural (objective) reality. He is a dialectical product of "me," or the impulsive self, and "me," or the social side of humans. Therefore, every person consists of a biological and psychological "me" and a sociological "me" (Muhammad & Hiariej, 2021).

Herbert Blumer, Mead's student at the University of Chicago, then described Mead's thinking in several important discussions, namely: (1) the self, (2) the act, (3) social interaction, (4) objects, and (5) joint action. As quoted by Ambo Mead in his work entitled *Mind, Self, and Society*, Mead explains the concept of self as a social entity and also

selfhood in the sense of a physical organism. This selfhood emerges in the context of experience and social interaction and continues to develop in connection with social processes and in relation to the individuals within it. The dimension of selfhood has two meanings, namely the self in the object dimension, which Mead calls "me," and the self in the dimension called the subject "I" (Yang, 2023).

Three main words structure the concept of "multicultural society": society, multicultural, and cultural. The term "society" means a group of people who live in unity and interact according to a system of customs in an area for a certain time. While the term "multi" means diverse or many, "cultural" means culture. So a multicultural society is a society that lives in a place with various different cultures. Multicultural societies usually adhere to the understanding of multiculturalism, namely the assumption that each culture has an equal position and its own advantages. A multicultural society is one that is composed of diversity and various kinds of culture, which in community life involves values, culture, and habits that emphasise mutual acceptance of each other. Multiculturalism is related to culture and is possibly limited by the concept of values or having certain interests.

Several conceptual definitions regarding this problem can be seen from the definitions put forward by figures, including: J. S. Furnival states that a multicultural society is a society consisting of two or more communities (groups) that are culturally and economically fragmented and have different institutional structures from one another. Meanwhile, Nasikun believes that a plural society is a society consisting of two or more social orders, communities, or groups that are culturally, economically, and politically separated (isolated) and have institutional structures that are different from each other. Clifford Geertz contends that a plural society divides into several embryonic subsystems, bound by primordial ties (Paffrath & Simon, 2023).

According to C.W. Watson in his book *Multiculturalism*, talking about a multicultural society is talking about the society of a country, nation, region, or even a limited geographical location such as a city or school, which consists of people who have different cultures on equal terms (Tisdell, 2020). Bikhu Parekh said that a multicultural society is a society consisting of several kinds of cultural communities with all their advantages, with slightly different conceptions of the world, a system of meanings, values, forms of social organisation, historical customs, and customs (Morozov, 2021). In essence, a multicultural society is a society consisting of various tribes, each of which has a different cultural structure (Worth, 2021). In this case, a multicultural society is not homogeneous, but rather exhibits heterogeneous characteristics. The pattern of social relations between individuals in the society is tolerant, and they must accept the reality of peaceful co-existence with each other, despite the differences inherent in each social ethnicity's politics (Hummelstedt et al., 2021).

Therefore, in a multicultural society, it is very possible for vertical and horizontal conflicts to occur, which can destroy the society. For example, disputes involving ethnic, racial, class, and religious sentiments occurred in various countries ranging from Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Zaire to Rwanda, from the former Soviet Union to Sudan, from Sri Lanka, India to Indonesia. Indonesian society is a plural society, or "plural

society." The internal conditions of the country and the Indonesian nation itself contribute to the plurality of Indonesian society. The factors that cause the plurality of Indonesian society include geographic conditions, which are the main factor in creating ethnic plurality. For your information, Indonesia's territory consists of approximately 3000 miles from east to west and more than 1000 miles from north to south. Indonesia's location between the Indonesian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean significantly influenced the formation of religious plurality in Indonesian society. The first influence that touched Indonesian society was Hindu-Buddhist influence from India, 400 years after Christ. The influence of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam influences pluralistic Indonesian society.

Meanwhile, pluralism is a characteristic of multiculturalism. Multicultural societies, formed from various ethnicities, races, religions, and other diversity, maintain strong divisions between societal groups (Torres & Tarozzi, 2020). There is dominance from one group to another. In a multicultural society, groups typically divide into those who dominate and those under dominance. Low consensus. The consensus referred to here is a decision taken based on mutual agreement. Due to the diverse differences within a multicultural society, it can be challenging to come to a consensus that all groups can agree upon, resulting in a low level of consensus formation. Social integration is usually forced. Integration is a system of mixing to achieve a unified whole (Loh, 2022). As we mentioned earlier, because of the great diversity that exists, it is difficult for multicultural societies to reach agreement. Therefore, to achieve harmony and peace, we can force the nature of social integration to change. Having a structure within the institution that is non-complementary. In a multicultural society, the unity of social institutions will be separated by certain segments. The diversity of the various aspects above shows the multicultural form of society.

METHOD

This research uses qualitative research. According to Murdiyanto (2020), qualitative research methods focus on in-depth understanding, interpretation, and revealing the meaning of the data collected. Researchers employ case studies as their primary research method. Researchers use case studies to deeply understand the context, process, and complexity of the phenomenon under study (Iswadi et al., 2023). Researchers can uncover hidden perspectives, experiences, and meanings related to majority hegemony in multicultural societies through this type of research. Researchers can use research results to gain in-depth, contextual, and detailed insights into the studied cases, thereby informing policy, practice, or advancing theory development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of interviews with religious and community leaders reveal the manifestation of the concept of majority hegemony in various aspects of life within a multicultural society. One of the main findings is the dominance of the majority group in public policy, where the interests and preferences of the majority group often dominate in the decision-making process. In addition, hegemony manifests itself in cultural practices, where the majority group's norms and values often rule the public sphere, often marginalizing

minority groups. Control over resources and access to key religious institutions, along with the dominance of religious norms and practices, reflect majority hegemony in a religious context. This creates an imbalance in representation and influence between majority and minority groups in multicultural societies. The dominance of majority groups in public policy can result in neglect of the interests and needs of minority groups, which in turn can deepen social and economic disparities between the two groups.

On the other hand, minority groups may find it challenging to feel accepted and respected in society due to cultural practices dominated by the norms of the majority group. This can create tension between groups and hinder a healthy social integration process (Lissitsa, 2021). In a religious context, the control of resources and access to mainstream religious institutions by majority groups can limit the participation and involvement of minority groups in religious activities. Furthermore, the majority group's pervasive dominance of religious norms and practices can lead to the perception of minority groups' religious beliefs and practices as less valuable or ignored. Minority groups may experience marginalization and struggle to uphold their religious identity in a majority-dominated environment. Overall, majority hegemony can produce social injustice, intergroup tensions, and obstacles to the integration of multicultural societies. Therefore, according to Jamil & Retis (2023), it is important to acknowledge and overcome the power dynamics that underlie majority hegemony, as well as to encourage inclusion, dialogue between groups, and equality of access in an effort to build a more inclusive and just society for all its citizens.

The results of this research have important implications for understanding power dynamics in multicultural societies. In an effort to build an inclusive and just society, it is important to recognize and overcome possible majority hegemony. Steps such as strengthening the representation and participation of minority groups in decision-making processes, promoting inclusive intergroup dialogue, and supporting initiatives that strengthen the identity and empowerment of minority groups can help reduce power inequalities and create a more just society for all its citizens.

Firstly, we need to create more space for the representation of minority groups in power structures and decision-making. Affirmative policies, which ensure proportional representation of various groups in government institutions, civil society organizations, and other public institutions, can achieve this. By doing so, we can effectively hear and champion the voices and interests of minority groups in the creation of policies that impact their lives.

In addition, the promotion of inclusive intergroup dialogue is a key step in strengthening relations between majority and minority groups. Open and honest dialogue can help overcome stereotypes, prejudice, and intergroup tensions that may arise in multicultural societies. Initiatives such as public discussion forums, intergroup meetings, and multicultural education programs can be effective means of promoting mutual understanding, tolerance, and cooperation between various groups in society.

In addition, supporting initiatives that strengthen the identity and empowerment of minority groups is also an important step in fighting majority hegemony. This can be done

through capacity building, training, and education that strengthen the cultural, religious, and ethnic identities of minority groups. In addition, support for community-based economic programs and entrepreneurship initiatives can help increase the economic independence of minority groups, thereby reducing dependence on majority groups and strengthening their position in society.

By implementing these measures comprehensively, society can reduce power imbalances and create a more inclusive, fair, and just environment for all its citizens. Apart from that, this effort can also help strengthen diversity as a valuable asset in enriching people's lives and promoting peace and social stability in the context of an increasingly complex and dynamic multicultural society. Therefore, it is important for stakeholders at various levels, from government to civil society and individuals, to work together in an effort to create a more inclusive and just society for all its citizens.

CONCLUSION

The concept of majority hegemony is a significant phenomenon in multicultural societies, manifesting in various aspects of social, cultural, and religious life, as this research reveals. Key findings include the dominance of majority groups in public policy, cultural practices that dominate public spaces, and control of key religious resources and access by majority groups.

The implication of these findings is that majority hegemony can produce social injustice, intergroup tensions, and obstacles to social integration in multicultural societies. Therefore, to build a more inclusive and just society for all its citizens, we need to recognize and overcome majority hegemony, promote inclusion, dialogue between groups, and equality of access.

Recommendations for future researchers are to continue the exploration of power dynamics in multicultural societies, with a focus on effective strategies to reduce majority hegemony and strengthen diversity as a positive asset in society. We can take steps such as adopting a participatory approach in research and policy development, expanding the space for minority groups' representation and participation in decision-making processes, and deepening our understanding of the impact of majority hegemony on welfare and social justice in multicultural societies. In this way, further research can make a valuable contribution to efforts to build a more inclusive, just, and harmonious society for all its citizens.

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