

ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the factors that influence tolerance in Indonesia. In this study, tolerance is seen from a person's attitude towards religious and ethnic differences. Data used are the results of Sosial Ekonomi Nasional Modul Sosial Budaya dan Pendidikan (Susenas MSBP) survey in 2021 conducted by Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS). This study uses ordinal logistic regression analysis and the results show that demographic factors (residence area and age) and socio-economic factors (education, poverty status, working status, and interaction with others) are the main factors that influence tolerance attitudes in Indonesia. Individuals who live in urban areas, are highly educated, and interact with others, are more tolerant in accepting leaders, friends, and activities from different religions and ethnic groups. Older people have a higher tolerance attitude than younger people in accepting leaders of different religions and ethnicities. Poor households are more likely to accept leaders and friends of different religions and ethnicities, but less likely to accept leaders and activities of different ethnicities. The results also show that working individuals are less likely to accept activities from different religions/ethnic groups.

Keywords: Religious Tolerance, Ethnic Tolerance, Logistic Ordinal
JEL: H31; J15; Z13

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Introduction

Indonesia is an archipelago with diverse cultures. There are 1,331 tribes and sub-tribes in Indonesia based on population census data conducted by BPS in 2010. In 2013, the collaboration of BPS and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) classified tribes and sub-tribes into 633 major tribal groups. There are 6 religions that widely embraced and used as a guidance of life by the people of Indonesia, namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. In addition to the 6 largest religions, there are also local beliefs and faiths that are embraced and preserved by people in Indonesia with hundreds or even thousands of adherents.

The diversity of cultures in Indonesia is a wealth and strength that must be preserved, but if not managed properly, it can lead to increased opportunities for inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflict.

The condition of tolerance in Indonesia is at a good level, as shown by the results of a survey (Litbang Kompas, 2022) which focuses on tolerance attitudes during the 2019 elections, where Indonesians still uphold the value of tolerance. Issues of religious, political and ethnic differences are the main problems that must be resolved. Conflicts between ethnicities and religions often occur during the election period where campaign materials

often contain elements of SARA (Ethnicity, Religion, Race, and Intergroup) or hate speech (Bawaslu, 2020). In the executive summary of the (SETARA, 2021), report, the most dominant issue of religious freedom violations in Indonesia committed by the state is discrimination, and discriminatory policies. While the most dominant issue of violations of religious freedom in Indonesia committed by the community is in the form of intolerance and hate speech. The province with the highest number of violations of religious freedom is West Java, followed by DKI Jakarta, East Java, West Kalimantan, and North Sumatra (SETARA, 2021).

Tolerance has benefits in the economic field, including related to technology. With tolerance for differences and accepting advanced external cultures, technological progress can be achieved (Mokyr, 1992, p. 186). By having a tolerant attitude, someone will be able to accept new ideas that can develop creativity and technology. One of the important cultural values in accepting different beliefs and giving them a fair chance in the market of economic competition is pluralism (Mokyr, 2016, p. 53). An area able to absorb creative labor and have a good social network if it has cultural tolerance, both ethnic and religious. The most successful ideas in the 17th century in most Western European markets were ideas related to tolerance (Mokyr, 2016, p. 234). Tolerance also enables accelerated innovation, technological development, and economic growth (Kwasnicki, 2021). The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of demographic characteristics and socio-economic characteristics on religious and ethnic tolerance attitudes in Indonesia.

Literature Review

Tolerance is defined as the willingness to extend basic procedural rights and respect for civil liberties to strongly disliked groups or conflicting ideas (Sullivan et al., 1984). Gibson (2009) defines tolerance as the willingness to accept disagreeable ideas or groups. Hazama (2011) defines tolerance as an individual's attitude toward unpleasant behavior or decisions within a group. Cerqueti et al. (2013) defines tolerance from a sociological perspective as an attitude of respect or acceptance of diversity. Such respect can take the form of being open to the inclusiveness of ethnicities, races, and walks of life and educating oneself to respect others (Florida, 2014, p. 10).

Tolerance towards diversity becomes a means for a person to trust, engage, and network with other people or institutions and becomes a source of innovation for economic growth (Page, 2008). Tolerance not only impact individuals, but also institutions and society as a whole (Wise & Driskell, 2017). According to Inglehart (1997, p. 188), a culture of trust and tolerance is particularly important for people in developing countries who have extensive social networks. High tolerance can produce something important for society in the form of economic growth (Jacobs, 1992), regional economic productivity (Ottaviano & Peri, 2005), and technology performance (Florida, 2002).

The high level of tolerance makes a region able to receive investment in the tourism economy. With hospitality and respect for differences, a region can attract tourists to come visit. Increasing the number of tourists can increase the economic growth of a region. High tolerance can increase regional economic productivity through relationships or interactions with others. By respecting differences, mutual trust can be increased and economic relations between individuals in one region can be improved. Increased trust and economic relations make people calmer in carrying out economic activities which indirectly increase their productivity in the regional economy. In addition, with high relations, a person's need to use technology will increase. This has led to an increase in technology performance required to accommodate the increasing need for technology.

There are several socio-economic factors that influence tolerance, including residence area, age, education, interaction with others, poverty status, and working status. People living in urban areas are more tolerant than those living in rural areas, both tolerant of other religions (Hadi et al., 2017) and of other ethnic groups (McIntosh et al., 1995; Nizah et al., 2017). As people get older, their tolerance tends to decrease, both tolerance towards other

religions (Hadi et al., 2017) and other ethnic groups (Hazama, 2014). However, Verkuyten & Killen (2021) argue that both tolerant and intolerant attitudes can occur at all ages. The study of Hodson et al. (1994) shows that the older a person is, the higher the tolerance attitude towards other ethnic groups. The results of this study contradict the results of studies which state that increasing age makes tolerance attitudes towards other religions (Hadi et al., 2017; Roth & Sumarto, 2015) and other ethnic groups (Hazama, 2014; Roth & Sumarto, 2015) lower. Verkuyten & Killen (2021) mediate these conflicting results and argue that both tolerant and intolerant attitudes can occur at all ages. Higher level of education, individuals tend to be more tolerant of other religions (Hadi et al., 2017; Roth & Sumarto, 2015) and other ethnic groups (Hazama, 2014; Roth & Sumarto, 2015). Interaction with others is necessary to improve an individual's attitude of tolerance towards other religions (Aras & Gunawan, 2019) and other ethnic groups (Hazama, 2014). Poor status makes individuals tend to be intolerant (Hadi et al., 2017), but can also be more tolerant (Albana & Izazy, 2022; Hazama, 2014) of other religions. Individuals who work tend to be more tolerant of other religions (Hadi et al., 2017) and other ethnic groups (Hodson et al., 1994).

Data and Research Methods

In this study, the type of data used is quantitative data sourced from primary data from the results of *Survei Sosial Ekonomi Nasional (Susenas)* Modul Social, Culture, dan Education September 2021 conducted by Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS). Data on urban and rural poverty lines in each province were obtained from official BPS publications available on the BPS website. There were 272,090 respondents that used as the population of this study. The sample used in this study were those who were heads of households as many as 74,701 respondents. This study uses logistic regression analysis techniques, which is a condition where the dependent variable has two or more categories (Whitley et al., 2012, p. 674). For data with ordinal type and more than two categories, ordinal logistic regression analysis can be used (Kleinbaum & Klein, 2010, p. 466).

The tolerance model is built into religious and ethnic tolerance. To provide a different perspective of tolerance attitudes, each tolerance attitude consists of attitudes towards leaders, activities, and friends of different religions/ethnicities. The tolerance model uses a dependent variable consisting of four categories: disagree, less agree, agree, and strongly agree. Score 1 describes the attitude of disagreeing with differences in religion/ethnicity, score 2 describes the attitude of less agreeing with differences in religion/ethnicity, score 3 describes the attitude of agreeing with differences in religion/ethnicity, while score 4 describes the attitude of strongly agreeing with differences in religion/ethnicity.

The area of residence in this study consists of urban and rural areas. A person's age on a ratio scale is calculated in years rounded down or based on the last birthday. Education is a variable that describes the highest education completed by respondents. In this study, education is grouped into 4 categories of formal education levels in Indonesia based on Pasal 14 Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 concerning the National Education System. The categorized values of the education variable are not/never completed elementary education, elementary education, secondary education, and high education. Interaction with others is measured by whether or not respondents have communicated with other people of different religions/ethnicity. Poor is a condition where the average consumption expenditure per capita per month is less than the poverty line. The poverty line used in this study is the poverty line for urban and rural areas in each province in Indonesia. Working status is for respondents who are currently working or temporarily not working in the past week.

Finding and Discussion

Ethnic tolerance is measured by individual attitudes towards leaders of different ethnic groups, activities of different ethnic groups, and friends of different ethnic groups. These individual attitudes can be obtained from answers to questions contained in the VSEN21.MSBP

Susenas MSBP questionnaire in 2021 which was carried out by BPS. Tolerance towards leaders of different ethnic groups was obtained through individual responses to the question “how would you respond if led by a leader (chairman/head) of a different ethnic group?”. Tolerance towards activities of different ethnic groups was obtained through individual responses to the question “how do you respond if there are activities in the neighborhood around your house carried out by a group of people from other ethnic groups?”. Tolerance towards friends from different ethnic groups was obtained through individual responses to the question “how would you respond if a household member was friends with a person from another ethnic group?”. The Susenas MSBP results show that the Indonesian population has a relatively high tolerance towards ethnic differences.

Figure 1 shows that 59.95 percent agree to be led by a leader of a different ethnic group, 69.80 percent agree if there are activities held by different ethnic groups, and 83.97 percent agree if a household member has a friend of a different ethnic group. These results suggest that Indonesians are more receptive to friends than leaders of different ethnicities. The risk that must be borne when choosing a leader of a different ethnicity will last throughout the leader’s term of office. The risk is obtained when the individual regrets the decision that has been taken. Accepting activities organized by other ethnic groups has an indeterminate risk. Once the activities of other ethnic groups have been accepted, it will be difficult to try to stop them, especially those that have been going on for a long time. The risk of befriending people from other ethnic groups is relatively smaller than others. The risk can be addressed immediately by breaking off the friendship within a short period of time.

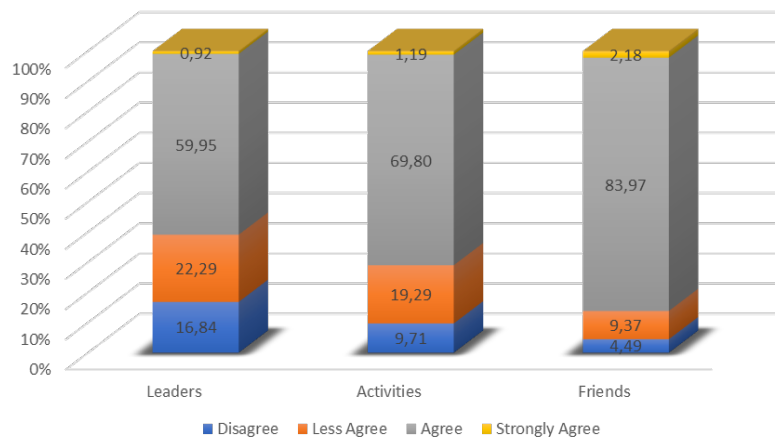


Figure 1: Ethnic Tolerance in Indonesia

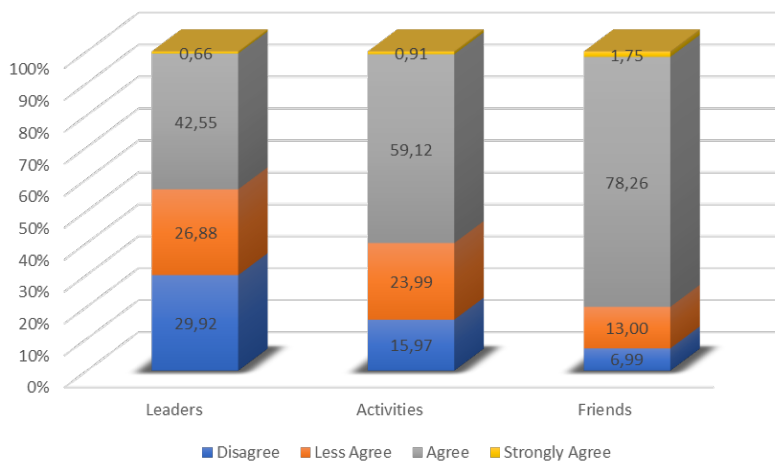


Figure 2: Religious Tolerance in Indonesia

Religious tolerance is measured by individual attitudes towards leaders of different religions, activities of different religions, and friends of different religions. Tolerance towards leaders of different religions is obtained through individual responses to the question “how would you respond if led by a leader (chairman/head) of a different religion or belief?”. Tolerance towards activities of different religions is obtained through individual responses to the question “how would you respond if there were activities in the neighborhood around your house carried out by a group of people of another religion or belief?”. Tolerance towards friends of different religions is obtained through individual responses to the question “how would you respond if a household member was friends with a person of another religion or belief?”. The tolerance of the Indonesian population towards religious differences is relatively lower than tolerance towards ethnic differences. Figure 2 shows that 42.55 percent agree to be led by leaders of different religions, 59.12 percent agree if there are activities held by different religions, and 78.26 percent agree if a household member has friends of different religions. This shows that religion is still a strong boundary for Indonesians in accepting differences.

Tabel 1: Ethnic Tolerance According to Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics

Variable	Leaders				Activities				Friends			
	D	LA	A	SA	D	LA	A	SA	D	LA	A	SA
Residence Area												
Rural	20.31	25.19	53.69	0.80	11.86	21.61	65.42	1.11	5.83	11.36	80.74	2.08
Urban	12.27	18.48	68.18	1.07	6.89	16.25	75.57	1.30	2.72	6.76	88.22	2.31
Age												
Productive	16.26	21.63	61.17	0.93	8.85	18.76	71.19	1.21	3.93	8.88	84.95	2.24
Unproductive	18.00	23.61	57.50	0.88	11.44	20.37	67.03	1.16	5.59	10.35	82.01	2.05
Education												
Not Graduated	21.60	25.87	51.86	0.67	13.45	22.00	63.63	0.92	6.80	12.10	79.40	1.71
Elementary Education	17.93	23.93	57.37	0.77	10.50	20.93	67.51	1.07	5.05	10.39	82.63	1.94
Secondary Education	13.72	19.03	66.09	1.17	7.20	16.75	74.72	1.33	2.77	7.08	87.65	2.50
High Education	10.71	16.26	71.63	1.40	5.36	13.04	79.67	1.93	1.87	5.32	89.46	3.35
Interaction With Others												
Not Interacting	31.29	33.41	35.06	0.25	20.10	33.15	46.36	0.40	10.96	19.55	68.96	0.54
Interacting	9.72	16.81	72.22	1.25	4.59	12.46	81.37	1.58	1.30	4.35	91.37	2.98
Poverty Status												
Not Poor	16.47	21.99	60.62	0.92	9.40	19.03	70.37	1.20	4.33	9.16	84.32	2.19
Poor	20.74	25.43	52.98	0.85	12.90	22.07	63.93	1.09	6.12	11.52	80.34	2.02
Working Status												
Not Working	15.89	21.23	62.02	0.85	10.64	17.51	70.77	1.08	5.03	9.31	83.79	1.87
Working	16.97	22.43	59.68	0.93	9.59	19.53	69.68	1.21	4.41	9.38	83.99	2.22

Note: D (Disagree), LA (Less Agree), A (Agree), SA (Strongly Agree)

Table 1. shows that people living in rural and urban areas, all ages, all levels of education, poor or non-poor, employed or unemployed, still have relatively high tolerance in accepting leaders, activities, and friends of different ethnicities. Individuals who have never interacted with others of different religions/ethnicities are less likely to accept leaders of different ethnicities and activities of different ethnicities. Table 2. shows that tolerance in accepting friends of different religions is relatively high for individuals who live anywhere, all ages, all levels of education, working or not working, poor or not poor, and interacting or not interacting with other people of different religions/nationalities. Individuals who have

never interacted with others of different religions/ethnicities have low tolerance in accepting activities from other religions. Individuals who interact with others of different religions/ethnicities have high tolerance in accepting leaders of different religions.

Table 2: Religious Tolerance According to Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics

Variable	Leaders				Activities				Friends			
	D	LA	A	SA	D	LA	A	SA	D	LA	A	SA
Residence Area												
Rural	20.31	25.19	53.69	0.80	11.86	21.61	65.42	1.11	5.83	11.36	80.74	2.08
Urban	12.27	18.48	68.18	1.07	6.89	16.25	75.57	1.30	2.72	6.76	88.22	2.31
Age												
Productive	16.26	21.63	61.17	0.93	8.85	18.76	71.19	1.21	3.93	8.88	84.95	2.24
Unproductive	18.00	23.61	57.50	0.88	11.44	20.37	67.03	1.16	5.59	10.35	82.01	2.05
Education												
Not Graduated	21.60	25.87	51.86	0.67	13.45	22.00	63.63	0.92	6.80	12.10	79.40	1.71
Elementary Education	17.93	23.93	57.37	0.77	10.50	20.93	67.51	1.07	5.05	10.39	82.63	1.94
Secondary Education	13.72	19.03	66.09	1.17	7.20	16.75	74.72	1.33	2.77	7.08	87.65	2.50
High Education	10.71	16.26	71.63	1.40	5.36	13.04	79.67	1.93	1.87	5.32	89.46	3.35
Interaction With Others												
Not Interacting	31.29	33.41	35.06	0.25	20.10	33.15	46.36	0.40	10.96	19.55	68.96	0.54
Interacting	9.72	16.81	72.22	1.25	4.59	12.46	81.37	1.58	1.30	4.35	91.37	2.98
Poverty Status												
Not Poor	16.47	21.99	60.62	0.92	9.40	19.03	70.37	1.20	4.33	9.16	84.32	2.19
Poor	20.74	25.43	52.98	0.85	12.90	22.07	63.93	1.09	6.12	11.52	80.34	2.02
Working Status												
Not Working	15.89	21.23	62.02	0.85	10.64	17.51	70.77	1.08	5.03	9.31	83.79	1.87
Working	16.97	22.43	59.68	0.93	9.59	19.53	69.68	1.21	4.41	9.38	83.99	2.22

Note: D (Disagree), LA (Less Agree), A (Agree), SA (Strongly Agree)

Table 3. shows that people living in urban areas tend to be more accepting of leaders, activities, and friends of different religions and ethnicities. This result is consistent with the study of [Nizah et al. \(2017\)](#) and [McIntosh et al. \(1995\)](#) which shows that living in urban areas makes individuals more tolerant of other ethnic groups than those living in rural areas. [Hadi et al. \(2017\)](#) also shows that by living in urban areas, individuals are more tolerant of other religions than those living in rural areas. Living in the city makes people more motivated to coexist because of the heterogeneous life there.

Older the individual, higher the tendency to accept leaders of different religions and ethnicities. [Verkuyten & Killen \(2021\)](#) state that tolerant and intolerant can occur at any age. [Hodson et al. \(1994\)](#) in Yugoslavia and [McIntosh et al. \(1995\)](#) in Rumania and Bulgaria showed that the older the age of the individual makes his tolerance attitude higher towards different nationalities/ethnicities. With age, individuals have various insights related to ethnic differences and how to behave in dealing with these differences. Age does not statistically effect on individual tolerance in accepting activities and friends of different ethnic groups. Young people today have easy access to information through the media, but are also easily provoked by false news, so they are easily influenced to be intolerant of other cultures or religions. This is supported by the survey results of the *Centre for Strategic and International Studies* (CSIS) by [Okthariza, 2017](#) which showed that 58.02 percent of Indonesia's young generation rejected being led by leaders of different religions.

Table 3: Tolerance Regression Results

Tolerance (Disagree=1)	Different Ethnicity			Different Religions		
	Leaders	Activities	Friends	Leaders	Activities	Friends
Residence Area (Urban=1)	0.417*** (0.0162)	0.284*** (0.0177)	0.345*** (0.0225)	0.194*** (0.0147)	0.336*** (0.0160)	0.412*** (0.0200)
Age	0.00161** (0.000631)	-0.000877 (0.000689)	0,0000385 (0.000857)	0.00253*** (0.000579)	0.000666 (0.000624)	-0.00106 (0.000762)
Education (Not Graduate=1)	0.118*** (0.00960)	0.113*** (0.0105)	0.147*** (0.0134)	0.109*** (0.00869)	0.149*** (0.00947)	0.136*** (0.0118)
Interaction With Others (Interacting=1)	1.502*** (0.0160)	1.633*** (0.0173)	1.910*** (0.0236)	1.149*** (0.0151)	1.370*** (0.0158)	1.605*** (0.0195)
Poverty Status (Poor=1)	-0.0689*** (0.0260)	-0.0831*** (0.0281)	-0.0396 (0.0347)	0.0917*** (0.0247)	0.0152 (0.0260)	0.0645** (0.0315)
Working Status (Working=1)	-0.106*** (0.0259)	-0.0935*** (0.0282)	-0.00163 (0.0345)	-0.0210 (0.0235)	-0.0542** (0.0255)	0.0455 (0.0307)
/cut1	-0.382*** (0.0543)	-1.182*** (0.0597)	-1.750*** (0.0744)	0.293*** (0.0497)	-0.460*** (0.0537)	-1.347*** (0.0659)
/cut2	0.934*** (0.0544)	0.314*** (0.0593)	-0.414*** (0.0732)	1.513*** (0.0500)	0.938*** (0.0538)	-0.0356 (0.0652)
/cut3	6.369*** (0.0673)	6.024*** (0.0691)	5.912*** (0.0804)	6.369*** (0.0675)	6.295*** (0.0668)	5.864*** (0.0728)
Observation	74,701	74,701	74,701	74,701	74,701	74,701

Note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The results presented in Table 3 also show that higher level of education, individuals tend to be more accepting of leaders, activities, and friends of different ethnic groups. [Hazama \(2014\)](#) showed that the higher the level of education in 29 European democracies, the higher the awareness to tolerate other ethnic groups. [Hadi et al. \(2017\)](#) showed that the higher the level of education in Indonesia, the awareness to tolerate other religions will increase. [Roth & Sumarto \(2015\)](#) also showed the results of their research that education can influence tolerance towards people of different religions or ethnicities towards a more positive direction.

Individuals who interact with others of different religions/ethnicities tend to be more accepting of leaders, activities, and friends of different religions or ethnicities. More often individuals interact with other people, more tolerant they are of ethnic differences ([Hazama, 2014](#)). Social interaction can increase tolerance and harmonization of social life between religious communities in Indonesia ([Aras & Gunawan, 2019](#)). The intensity of communication with other people of different religions/ethnicities makes a person able to recognize differences and know how to behave and respect these differences. The increased tendency when one interacts with others to tolerate friends of different religions/ethnicities is greater than tolerance towards leaders or activities of different religions/ethnicities. This is consistent with the fact that in Indonesia, people interact more with people around them, such as friends and family.

Poor status makes individuals less likely to accept leaders and activities of different ethnicities. [Hazama \(2014\)](#) study shows that the higher the economic status of individual, the higher the tolerance attitude. Individuals who have a high economic status are more often interact with other people of different religions or ethnicities in terms of business. This has resulted in a growing attitude of tolerance towards different ethnic groups to maintain good relations with their business partners. In contrast to its effect on ethnic tolerance, poor status actually makes individuals more likely to accept leaders and friends of different religions. [Albana](#)

& Izazy (2022) shows that individuals who are poor are more tolerant of other religions. Poor status according to Albana & Izazy (2022) is the status given to individuals who are recipients of *Program Keluarga Harapan* (PKH) provided by the government to help alleviate poverty in Indonesia. In this study, households are poor if their per capita expenditure is below the poverty line, which in turn becomes the target of government assistance recipients. The majority of government aid recipients do not have jobs so they can use their time to be more religious and respect religious differences.

Working individuals are less likely to accept leaders and activities of different ethnicities and activities of different religions. This can be due to the busyness of individuals at work, which reduces the opportunity to communicate with others in the household and around the place of residence. The lack of opportunities to interact with other people makes individuals unable to accept the existence of other cultures, be it leaders, activities or friendships with people of different ethnicities. The study of de Vaus & McAllister (1987) shows that individuals who are more religious have a higher tolerance for religion. They also stated that those who are unemployed or not working are more religious because they spend more time worshipping. Individuals who work are preoccupied with their work activities and have less time to worship more so that their religious tolerance is also reduced.

Conclusion

Indonesia is a country with a friendly and tolerant society. High tolerance can increase economic growth, regional economic productivity, and technological performance. Based on the research results, there are several indicators of the determinants of tolerance in Indonesia. Residence area, education, and interaction with others are the main indicators of tolerance towards leaders, activities and friends of different religions/ethnicities. Age is the main indicator of tolerance towards leaders of different religions/ethnicities. Poverty status is the main indicator of tolerance towards leaders of different religions/ethnic groups, activities of different ethnic groups, and friends of different religions. Working status is a key indicator of tolerance towards leaders of different ethnicities, and activities of different religions/ethnicities.

Individuals who live in urban areas, have a higher level of education, are older, and interact with others tend to be more tolerant in accepting religions/ethnicities differences. Status poor makes individuals tend to be tolerant to ethnic differences, but tend to be intolerant of religious differences. Working individuals tend to be intolerant of religious/ethnic differences. Education can be used as a medium by the government to improve relations between the majority and the minority, thus achieving a high level of tolerance in religion and ethnicity. The government can create a program that can increase the interaction of people of different religions/ethnicity to get them used to respecting different religion/ethnicity. The government can also make policies related to public welfare to increase tolerance. The policy can be in the form of setting fewer working hours so that communication or interaction with other people is more frequent. Another policy that can be made is to provide social assistance to those who have low incomes so that they do not have to increase their working hours and can spend more time interacting with others around their place of residence.

Researchers realize that nothing is perfect, including this research there are also several limitations. One of the limitations of this study is that the data used is at one point in 2021 where the results cannot explain individual behavior in each period. With these limitations, the results of this study can still be used as anticipation for the next period. Future research can use panel data that can describe conditions in the previous period, current conditions, and predict conditions in the next period. Future research can also examine more general variables such as employment and poverty status.

Declaration

This research is free and does not conflict with the interests of anyone. Data were obtained through a submission mechanism to BPS through the silastik.bps.go.id website and taking data published through the bps.go.id website and then processed using STATA 16.0/MP software. All authors contributed fully to this research, both in obtaining data, processing data, writing, and checking the manuscript. The authors would like to thank BPS for being willing to provide data so that this research could be carried out.

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