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EXISTENCE OF STM IN BUILDING INTERRELIGIOUS HARMONY IN THE RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENT OF PARSAORAN

Zulpina¹, and Putra Fadli Harahap²

Abstract: The Serikat Tolong Menolong (STM) is a social association or organization that aims to assist others. This is in line with the principle of *Ta'āwun* from the Islamic perspective, which entails assisting fellow human beings without distinguishing their ethnicity, customs, or culture. The purpose of this paper is to explain the presence of the Mutual Assistance Society (STM) in fostering religious harmony within Pesona Parsaoran Residence based on the principle of *Ta'āwun*. This research adopts a qualitative phenomenological approach. Data was collected through direct observation and interviews with the chairman of the Mutual Assistance Society (STM) in Pesona Parsaoran Residence and several religious figures from Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism. The findings of the research indicate that the presence of the STM in Pesona Parsaoran Residence significantly contributes to building religious harmony within the community. The principle of mutual assistance that underlies the establishment of the Mutual Assistance Society (STM) aligns with the concept of *Ta'āwun* from the Islamic perspective, which emphasizes the importance of humans helping and supporting one another despite their different beliefs. Some forms of activities carried out by the STM include assisting neighbours in times of bereavement, and natural disasters, as well as helping neighbours in times of joy such as birthdays, weddings, religious gatherings, and more.

Keywords: *Serikat Tolong Menolong (STM), Religious Harmony, Mutual Assistance, Parsaoran, Ta'āwun, Cooperation.*

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INTRODUCTION

Harmonization among religious communities is a spiritual necessity for humanity that cannot be separated from a life filled with differences. These differences should not be a barrier to living in harmony, peace, tranquillity, and prosperity within the framework of brotherhood and unity. The awareness of harmonious coexistence among religious communities should be dynamic, humanistic, and democratic so that it can be transformed to reach the grassroots level of society. This ensures that harmony is not only experienced or enjoyed by the privileged (the wealthy), but by all humanity.

The existence of belief and faith in an internalized and integrated religion within an individual does not automatically provide the solution to all life problems. The most fundamental factor is that religion provides a significant meaning to the purpose of human life. To gain a deeper understanding of religion, other aspects are required, including knowledge and philosophy. This serves as the basis to understand religion. Therefore, the most important thing is the openness of one religion toward other religions. When there is a narrow-minded view driven by fanaticism and radicalism, claiming that only a particular religion is the absolute truth, it becomes an obstacle and hindrance in achieving harmony among religious communities.

From the Islamic perspective, the need for religion is inherent in human nature (*fitnah*), meaning that every human being is inclined to worship the One God. This is because human beings inherently tend to seek and accept the truth, and the truth is found through practicing religion, regardless of whether it is Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, or any other religion. Therefore, humans are capable of finding God even if their environment leads them elsewhere.

Each religion has its concepts and teachings for realizing the harmony and harmonization of religious communities, which is one of the foundations in achieving the aspirations of nationhood and statehood. However, in essence, they share the same goal, which is to establish order in society, protect the rights of religious adherents to practice freedom of religion, promote tranquillity and peace in human life, and ensure the welfare of religious communities, as stated in the preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945.

Pesona Parsaoran Residence is one of the residential complexes consisting of diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. The diversity within the community does not lead to debates, fights, or conflicts about religion. Instead, what happens is that all residents of this housing complex live in safety, peace, tranquillity, and prosperity? This is made possible due to the high level of religious awareness and understanding, as well as the presence of an organization or Mutual Assistance Society (STM) that binds everyone together. The STM aims to foster good social relations (*silaturahmi*) and mutual assistance among religious communities.

In Islam, this perspective is referred to as *Ta'āwun*, which means the act of mutual assistance among human beings that arises from a sincere heart and solely seeks the pleasure of Allah, regardless of ethnicity, race, nationality, or religion. The concept of *Ta'āwun* is found in the *Qur'an*, specifically in Surah *Al-Maidah* (verse: 2), *Al-Kahf* (verse: 95), *Al-Furqan* (verse: 4), *Al-Ma'un* (verse: 7), and other surahs. Therefore, the existence of the Mutual Assistance Society (STM) based on the concept of *Ta'āwun* in *Pesona Parsaoran Residence* is crucial to be examined and studied in-depth. It is hoped that this paper can provide meaningful information and lessons for readers in achieving religious harmony in their residential environment.

Some relevant studies to this discussion are Harmonization of Religion and State: Mainstreaming the Values of Religious Moderation In Indonesian Da'wah Orientation yang ditulis oleh Husaini dan Athoillah Islamy pada Jurnal *Al-Adalah*, Theguh Saumantri explained The Harmonization of Religion and The State: A Study of The Indonesia Context In the Journal of Religious Social Studies at UIN Syek Nurjati Cirebon, John Von Heyking conducted research on The Harmonization of Heaven and Earth: Religion, Politics, and Law in Canada, Wildan Insan Fauzi, Murdiah Winarti, Ayi, and Budi Santosa described Islamic Tourism: A Form of Harmonization of Religion, Politics, Social, Culture and Economy pada Proceedings of 3rd International Seminar on Tourism (ISOT 2018), Idrus Ruslan and Muhammad Aqil Irham conducted a study on the Role of cultural literacy and peace education in harmonization of religious communities yang dipublikasikan pada Journal of Social Studies Education Research.

Based on the description above, the author observes the lack of specific studies on the implementation of religious harmony within the framework of the Mutual Assistance Society based on the concept of *Ta'āwun*. Therefore, the author is interested in

conducting a deeper investigation on this topic using a qualitative phenomenological approach. This research was conducted in Pesona Parsaoran Residence, located in Bandar District, Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra Province. Data collection was carried out through direct observation and interviews with the chairman of STM Pesona Parsaoran Residence and several religious figures from Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism. The data obtained will be analysed using a flow model or data flow analysis, involving the steps of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, as shown in the following figure:

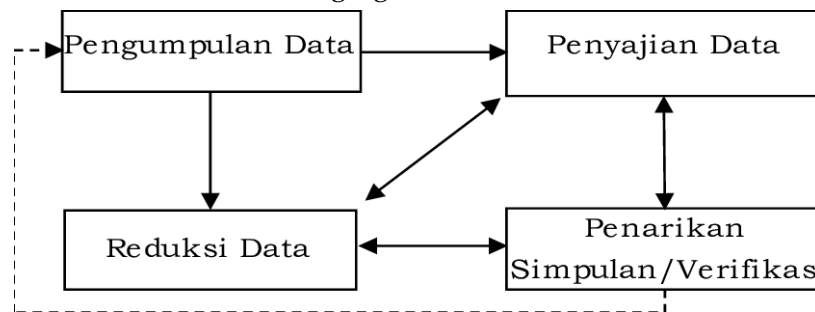


Figure 1: Data Flow Analysis Model (flow model)

Some research findings that will be elaborated in this paper are the existence of the (STM) in Pesona Parsoran Residence, analysis of the principle of *Ta'āwun* in STM Pesona Parsoran Residence, and religious harmony in Pesona Parsoran Residence, Simalungun Regency.

THE EXISTENCE OF THE SERIKAT TOLONG MENOLONG IN PESONA PARSORAN RESIDENCE:

The term "eksistensi" originates from the Latin word "existere," which means existence. Existence is also referred to as understanding. In terms of terminology, "eksistensi" signifies what exists, what has actuality, and everything that explains the fact that something exists. Meanwhile, STM (Serikat Tolong Menolong) is an institution based on the desire for mutual acquaintance, mutual assistance in times of joy and sorrow, and a sense of shared responsibility among its members. The objective is to strengthen the familial bonds among STM members. Regular meetings, active participation in social and cultural activities, and providing assistance are manifestations

of the social nature and spirit towards fellow members, both in terms of moral and material support.

The Serikat Tolong Menolong in Pesona Parsaoran Residence is named STM, which in the Batak language means "one heart." This STM (Islamic Boarding School) was initiated at the end of 2018, initially conceived by several residents living in the housing complex. The idea was then approved, leading to a collective consultation attended by religious figures from Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism. Subsequently, in 2019, the STM was officially established, based on the principles of unity, brotherhood, equality, freedom of expression, mutual assistance, peace, justice, consultation, and piety.

Regarding the rights of each member, they are entitled to receive assistance, attention, and good support while residing in the housing complex. All of these are established to create a comfortable living environment within the residence. As a result, the STM Parsaoran Residence is formed. The details of the regulations and agreements are outlined in the Articles of Association and Household Rules as follows:

ANALYSIS OF THE PRINCIPLE OF TA'ĀWUN IN STM (ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL) IN BUILDING RELIGIOUS HARMONY AT PESONA PARSAORAN RESIDENCE:

The term "Ta'āwun" originates from the Arabic language, derived from the verb which means mutual assistance or mutual cooperation. Ibn Haldon and Aristotle state that humans are social beings who cannot live without the help of others. Islam strongly encourages its followers to constantly cultivate a spirit of mutual assistance and support, both towards fellow Muslims and non-Muslims. This is because mutual help and cooperation foster a sense of compassion. In a hadith, it is stated:

"ارحموا من فى الارض يرحمكم من فى السماء"¹

This means that you should show love and compassion to everyone on earth, and in turn, everything in the heavens will show love and compassion towards you. The hadith commands humanity to show love and compassion towards one another, including towards fellow humans, animals, and plants that exist on the face of this earth. By doing

¹ Al-Tirmidhī, Al-Sunan (Al-Riyadh: Darussalam, 1999), Hadith# 1924.

so, love and affection from Allah and His angels emerge. *Ta'āwun* or mutual assistance is one of the attitudes that can foster mutual understanding, love, and compassion.

It is narrated in the book *Nashaihlul 'Ibad* by Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani that once Imam al-Ghazali had a dream in which he met someone who asked him about the provisions he would bring to meet Allah. Imam al-Ghazali then answered by explaining all the worship he had performed throughout his life in this world. However, Allah rejected all of that, except for one act of kindness that he had done to a fly, and it was because of that fly that Imam al-Ghazali was granted entry into Paradise. It turned out that at one time, Imam al-Ghazali was busy writing his works when a fly landed on the inkwell he was using. Observing this, Imam al-Ghazali remained silent and allowed the thirsty fly to drink its fill of ink. From the description above, it can be concluded that acts of goodness will bring about compassion and surely receive recompense from the Most Merciful. No matter how small the act of kindness may be, it never escapes His sight even for a moment.

Assisting one another is a noble characteristic. Helping someone in distress is a commandment that holds the value of a prayer, for it is mentioned in a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Whoever relieves a believer's distress from the distresses of this world, Allah will relieve him of a distress from the distresses of the Hereafter."

The concept of *Ta'āwun* in Islam is divided into six types. First, *Ta'āwun* in virtue and piety encompasses universal virtues (*al-birr*) within the scope of wholehearted obedience. Second, *Ta'āwun* takes the form of loyalty to fellow Muslims, acknowledging that fundamentally every Muslim is a brother or sister. Third, *Ta'āwun* focuses on strengthening the foundations of communal living and mutual protection. Fourth, *Ta'āwun* involves efforts towards unity or solidarity based on goodness and piety. Fifth, *Ta'āwun* takes the form of mutual support in truth and patience, which entails making commitments to achieve excellence and loyalty in the context of enjoining good and forbidding evil. Sixth, the benefits of *Ta'āwun* in goodness and piety include alleviating the hardships of the Muslim ummah, concealing faults, facilitating their affairs, assisting them against oppressors, and so on.

The *Quran* related to this matter in Surah *Al-Hujurat* (verse: 13), which states:

"يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ"

"O mankind! Indeed, we have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you."

In the concept of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic Brotherhood), the term "*lita'ārafū*" in the above verse does not only stop there, but it involves several stages or processes that an individual must go through to reach the stage of *Ta'āwun*, namely *ta'aruf* (getting to know each other), *tafahum* (mutual understanding), *Ta'āwun* (mutual assistance), *takaful* (sharing burdens), and *ithār* (prioritizing others over oneself). *Ta'aruf* is the initial process carried out when meeting someone new, while *tafahum* arises when both parties have already become acquainted with each other's characters, hobbies, habits, occupations, and so on. When a sense of *tafahum* is established, it will progress to *Ta'āwun*, where individuals mutually assist, depend on, and care for one another.

After reaching this stage, the sense of brotherhood will elevate to the next stage, namely *takaful*, as expressed in the proverb "a burden shared is a burden halved" and "your sadness is my sadness, your wounds are my wounds". As for the final stage, it is *ithār*, which is the highest stage in this process, and not everyone reaches it except for those who believe and are pious. In the hadith, it is explained that "none of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself". Fundamentally, humans are created from the same elemental occurrence, which is clay. What distinguishes them before their Lord is their piety, not the noblest tribe, *qabilah* lineage, or Bani lineage.

Based on the description above, the concept or principle of "*Ta'āwun*" (mutual cooperation) is highly relevant and holds potential in creating religious harmony and unity through the individual piety of each person. Every religion, be it Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and others, encourages their followers to have faith and piety in what they believe. The higher the level of piety a person possesses, the greater the opportunity to create a peaceful, tranquil, and prosperous life, thereby realizing harmonious religious living. This is because religion teaches us to always spread goodness instead of committing evil. Religion encourages mutual assistance and care for one another, rather than fostering antisocial behaviour as individuals.

RELIGIOUS HARMONY IN PESONA PARSAORAN RESIDENCE, SIMALUNGUN REGENCY:

Building harmonization among religious communities is an essential task for followers of religions to install a sense of brotherhood and kinship within society. The diversity of ethnicities, races, cultures, and religions in the world is inherent to human nature, as described in Surah *Al-Hujurat* (verse: 13). The diversity of ethnicities and religions present in Pesona Parsaoran Residence is not a factor that leads to conflicts or disputes within the community. Instead, this diversity teaches residents to uphold the values of their respective religions and beliefs. The application of attitudes such as mutual respect, mutual esteem, and mutual assistance within this residential area fosters a safe, peaceful, tranquil, and prosperous communal life.

Harmonization is the manifestation of a religious moderate attitude, which in Islam is referred to as "*wasatiyyah*" (the middle path). In terminology, "*wasatiyyah*" is defined as the balance of faith, morality, and character within the social and political order. Moderatism is closely related to justice, especially in its tendency to find a middle ground between extremes; a point of convergence that ensures harmony in society. By deeply understanding the meaning of religious moderation, a safe, peaceful, tranquil, and prosperous communal life can be realized.¹ The understanding of religious moderation and the values of harmony serve as the foundation for the residents of Pesona Parsaoran in creating a harmonious life.

The Established Serikat Tolong Menolong in Pesona Parsaoran Residence has a significant impact on creating a harmonious religious life. This influence cannot be separated from the principles explicitly stated in the aforementioned Mutual Aid Society, including principles of unity and brotherhood, equality, freedom of expression, mutual assistance, peace, justice, consultation, and piety. Hal ini sesuai dengan pendapat Fathoni Ahmad yang menjelaskan bahwa untuk menciptakan kerukunan umat beragama dapat dilakukan dengan cara-cara sebagai berikut. *Firstly*, mutual empathy, respect, and tolerance among individuals of different religions. *Secondly*, refraining from imposing a specific religion on someone. *Thirdly*, practicing religious rituals according

¹ Saibatul Hamdi, Munawarah Munawarah, and Hamidah Hamidah, "Revitalisasi Syiar Moderasi Beragama Di Media Sosial: Gaungkan Konten Moderasi Untuk Membangun Harmonisasi," *Intizar* 27, no. 1 (2021): 1-15.

to one's own faith. Lastly, adhering to religious regulations, both within one's religion and the laws of the country or government.¹

The understanding and awareness of the community regarding the importance of maintaining unity, respecting one another, and mutual respect and assistance are manifestations of the values of religious moderation. As described by Husaini and Islami, religious moderation, understood as a model of religious attitude that adopts a middle and balanced approach, avoiding extremism and excess, has been advocated by the Quran.² The principle of Ta'āwun or mutual assistance implemented in STM Saroha is realized through various activities such as accident assistance, reception or celebration assistance, and other social aid. This leads to the cultivation of a loving and caring attitude among members, as explained by Nopi Hariani, where the attitude of Ta'āwun can strengthen love and affection towards others while keeping away from slander. Their goodness is always remembered by others, honored by Allah, and valued by others.³

CONCLUSION

The presence of Serikat Tolong Menolong (STM) within the Pesona Parsaoran Residence exerts a profound impact on fostering a harmonious, tranquil, and spiritually rich religious life. Rooted in the core principle of Ta'āwun, or mutual assistance, STM members have effectively molded the community into conscientious, socially-engaged individuals who ardently uphold their diverse religious convictions and beliefs. The spirit of collective support and cooperation permeates the very fabric of this community, leading to not only stronger bonds among its members but also a collective dedication to nurturing a pluralistic, inclusive, and harmonious religious environment that thrives on mutual respect and understanding. In sum, STM stands as a beacon of unity and spirituality in Pesona Parsaoran Residence.

¹ Fathoni Ahmad, "Mewujudkan Harmonisasi Umat Beragama," NU Online, n.d.

² Husaini Husaini and Athoillah Islami, "Harmonization of Religion and State: Mainstreaming the Values of Religious Moderation In Indonesian Da'wah Orientation," *Al-Adalah: Jurnal Hukum Dan Politik Islam* 7, no. 1 (2022): 51-73.

³ Nopi Hariani, "Ta'aruf Dan Ta'awun Dalam AL-Qur'an," 2019.

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