

Hadith on Religious Tolerance: A Thematic Study and Its Relevance to Indonesia's Multicultural Society

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Abstract

Tolerance is a crucial issue in Indonesia, given the multicultural nature of its society. It serves as the foundation for harmonious and peaceful coexistence, free from conflict arising from differences. However, not everyone practices it, leading to friction and conflict; therefore, tolerance within the framework of religious moderation is vital. The Hadith of the Prophet as a source of Islamic law thematically teaches tolerance that is beneficial to the Indonesian nation. This study aims to examine relevant Hadiths regarding religious tolerance through a thematic approach, interpret their content, and link them to Indonesia's multicultural context, as well as their practical implications for society and policymakers. The research employs a library research methodology (literature review) focusing on written documents concerning Hadiths on religious tolerance, their thematic connections, and their implications for Indonesian society. The findings reveal that while the Hadiths do not explicitly use the modern term "religious tolerance," their content demonstrates principles of tolerance both textual and practical such as Compassion and empathy, Prioritizing the public interest and welfare, Universality in ethics, Protection of minorities, Balance between belief and freedom. Relevance to Indonesia's multicultural Society: Religious legitimization of plurality, prevention of local conflict, conflict resolution, and the ethical basis for public policy.

Keywords: Hadith, tolerance, religious, thematic, multicultural

INTRODUCTION

As a highly diverse multicultural nation, Indonesia relies on its national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), as the socio-ideological foundation to bind various ethnic and religious groups into a cohesive national identity. However, deep-seated cultural and religious diversity acts as a double-edged sword; if mismanaged, these differences frequently trigger social friction, structural intolerance, and horizontal conflicts that threaten national stability (Polhaupessy et al., 2025). In a pluralistic society, maintaining communal harmony requires more than passive coexistence; it demands the active cultivation of religious tolerance across all levels of society (Falah, 2025). When cultural and religious frictions occur at the grassroots level, they highlight the ongoing challenges of preserving national unity amidst shifting political and social dynamics.

In the context of Islamic philosophy, tolerance is not merely the passive endurance of differences, but a proactive stance of mutual respect, magnanimity, and the protection of fundamental human rights within daily social interactions (Hajar, 2024). Islamic textual traditions provide a robust framework for this behavior, positioning pluralism as an intentional divine design that requires humans to foster mutual understanding

(Saifullah & Hidayat, 2023). Prophetic traditions (*hadith*) serve as the secondary foundational source in Islam, offering practical guidelines for translating scriptural mandates into actionable social ethics (Ceputri, 2025). Consequently, deriving contemporary social principles from these classical texts remains vital for building a harmonious society.

Recent Islamic scholarship has increasingly examined these principles to address modern pluralism in Indonesia through various methodological lenses. One major research focus involves textual validation and transmission analysis; scholars have prioritized evaluating the chains of transmission (*sanad*) and textual integrity (*matan*) of tolerance-related accounts to ensure their authenticity (Hajar, 2024; Muhyi, 2024). Concurrently, other researchers focus on contextual reconstructions, applying inclusive and functional interpretations to prophetic texts to counter radical misinterpretations and strengthen social cohesion (Falah, 2025; Jendri, 2025). Furthermore, broad thematic explorations have successfully established the Prophet Muhammad's historical precedents, such as the Charter of Medina, as benchmarks for cross-religious kindness and peaceful coexistence (Abdillah, 2025; Munadi et al., 2025; Zaynah, 2025).

Despite these valuable contributions, a significant gap remains in the current literature. Existing studies tend to be polarized: they either focus heavily on isolated textual hermeneutics (e.g., Hajar, 2024; Muhyi, 2024) or offer generalized historical narratives of prophetic behavior without addressing modern structural challenges (e.g., Falah, 2025; Zaynah, 2025). There is a lack of research that systematically synthesizes these verified prophetic texts into a practical, policy-oriented framework capable of resolving contemporary socio-legal and religious tensions in Indonesia (Prayitno, 2025). Consequently, communities and policymakers lack an integrated theological reference that directly connects authenticated scriptural mandates with the practical demands of modern religious moderation.

This study addresses this gap by conducting a rigorous thematic (*maudhu'i*) analysis of selected prophetic traditions that explicitly govern interfaith relations and religious tolerance. Moving beyond simple textual description, this research systematically decodes the core messages of these texts and analyzes their relevance to Indonesia's current multicultural dynamics. By bridging classical Islamic textual authority with contemporary social realities, this study develops an actionable framework for religious moderation. The findings provide conceptual insights and practical guidance for educators, community leaders, and policymakers looking to build durable moral resilience and social harmony.

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative library research design utilizing the thematic hadith analysis (*maudhu'i*) approach. Rather than merely collecting and describing existing literature, this design systematically identifies, gathers, and analyzes specific prophetic traditions (*hadith*) centered on a singular theme. In this study, the framework was operationalized to examine the concept of interfaith tolerance and its theological and practical alignment with the multicultural realities of contemporary Indonesian society.

Data collection relied on both primary scriptural sources and secondary academic literature retrieved from reputable digital repositories. The primary data consisted of canonical Islamic text repositories, specifically the *Kutub al-Sittah* (the six major hadith compilations) with a primary focus on *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*, accessed through the *al-Maktabah al-Shamilah* digital library. To complement these foundational texts, secondary literature was gathered from academic databases including Scopus, Google Scholar, and SINTA (Science and Technology Index) by executing advanced search queries with specific keywords and Boolean operators, namely ("hadith study" OR "tafsir maudhu'i") AND ("religious tolerance" OR "interfaith relations") AND ("multiculturalism" OR "Indonesia").

To ensure analytical rigor, explicit eligibility boundaries were applied during the literature selection process. The inclusion criteria required that primary hadith texts explicitly address interfaith interactions, pluralism, or peaceful coexistence, and that secondary peer-reviewed journal articles were published between 2016 and 2026 to capture contemporary dynamics of Indonesian tolerance in English, Indonesian, or Arabic full-text formats. Conversely, the exclusion criteria filtered out non-peer-reviewed sources such as personal blogs, popular opinion pieces, mass media news, and standalone abstracts. Additionally, hadith literature focusing strictly on internal Islamic jurisprudential rituals (*ibadah*) or isolated historical narratives without relevance to social ethics was excluded from the final dataset.

Data analysis was executed through a structured, multi-phased thematic (*maudhu'i*) hadith method to synthesize the findings effectively. First, the core concept of religious tolerance (*al-samahah*) was isolated as the central analytical lens for the study. Second, the relevant prophetic traditions were gathered from the canonical collections, and their authenticity was verified based on established chains of transmission (*sanad*) and textual integrity (*matan*). Third, the historical and situational contexts (*asbab al-wurud*) of the selected texts were examined to prevent literalist misinterpretations. Finally, an inductive synthesis was performed by cross-referencing the contextualized meanings of the hadiths with contemporary empirical findings on Indonesian pluralism, thereby generating concrete thematic categories to guide practical religious moderation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thematic Hadith Analysis on Religious Tolerance

A thematic (*maudhu'i*) examination of the foundational prophetic traditions reveals that Islamic textuality positions religious tolerance (*al-samahah*) not as a passive social compromise, but as an active moral imperative. The analyzed text corpuses can be synthesized into four distinct theological dimensions.

1. Compassion and Empathy as the Baseline of Human Interaction

The primary framework for interpersonal ethics in Islam is anchored in universal empathy. This principle is explicitly commanded in a highly authenticated narrative transmitted by Anas ibn Malik:

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ

"None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself." (HR. Al-Bukhari No. 13; Muslim No. 45).

While classical literalist interpretations occasionally restrict the term "brother" (*akhihi*) to fellow Muslims, a contextual, inclusive reading extends this mandate to global human fraternity. Empathy and compassion are divine endowments that leave no theological justification for systemic hatred.

This universalist ethical standard is exemplified in *Sahih Muslim* No. 1593, which records the Prophet Muhammad standing up out of respect when a non-Muslim funeral procession passed before him. When questioned by his companions, the Prophet replied by validating the deceased's shared humanity. This gesture demonstrates that religious differences do not negate human dignity (Hajar, 2024). Consequently, these narratives establish a high moral standard that requires Muslims to treat all individuals with active compassion, regardless of their theological affiliations.

2. Prioritizing Public Welfare and Social Utility

The secondary dimension of prophetic tolerance emphasizes active contribution to the collective good. This utilitarian altruism is captured in a narrative recorded by Abdullah ibn Umar:

أَحَبُّ النَّاسِ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى أَتَمُّهُمْ لِلنَّاسِ

"The most beloved of people to Allah are those who are most beneficial to people." (HR. At-Thabrani No. 6026).

By using the universal noun "people" (*al-nas*) rather than a restrictive sectarian identifier, the tradition establishes that social utility must transcend religious boundaries. The text encourages a proactive social ethics where individuals strive to alleviate human suffering such as feeding the hungry, relieving financial distress, and generating communal welfare without discriminating based on faith background. This paradigm transitions tolerance from mere peaceful coexistence to active, collaborative social engagement.

3. Institutional Safeguards and the Protection of Non-Muslim Citizens

The political and legal operationalization of religious tolerance in early Islam is preserved in the Charter of Medina (*Shahifah Madinah*). This historical treaty established a multi-religious coalition where non-Muslim factions (*Ahl al-Dzimmah*) received comprehensive civil protection and legal equality (Hemawati et al., 2022). The gravity of maintaining these interfaith covenants is underscored in *Sahih Muslim* No. 1366:

وَذِمَّةُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَاحِدَةٌ يَسْعَى بِهَا أَذْنَاہُمْ فَمَنْ أَحْفَرَ مُسْلِمًا فَعَلَيْهِ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ لَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ صَرْفٌ وَلَا عَدْلٌ

"The protection of Muslims is one, which applies to the least of them. Whoever breaks the covenant of a Muslim, upon him is the curse of Allah, the angels, and all of mankind; neither mandatory nor optional deeds will be accepted from him on the Day of Resurrection."

This text establishes a strict legal mechanism against majoritarian tyranny or the oppression of religious minorities. The prophetic decree treats an assault on the civil rights of a protected non-Muslim citizen as a severe breach of religious covenant. In the contemporary context, these principles provide a normative framework for pluralistic nations, emphasizing that minority protections are non-negotiable obligations (Zaynah, 2025). Authentic texts in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* systematically reject religious coercion, structural violence, and sectarian denigration, substituting them with institutionalized principles of justice and security for all citizens (Muhyi, 2024).

4. Communication Ethics and Gentle Engagement

The final dimension focuses on the discursive methods used within a pluralistic society. Islamic communication ethics mandate gentleness, particularly when discussing sensitive theological matters. This is illustrated in a narrative transmitted by 'Aisyah:

يَا عَائِشَةُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَفِيقٌ حُبُّ الرَّفْقِ وَيُعْطَى عَلَى الرَّفْقِ مَا لَا يُعْطَى عَلَى الْعُنْفِ وَمَا لَا يُعْطَى عَلَى مَا سِوَاهُ

"O 'Aisyah, indeed Allah is gentle and He loves gentleness. He grants upon gentleness that which He does not grant upon harshness, and that which He does not grant upon anything else." (HR. Al-Bukhari No. 6024; Muslim No. 2165).

This instruction establishes a clear boundary against aggressive proselytization or exclusionary discourse. When applied to interfaith interactions, it requires communication to be respectful, courteous, and protective of individual conscience. By rejecting linguistic violence and harshness, the prophetic model provides a practical framework for social interaction within highly pluralistic environments.

In summary, this thematic analysis identifies three core pillars of prophetic tolerance:

- 1) Ethical Universality: Applying moral principles like honesty, justice, and empathy uniformly across religious boundaries.

- 2) Minority Protection: Providing robust civil safeguards for smaller religious communities within a larger social structure.
- 3) Balanced Freedom: Encouraging deep devotion to one's own faith (*aqidah*) while maintaining fair, uncoercive social relations (*muamalah*) with others.

Societal Relevance within Indonesia's Multicultural Fabric

The thematic principles derived from the hadith literature carry direct structural relevance for managing Indonesia's complex multicultural landscape. This contemporary alignment functions across five specific domains.

1. Theological Legitimacy of Pluralism

The inclusive interpretation of prophetic texts provides a necessary theological counter-narrative to extremist and exclusionary ideologies. By illustrating that Islam views diversity as a deliberate divine design, these hadiths offer religious legitimacy to national frameworks like *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution (Jendri, 2025). This alignment bridges the perceived gap between religious devotion and civic responsibility, demonstrating that upholding constitutional pluralism is a fulfillment of prophetic ethics.

2. Grassroots Conflict Prevention

Indonesia's ethnic and religious diversity carries an inherent risk of horizontal conflict driven by ethno-religious sentiments (SARA). The application of hadith principles regarding justice and empathy serves as a normative tool for local conflict resolution. By prioritizing verified scriptural mandates over exclusionary cultural biases, local communities can dismantle negative stereotypes and de-escalate tensions before they manifest as sectarian violence.

3. Structural Integration in Islamic Education

To achieve sustainable conflict resolution, these thematic traditions must be structurally integrated into mainstream curricula, particularly within Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Integrating concepts like *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawasuth* (moderation), *ta'awun* (cooperation), and *tawazun* (balance) can reshape how students view diversity (Jannah et al., 2026). This shift helps transform religious education from an exclusive focus on sectarian identity toward an inclusive focus on civic pluralism and human rights.

4. Ethical Foundations for Public Policy

The structural protections outlined in the Charter of Medina offer a historical and ethical framework for contemporary public policy. Policymakers can reference these models to design inclusive legislation, particularly concerning the protection of minority places of worship and equitable access to religious education. State bodies, such as the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB), can utilize these authenticated texts to strengthen the state-sponsored Religious Moderation (*Wasathiyah*) agenda, providing clear theological boundaries against intolerant practices (Prayitno, 2025).

5. Character Development and Active Moderation

Integrating these traditions into character education helps cultivate essential civic virtues: integrity, responsibility, discipline, empathy, tolerance, and respect (Inayah, 2025). By presenting moderation as an active practice rather than a passive stance, educators can foster a generation that combines intellectual capacity with strong ethical standards, capable of navigating multicultural interactions with maturity.

Strategic Frameworks for Daily Implementation

Translating these scriptural and institutional principles into daily social practice requires concrete action across three primary areas of public life.

1. Civic Cooperation and Mutual Aid

The altruistic mandate of the hadith literature can be directly applied through traditional practices of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*). This collective engagement helps counter the growing individualism driven by rapid urbanization and digital spaces (Dewanti & Alhudawi, 2023). Organizing cross-religious social initiatives such as disaster relief, community welfare programs, and environmental projects helps shift the focus from theological differences to shared social responsibilities, building deep communal trust.

2. Countering Public and Digital Discrimination

In the digital era, public squares and social media platforms frequently amplify polarizing rhetoric, hate speech, and discriminatory narratives. Practicing prophetic communication ethics requires an active refusal to engage in or spread digital denigration. Patterned after the Prophet's consensus-building approach in Medina, communities must prioritize dialogic engagement to find common ground and de-escalate online polarization (Hemawati et al., 2022). This involves moving beyond mere passive coexistence to actively defending the public square from sectarian hostility.

3. Safeguarding the Constitutional Right to Worship

A tangible application of religious tolerance involves actively protecting the constitutional right of all citizens to worship freely. This requires local communities to support and protect the sacred spaces of neighboring faiths, in line with constitutional guarantees. Rather than viewing tolerance as a compromise of personal faith (*aqidah*), it must be understood as an essential social ethic (*muamalah*) necessary for preserving human dignity and social harmony (Ceputri, 2025).

Practical Recommendations for Stakeholders

To operationalize these findings, this study proposes five actionable interventions for educators, religious leaders, and policymakers:

1. Curricular Integration: Incorporate thematic hadiths on tolerance and social ethics into the standard curricula of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), public madrasahs, and secular educational institutions, supported by comprehensive teacher-training programs.
2. Moderate Proselytization (*Dakwah*): Shift religious discourse toward narratives that highlight social utility, universal human rights, and the preservation of individual conscience.
3. Protective Public Policy: Strengthen local administrative and legal protections to safeguard freedom of worship and streamline the licensing of minority houses of worship.
4. Value-Driven Interfaith Forums: Facilitate structured interfaith dialogues focused on shared ethical values and practical civic collaboration, rather than static theological debates.
5. Public Religious Literacy: Launch digital literacy campaigns to counter sectarian misinterpretations of scriptural texts and build an inclusive understanding of Islamic social ethics.

CONCLUSION

This thematic hadith study demonstrates that while the explicit modern term "religious tolerance" does not exist within classical prophetic texts, the foundational principles and practical applications of interfaith tolerance are deeply embedded throughout the hadith corpus. These principles manifest as concrete ethical frameworks, universal empathy, social cohesion, communal unity, institutional justice, and legal protections for minority groups, all of which serve the universal public interest (*maslahah*). Consequently, these prophetic paradigms provide a robust normative baseline to strengthen social cohesion and constructively manage diversity within Indonesia's multicultural fabric. To mitigate the inherent risks of

sectarian friction in a pluralistic society, Indonesia requires systematically integrated tolerance education anchored in universal values, protective public policies for all religious groups, and wise, empathetic grassroots social engagement.

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