

***Tasāmuh* in Interreligious Coexistence: An Analytical Study of Islamic Ethics and Communicative Action in a Multireligious Society**

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Abstract

Studies of interreligious tasāmuh in Indonesia have predominantly focused on structural and institutional dimensions, including state policies, majority-minority relations, and the role of religious organizations. Meanwhile, the everyday communicative processes through which tasāmuh is constructed, negotiated, and sustained within local communities remain insufficiently explored. This study aims to analyze tasāmuh as an Islamic ethical framework for interreligious coexistence through communicative action within multireligious community of Plajan Village. Employing an interdisciplinary qualitative approach, this study was conducted through field research in Plajan Village, Jepara, a multireligious village officially recognized as both a Pancasila Village and a Religious Tolerance Village. Data were collected through participant observation, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that tasāmuh in Plajan Village is not emerge as a

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passive social condition but is continuously produced through five interconnected communicative practices grounded in Islamic ethics. Dialogical communication fosters ta'aruf (mutual understanding and familiarity), deliberation promotes ta'ayush (peaceful coexistence), social consensus generates ta'awun (cooperation), non-dominating communication reflects 'adl (justice), and the public sphere fosters rahmah (care and social empathy). These findings demonstrate that communicative action not only fosters rational mutual understanding but also cultivates the ethical dimension of tasamuh that sustain multireligious coexistence. The contribution of this study lies in conceptualizing tasamuh as an Islamic ethical framework that extends beyond conceptual level and is concretely manifested communicative processes in everyday multireligious life.

Keywords: *Communicative Action; Multireligious Society; Plajan Village; Public Sphere; Religious Tolerance.*

Introduction

Indonesia is characterized by remarkable religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity. With 17,001 islands and 1,340 ethnic groups,¹ Indonesia is often described as a country of “mega-cultural diversity,” with 718 regional languages.² Within this complex plural setting, interreligious tolerance is not merely a moral value but an essential condition for sustaining peaceful and dignified coexistence. Samuel Huntington warned that civilizational and religious differences could become major sources of conflict in the twenty-first century, underscoring the importance of cultivating and sustaining tolerance.³ From an Islamic perspective, religious difference can be understood through the concept of *tasamuh*, referring to an attitude of mutual respect and openness toward adherents of other religions without requiring individuals to

¹ Statistics Indonesia (BPS), Kepulauan Indonesia, 2023 data, records 17,001 islands; Statistics Indonesia, 2010 Population Census, records 1,340 ethnic groups in Indonesia, accessed via <https://www.bps.go.id>.

² Agency for Language Development and Cultivation, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education of the Republic of Indonesia, Peta Bahasa, data as of February 2026, records 718 regional languages in Indonesia, accessed via <https://petabahasa.kemdikbud.go.id>.

³ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 28.

alter or abandon their own beliefs. In Islam, *tasāmuh* is grounded in theological principles associated with *tanḥīd*, the *Shariʿah*, and prophetic teachings. It also provides an ethical basis for establishing constructive relations with followers of other religions.⁴ Thus, Indonesia's diverse society requires more than tolerance as a means of coexistence; it also requires an ethical foundation capable of safeguarding each community's convictions while respecting other religious groups.

Religious tolerance in Indonesia continues to face evolving challenges amid political, social, and digital dynamics. Indonesia has a long tradition of social harmony rooted in local wisdom and the philosophy of Pancasila.⁵ Nevertheless, incidents of intolerance, discrimination, and interreligious friction continue to occur in various regions.⁶ These tensions demonstrate that tolerance is not a static condition but the outcome of ongoing communication and social negotiation. The concept of *tasāmuh* provides an ethical foundation for Muslims to establish social relations that respect religious and doctrinal differences. From a communication perspective, meanwhile, the theory of communicative action can be used to explain how mutual understanding between groups is developed through communication that is equal, rational, open, free from coercion, and oriented toward shared understanding and consensus.⁷ The public sphere, as an arena for communication

⁴ Ahmad Faizuddin Ramli and Mohamed Ashath, "A Theological Comparative Exploration of Tolerance in Islam and Buddhism," *Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 27, no. 2 (December 31, 2025): 39–68, <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.vol27no2.2>.

⁵ Hadi Pajarianto, Imam Pribadi, and Puspa Sari, "Tolerance between Religions through the Role of Local Wisdom and Religious Moderation," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 78, no. 4 (January 1, 2022): a7043, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7043>.

⁶ Muhammad Lukman Hakim, Indah Dwi Qurbani, and Abdul Wahid, "A Paradox between Religious Conviction and Recognizing the Freedom of Others on Measuring Religious (in) Tolerance Index in East Java, Indonesia," *Cogent Social Sciences* 9, no. 1 (December 31, 2023): 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2191443>.

⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, vol. 1 (Boston: Beacon press, 1984), 8.

across differences, plays a crucial role in shaping social consensus that enables the peaceful coexistence of diverse religious groups.⁸ This study conceptualizes *tasāmuḥ* within Islamic ethics as the principal normative foundation for understanding interreligious tolerance. The theory of communicative action is then employed as an analytical framework to explain how interreligious relationships, dialogue, and mutual understanding are constructed and sustained in a multireligious society.

Plajan Village in Pakis Aji District, Jepara Regency, Central Java, provides a valuable setting for in-depth study. The village is home to a multireligious population comprising Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists, who have maintained social harmony for decades through everyday interaction, shared traditions, and locally developed mechanisms of interreligious communication.⁹ In recognition of its interreligious harmony, Plajan has officially been designated a Pancasila Village and a Religious Tolerance Village. This recognition makes Plajan not only a source of local pride but also a relevant case for scholarly examination as a reference for other areas confronting similar challenges in managing religious diversity.¹⁰ Plajan's recognition for its harmonious interreligious relations has been further strengthened by government recognition. Through its Center for Religious Harmony, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has designated Plajan as a Religious Harmony Awareness Village and positioned it as a model for strengthening harmony at the village level.¹¹ In 2025, Plajan was also selected

⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 27.

⁹ Syamsul Ma'arif, "Strategi Komunikasi Antar Umat Beragama Dalam Menumbuhkan Ukhuwwah Wathaniyyah Di Desa Plajan Kecamatan Pakis Aji Kabupaten Jepara," *An-Nida: Jurnal Komunikasi Islam* 7, no. 2 (2015), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.34001/an.v7i2.758>.

¹⁰ Ahmad Saefudin and Fathur Rohman, "Teologi Damai Agama Islam, Hindu Dan Kristen Di Plajan Pakis Aji Jepara," *Al-Qalam* 25, no. 2 (December 5, 2019): 393, <https://doi.org/10.31969/alq.v25i2.733>.

¹¹ Central Java Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, "PKUB

as a pilot project for the Religious Harmony Awareness Village initiative and hosted a Harmony Festival involving government representatives, religious leaders, and members of different religious communities.¹² These conditions indicate that Plajan is not only religiously diverse but also constitutes a social environment in which tolerance, communication, and interreligious coexistence are practiced in everyday life.

Several scholars have examined *tasamuh* in Islamic thought using theological, normative, and social approaches. Zuhri (2012), in “*Maḥmūd al-Tasāmuh* ‘inda Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalūsi,” shows that Ibn Ḥazm’s thought is characterized not only by firmness in theological matters but also by dimensions of religious and humanitarian tolerance. According to Zuhri, steadfast commitment to religious belief does not preclude the possibility of establishing tolerant relations with those who hold different convictions.¹³ Rasidin et al. (2023), in “Tasamuh Village: A Model of Realizing Tolerance Values as an Antidote to Intolerance to Realize Religious Moderation in Indonesia,” similarly conceptualize *tasāmuh* as an ethical principle in social relations encompassing principles of fairness, mutual respect, and appreciation of difference. Their study emphasizes that *tasāmuh* does not entail conflating matters of creed; rather, it is expressed through human fraternity, openness, dialogue, intellectual humility, cultural empathy, and open-mindedness.¹⁴

Lakukan Penguatan Lembaga Kerukunan di Desa Sadar Kerukunan Plajan, Pakis Aji Kabupaten Jepara,” September 26, 2025. <https://jateng.kemenag.go.id/pkub-lakukan-penguatan-lembaga-kerukunan-di-desar-sadar-kerukunan-plajan-pakis-aji-kabupaten-jepara/>

¹² Central Java Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, “Estafet Kerukunan Harus Dilestarikan dari Generasi Muda ke Generasi Tua,” October 23, 2025. <https://jateng.kemenag.go.id/estafet-kerukunan-harus-dilestarikan-dari-generasi-muda-ke-generasi-tua/>

¹³ Zuhri Zuhri, “*Maḥmūd Al-Tasāmuh* ‘inda Ibn Ḥazm Al-Andalūsi,” *Al-Jami’ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 50, no. 2 (2012): 485–508, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2012.502.485-508>.

¹⁴ Mhd. Rasidin et al., “Tasamuh Village: A Model of Realizing Tolerance Values as an Antidote to Intolerance to Realize Religious Moderation in Indonesia,” *Khatulistiwa*

Subsequent studies further reinforce the normative foundations of *tasāmuh*. Klaina and Putra (2024), in “*Al-Tasāmuh* or Tolerance in the Quran and Sunnah and Claims of the Deniers,” argue that *tasāmuh* is grounded in the Qur’an and Sunnah and provides a basis for Muslims and non-Muslims to coexist peacefully. At the same time, tolerance in Islam has normative boundaries and therefore should not be understood as the erasure of religious identity or the relativization of belief. The study also identifies dialogue and persuasion as important means of fostering relations with those who differ.¹⁵ In a multireligious context, Imam Safi’i (2024), in “Fikih Tasamuh: Konstruksi Toleransi Antarumat Beragama Masyarakat Desa Rejoangung Kecamatan Ngoro Kabupaten Jombang,” demonstrates that harmonious relations among Muslims, Christians, and Hindus are shaped by a community based social ethic that sustains tolerance and harmony in everyday life.¹⁶ Meanwhile Putri Muthmainnah, et al. (2025), in “Mafhumu *al-Tasamuh* al-Diiniy inda Yusuf al-Qordhawi fii halli Islamophobia,” show that Yusuf al-Qaradawi’s concept of tolerance is rooted in the Qur’an, Sunnah, and the historical experience of Muslim societies. Their study also stresses the importance of knowledge, understanding, and the elimination of hatred as pathways to harmonious social relations.¹⁷

13, no. 1 (March 9, 2023): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.24260/khatulistiwa.v13i1.2374>.

¹⁵ Mekki Klaina and Ansusa Putra, “Al-Tasāmuh or Tolerance in the Quran and Sunnah? And Claims of The Deniers,” *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses* 7, no. 1–12 (May 15, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.14421/lijid.v7i1.5367>.

¹⁶ Imam Safi’i, “Fikih Tasamuh: Konstruksi Toleransi Antarumat Beragama Masyarakat Desa Rejoangung Kecamatan Ngoro Kabupaten Jombang,” *Al-Mada: Jurnal Agama, Sosial, Dan Budaya* 7, no. 4 (2024): 880–99, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31538/almada.v7i4.5641>.

¹⁷ Putri Muthmainnah Khoirunnisa, Achmad Reza Hutama Al Faruqi, and Rif’at Husnul Maafi, “Mafhumu Al-Tasamuh Al-Diiniy Inda Yusuf Al-Qordhawi Fii Halli Islamophobia,” *Journal of Comparative Study of Religions* 6, no. 1 (November 19, 2025): 115–60, <https://doi.org/10.21111/jcsr.v6i1.14707>.

Research on *tasāmuh* has developed beyond the conceptual discussion and increasingly addresses the lived realities of multireligious communities. Sodiqin and Umroh (2023), in “Towards an Interreligious *Fiqh*: A Study of the Culture-Based Religious Tolerance in the Kaloran Community, Central Java, Indonesia,” find that interreligious tolerance in Kaloran emerges from the interaction between religious values and local wisdom, which encourages respect for religious choice and harmonious social life.¹⁸ Jayadi (2025), in “Harmony in Diversity: Exploring Religiosity Cohesion Among Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist Communities in North Lombok, Indonesia,” likewise finds that social cohesion among Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist communities in North Lombok is built through kinship, local traditions, and religious values, including *tasāmuh* within the Muslim community.¹⁹ These findings demonstrate that *tasāmuh* is not merely understood as an ethical principle in Islam but is also embodied in social life through respect, solidarity, communication, and interreligious interaction.

Based on this mapping, previous research on *tasāmuh* can be grouped into three broad strands. First are conceptual and theological studies that examine *tasāmuh* through the Qur’an, Sunnah, and the thought of Muslim scholars such as Ibn Ḥazm and Yusuf al-Qaradawi. Second are applied studies that explore the actualization of *tasāmuh* in particular multireligious communities. Third are studies of *tasāmuh* in Indonesia that examine its social practices through local culture, interreligious interaction, and community-based harmony. Despite their important contributions,

¹⁸ Ali Sodiqin and Roehana Rofaidatun Umroh, “Towards an Interreligious *Fiqh*: A Study of the Culture-Based Religious Tolerance in the Kaloran Community, Central Java, Indonesia,” *Al-Jami’ab: Journal of Islamic Studies* 61, no. 1 (January 21, 2024): 159–80, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2023.611.159-180>.

¹⁹ Suparman Jayadi, “Harmony in Diversity: Exploring Religiosity Cohesion Among Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist Communities in North Lombok, Indonesia,” *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 15, no. 1 (April 25, 2025): 261–76, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.151.15>.

these studies have generally not examined, in an integrated manner, how *tasāmuh*, as an Islamic ethic, is embodied in everyday communication practices that sustain coexistence in multireligious societies. More specifically, earlier studies in Plajan Village have identified communication strategies and the construction of a theology of peace, but have not explained interreligious practices within the framework of *tasāmuh* and its ethical dimensions.

The novelty of this study therefore lies in positioning *tasāmuh* as the principal framework for analyzing interreligious coexistence in the multireligious community of Plajan Village. *Tasāmuh* is understood not merely as tolerance in the sense of accepting the presence of others, but as an Islamic ethic manifested through respect for difference, *ta‘āruf* (mutual acquaintance), *ta‘āyush* (coexistence), *ta‘āwun* (cooperation), *‘adl* (justice), and *rahmah* (compassion). In this study, the theory of communicative action serves as an analytical instrument for explaining how these values are realized through communication, mutual understanding, sincerity, equality of participation, and the the management and resolution of differences in everyday life. Accordingly, the study explains not only the ethical values that sustain interreligious life but also the communicative mechanisms through which these values are practiced, negotiated, and maintained in the daily life of a multireligious society.

This study employs an interdisciplinary qualitative approach based on field research to examine the practice of *tasāmuh* and the role of communicative action in the multireligious community of Plajan Village, Jepara.²⁰ Data were collected through participant observation, focus group discussions (FGD), in-depth interviews with religious leaders, community figures, village officials, and residents from different religious backgrounds, as well as

²⁰ Sergio García-Magariño, Oscar Prieto-Flores, and Carmen Innerarity Grau, “Understanding Social Phenomena Linked to Religion: In Search of an Alternative Approach That Combines Science with Religious Insights,” *Religions* 14, no. 1 (January 3, 2023): 68, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010068>.

documentation related to community harmony activities and policies.²¹ The combination of these methods enabled the study to capture both the normative dimensions of *tasāmuḥ* and the everyday communicative processes through which interreligious coexistence is negotiated, maintained, and reproduced within the community. This methodological approach therefore provides a comprehensive basis for analyzing the relationship between Islamic ethical principles and communicative practices in sustaining interreligious coexistence in Plajan Village.

***Tasāmuḥ* as an Islamic Ethic in Interreligious Life**

Tasāmuḥ is a central concept in Islamic ethics that addresses attitudes toward diversity, including religious differences. Linguistically, *tasāmuḥ* derives from the Arabic root *s-m-ḥ*, which conveys openness, generosity, ease, and avoidance of imposing hardship on others. Therefore, *tasāmuḥ* is not entirely equivalent to the Western concept of tolerance (*tolerantia*). Zilio-Grandi explains that *tasāmuḥ* has a distinctive meaning within Islamic tradition because it remains connected to Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings. Tolerance is not merely restraint toward difference but a moral attitude requiring kindness, respect, and good treatment toward others.²² Classical scholars such as Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī also emphasized that individuals may remain committed to their own beliefs while respecting those with different convictions.²³ Thus, Islamic *tasāmuḥ* does not require weakening religious identity but encourages ethical relations among diverse communities.

In interreligious relations, *tasāmuḥ* functions as a social ethic rather than an equalization of theological beliefs. Islam

²¹ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2022), 224–43.

²² Ida Zilio-Grandi, “The Virtue of Tolerance: Notes on the Root *s-m-ḥ* in the Islamic Tradition,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 45, no. 4 (May 17, 2019): 429–37, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453718823025>.

²³ Zuhri, “Mafhūm Al-Tasāmuḥ ‘inda Ibn Ḥazm Al-Andalusī.”

recognizes religious diversity while promoting peaceful relations among different communities.²⁴ This perspective is reflected in Maimoen Zubair's view that *tasāmuh* requires mutual respect and social unity to protect religious freedom.²⁵ Yusuf al-Qaradawi further explains that *tasāmuh* in Islam aims to overcome prejudice, hatred, and misunderstanding through knowledge and constructive interaction.²⁶ Nevertheless, *tasāmuh* maintains normative boundaries. The principle of *lā ikrāha fī al-dīn* affirms freedom of belief,²⁷ while Islamic teachings encourage justice and kindness toward those who do not act with hostility.²⁸ Therefore, *tasāmuh* supports openness in social relations without merging religious convictions.²⁹

In a multireligious society, *tasāmuh*, as a social ethic, does not stand alone but is connected to a set of values that give more concrete form to relations between individuals and groups. Khambali shows that interaction in diverse communities can be developed through *ta'āruf* (mutual acquaintance), *tasāmuh* (tolerance), *ta'āwun* (mutual assistance), *takāful* (solidarity), and *maḥabbah* (affection) within the framework of *fiqh al-ta'āyush*. These values enable diversity communities to develop more harmonious social relations.³⁰ In this study, the ethical dimensions of *tasāmuh*

²⁴ Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, Issa Khan, and Mohammad Elius, "Analysing the Conceptual Framework of Religious Freedom and Interreligious Relationship in Islam," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 8, no. 2 (December 2, 2018): 309–334, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v8i2.309-334>.

²⁵ Muhammad Asif and Fakiḥ Abdul Azis, "Al-Shaykh Maimoen Zubair Wa Afkārūh 'an Al-Islām Wa Al-Waṭāniyah Wa Al-Tasāmuh Fī Indūnisiyā," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 15, no. 1 (June 1, 2021): 223–246, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2021.15.1.223-246>.

²⁶ Khoirunnisa, Al Faruqi, and Maafi, "Maḥumu Al-Tasamuh Al-Diiniy Inda Yusuf Al-Qordhawi Fī Halli Islamophobia."

²⁷ Qur'an, al-Baqarah [2]: 256.

²⁸ Qur'an, al-Mumtaḥanah [60]: 8.

²⁹ Qur'an, al-Kāfirūn [109]: 6.

³⁰ Khadijah Mohd Khambali¹ Hambali, "Kepelbagaian Dan Kesatuan Dalam Konteks Fiqh Al-Ta'ayush Di Malaysia Menurut Perspektif Pemikiran Islam," *Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 22, no. 1 (June 30, 2020): 73–102, <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.vol22no1.3.verse.13>. However, diversity also triggers different ideologies that

are elaborated through five principal dimensions: *ta'āruf*, *ta'āyush*, *ta'āwun*, *'adl*, and *rahmah*.

Ta'āruf represents mutual understanding through the recognition of others' identities, traditions, and ways of life, based on the Qur'an.³¹ It reduces prejudice by encouraging meaningful interaction among different groups.³² *Ta'āyush* refers to peaceful coexistence without eliminating religious differences, thereby transforming tolerance into a shared social life.³³ *Ta'āwun* represents cooperation in goodness through social assistance, humanitarian action, and collective responsibility while maintaining religious boundaries.³⁴ *'Adl* provides the foundation of justice by ensuring equal respect, participation, and fair treatment for all groups.³⁵ Meanwhile, *rahmah* gives *tasāmuḥ* a moral dimension through

cause problems especially in relation to the religious community. As such, diversity and unity is one of the point of questions that requires particular attention in the context of Malaysia's own diverse ethnicity and racial beliefs community. The question of diversity and unity is not a straight forward matter as it relates to all aspects of life as a medium in the relationship of religious community in the context of *fiqh al-ta'ayush* (co-existence

³¹ Qur'an, al-Hujurat [49]: 13.

³² Khadijah Mohd Khambali¹ Hambali, Nur Hidayah Mohd Paudzi, and Abdul Nasser Sultan Mohsen Sallam, "Islamic Perspective on the Concepts of Interaction among Multicultural Society," *Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 23, no. 2 (December 30, 2021): 249–74, <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.vol23no2.7>.

³³ Mohd Khambali¹ Hambali, "Kepelbagaian Dan Kesatuan Dalam Konteks Fiqh Al-Ta'ayush Di Malaysia Menurut Perspektif Pemikiran Islam." verse 13. However, diversity also triggers different ideologies that cause problems especially in relation to the religious community. As such, diversity and unity is one of the point of questions that requires particular attention in the context of Malaysia's own diverse ethnicity and racial beliefs community. The question of diversity and unity is not a straight forward matter as it relates to all aspects of life as a medium in the relationship of religious community in the context of *fiqh al-ta'ayush* (co-existence

³⁴ Hans A. Harmakaputra and Luthfi Rahman, "From Toleration to Solidarity: Muslim-Christian Relations in Indonesia during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *The Muslim World* 111, no. 4 (September 26, 2021): 616–38, <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12416>.

³⁵ Hamza R'boul, "Alternative Theorizing of Multicultural Education: An Islamic Perspective on Interculturality and Social Justice," *Journal for Multicultural Education* 15, no. 2 (August 9, 2021): 213–24, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JME-07-2020-0073>.

compassion, empathy, and protection of human dignity.³⁶ This reflects the Islamic understanding of the Prophet Muhammad as mercy to all creation.³⁷ In social life, *rahmah* can be expressed through empathy, concern for the difficulties of others, a refusal to demean them, and a commitment to protecting human dignity.³⁸

These dimensions demonstrate that Islamic *tasāmuḥ* extends beyond passive acceptance of difference. *Ta'āruf* builds understanding, *ta'āyush* enables coexistence, *ta'āwun* strengthens cooperation, *'adl* guarantees justice, and *rahmah* develops compassion. Through this framework, the study examines how religious communities in Plajan Village construct and sustain shared life amid diversity.

Multireligious Life and the Practice of *Tasāmuḥ* in Plajan Village

Jepara Regency in Central Java has historically been a culturally diverse region shaped by interactions among Islamic, Javanese, Chinese, and Hindu-Buddhist cultures through maritime networks and trade.³⁹ This historical diversity continues to influence its religious landscape, where Muslims constitute the majority while Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist communities remain part of social life. Plajan Village reflects this diversity, with a population of 8,057 residents, comprising 7,551 Muslims (93.73%), 444 Hindus (5.56%), 59 Christians (0.66%), and 3 Buddhists (0.05%). The village contains diverse religious facilities, including mosques,

³⁶ Ramli and Ashath, "A Theological Comparative Exploration of Tolerance in Islam and Buddhism."

³⁷ Qur'an, al-Anbiyā' [21]: 107.

³⁸ Jalal Alharbi and Lourance Al Hadid, "Towards an Understanding of Compassion from an Islamic Perspective," *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 28, no. 7–8 (April 11, 2019): 1354–58, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.14725>.

³⁹ Karina Putri Utami et al., "Sejarah Akulturasi Budaya Islam, Jawa, Cina, Dan Hindu-Buddha Pada Arsitektur Masjid Mantingan, Jepara, Jawa Tengah," *Sinektika: Jurnal Arsitektur* 21, no. 1 (January 17, 2024): 33–41, <https://doi.org/10.23917/sinektika.v21i1.2581>.

prayer rooms, Hindu temples, and a Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia church established in the 1980s.⁴⁰ The coexistence of these religious communities without major conflict has contributed to Plajan's recognition as a Pancasila Village and Religious Tolerance Village.⁴¹

Sociologically, Plajan represents a plural social setting in which communities actively engage with religious differences rather than merely accepting their existence.⁴² Religious diversity in Plajan is managed through communication, cooperation, and mutual respect. From an Islamic perspective, this pattern reflects *tasāmuh*, which does not require theological uniformity but emphasizes respect, peaceful coexistence, and cooperation for shared benefit. Muhajarah and Soebahar explain that Islamic tolerance can operate through religious moderation and the principle of *ma'ā laḥab* while maintaining religious boundaries.⁴³ Thus, interreligious cooperation in Plajan occurs within social life while each community maintains its religious identity.

The practice of *tasāmuh* appears in institutional, social, and cultural dimensions. At the institutional level, the village government issued Letter No. 535/15 dated March 4, 2019, encouraging mosques and *musala* located near Hindu temples to avoid external loudspeakers during Nyepi. This policy was not imposed unilaterally but emerged through deliberation among community members.⁴⁴ Plajan also holds annual interfaith communal prayers at the Village

⁴⁰ "Data Monografi dan Demografi Desa Plajan," <http://plajan.desa.id/2025/08/14/data-monografi-dan-demografi-desa-plajan>.

⁴¹ Ahmad Sholikin, Plajan Village Consultative Body (BPD), Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

⁴² Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2001), 4.

⁴³ Kurnia Muhajarah and Moh. Erfan Soebahar, "Fiqh of Tolerance and Religious Moderation: A Study towards Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 11, no. 1 (December 31, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2303817>.

⁴⁴ H. Kartono, S.E., Head of Plajan Village, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

Hall, featuring religious leaders from different communities.⁴⁵ The regulation of loudspeaker use during Nyepi illustrates how *tasāmuḥ* operates through mutual adjustment, in which Muslims maintain their religious practices while respecting Hindu communities' need for tranquility. Such interreligious communication contributes to social trust and conflict prevention.⁴⁶

Local traditions further strengthen tolerance in Plajan. The *Manganan* tradition, held after the rice harvest at Punden Balai Romo, provides a shared space for interaction among residents regardless of religious background. Historically used as a meeting place for village elders, Punden Balai Romo has evolved into an inclusive social space that supports interfaith interaction.⁴⁷ Everyday cooperation is also reflected in mutual assistance during religious celebrations, where Muslim residents help maintain security at Hindu and Christian celebrations. In contrast, Hindu and Christian residents support Eid celebrations.⁴⁸

These practices demonstrate that *tasāmuḥ* in Plajan extends beyond passive acceptance of difference. It is expressed through social relationships, mutual assistance, and shared responsibility while maintaining each community's religious identity.⁴⁹ This social ethic is reflected in the Nahdlatul Ulama-owned ambulance, which serves all residents regardless of religious background, demonstrating that tolerance is translated into concrete social

⁴⁵ Sholikhin, S.E., Plajan Village Secretary, Interview, Plajan, July 22, 2025.

⁴⁶ Michael Daniel Driessen, "Interreligious Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding: A Review," *Religions* 16, no. 2 (January 28, 2025): 150, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16020150>.

⁴⁷ Sholikhin, S.E., Plajan Village Secretary, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

⁴⁸ Fatih Munawar, Head of Banser, Plajan Village, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

⁴⁹ Zilio-Grandi, "The Virtue of Tolerance: Notes on the Root s-m-ḥ in the Islamic Tradition"; Ramli and Ashath, "A Theological Comparative Exploration of Tolerance in Islam and Buddhism."

action.⁵⁰ Another important foundation is *besanan*, a local kinship network connecting families from different religious backgrounds. These relationships strengthen trust and solidarity because religious differences are understood as personal matters that do not prevent collective responsibility.⁵¹ In this study, *besanan* is understood as an interreligious social relationship rather than a discussion of interfaith marriage within Islamic law.⁵²

The sustainability of tolerance in Plajan depends not only on government policies but also on religious leaders, community organizations, families, and residents. Zuhri et al. describe this pattern as tolerance from below, where harmony develops through grassroots dialogue, cooperation, solidarity, and interreligious interaction.⁵³ Therefore, *tasāmuh* in Plajan represents an active social practice formed through respect for religious differences, deliberation, cooperation, inclusive social resources, local traditions, and kinship networks. The experience of Plajan demonstrates that strong religious identity and openness toward others can coexist, enabling communities to build peaceful, just, and mutually respectful social relations.

Communicative Action in Interreligious Life

Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action provides a framework for understanding social interaction based on mutual understanding rather than coercion. Habermas argues that dialogue involves the exchange of arguments, consideration of different

⁵⁰ Ahmad Sholikin, Plajan Village Consultative Body (BPD), Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

⁵¹ Juwaro, Religious Leader and Head of the Muhammadiyah Branch in Plajan Village, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

⁵² Joko Malis, Village Official and Hindu Leader in Plajan, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

⁵³ Mishbah Khoiruddin Zuhri et al., "Tolerance From Below: Grassroots Movement and Interfaith Collaboration for Religious Moderation in Indonesia," *Jurnal Penelitian*, 2024, 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.28918/jupe.v21i1.2085>.

perspectives, and the pursuit of shared understanding. Unlike strategic action, which is oriented toward individual interests, communicative action recognizes individuals as equal participants in rational communication. In interreligious contexts, religious differences are not barriers to interaction but realities that can be addressed through openness, dialogue, and mutual respect.⁵⁴

Communicative action operates within the *lifeworld*, which consists of shared cultural backgrounds, traditions, social norms, and collective experiences. In Plajan Village, the *lifeworld* is reflected through local traditions, neighborhood relations, village activities, and everyday interactions that connect residents across religious boundaries. Interreligious relations are thus developed not only through formal dialogue but also through ordinary encounters as neighbors and members of the same community.⁵⁵ Habermas also emphasizes the role of the public sphere as a communicative space where citizens express opinions, discuss common concerns, and establish collective agreements. In a multireligious society, this space must provide equal opportunities for participation without domination. Religious perspectives may enter public discussions, but they should be communicated through reasons that others can understand and consider.⁵⁶

This process is evident in Plajan through the agreement on loudspeaker use during Nyepi. The arrangement emerged from communication between Muslim and Hindu communities to accommodate different religious needs. Muslims continued their religious practices while respecting Hindu requirements for a peaceful observance of Nyepi. This illustrates how communicative action produces shared norms through dialogue and mutual

⁵⁴ Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, 1:99.

⁵⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2: Lifeworld and System* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 75.

⁵⁶ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, 27, 36.

consideration rather than coercion.⁵⁷ Habermas identifies truth, normative appropriateness, and sincerity as essential validity claims in communication. In interreligious relations, these principles require accurate information, fair social norms, and genuine intentions among participants. Therefore, dialogue requires more than politeness; it requires honesty, rational justification, and openness toward different perspectives. Research also confirms that equality, sincerity, and respect in dialogue strengthen tolerance and public reasoning.⁵⁸

Communicative action also contributes to conflict prevention by allowing communities to express concerns directly and reduce prejudice caused by misunderstanding. In Plajan, tolerance is sustained through repeated interaction, open communication, and shared activities among residents.⁵⁹ Religious and community leaders function as mediators who translate social concerns across groups and address potential tensions through dialogue and clarification.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, communicative action does not automatically eliminate inequality. It remains a normative standard to ensure that all groups have meaningful opportunities to participate, express concerns, and influence collective decisions. Therefore, interreligious communication in Plajan requires continuous strengthening of participation among minority groups, women, and younger generations.

⁵⁷ Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (April 14, 2006): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0378.2006.00241.x>.

⁵⁸ Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2: Lifeworld and System*, 120.

⁵⁹ Rahkman Ardi, David Hizkia Tobing, Gita Nuraini Agustina, Ahmad Fauzan Iswahyudi, and Diah Budiarti, “Religious Schema and Tolerance towards Alienated Groups in Indonesia,” *Heliyon* 7, no. 7 (2021): e07603, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e07603>.

⁶⁰ Aurélia Bardon, Matteo Bonotti, and Steven T. Zech, “Educating Citizens to Public Reason: What Can We Learn from Interfaith Dialogue?” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 27, no. 7 (2024): 1050–1074, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2022.2073104>.

Thus, communicative action in Plajan represents an ongoing process of constructing shared life through dialogue, exchange of reasons, and collective agreement. Local traditions, public spaces, and social interactions provide the foundation for communication, while religious differences are managed through respect for each group's identity. The sustainability of tolerance depends on the community's ability to continue communicating, listening, and developing shared solutions amid changing social challenges.⁶¹

***Tasāmuḥ* and Communicative Action in Constructing an Ethics of Multireligious Life**

1. Dialogical Interreligious Communication as a Reinforcement of *Tasāmuḥ* through the Practice of *Ta'āruf*

Dialogical communication in Plajan Village represents a form of communicative action oriented toward mutual understanding rather than domination. Habermas explains that an ideal speech situation occurs when participants have equal opportunities to express opinions, question claims, and express their needs openly.⁶² However, this condition should not be understood as an automatic reality but a normative standard for evaluating the quality of communication in society.⁶³

In Plajan, interreligious communication occurs not only through formal forums but also through everyday social interactions, village activities, and community relations. The Head of Plajan Village, H. Kartono, S.E., emphasized the importance of

⁶¹ Genti Kruja, "Interfaith Harmony through Education System of Religious Communities," *Religion & Education* 49, no. 1 (2022): 104–117, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15507394.2021.2009305>.

⁶² Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978), 272.

⁶³ Gertrud Nunner-Winkler, "Discourse Ethics: A Pedagogical Policy for Promoting Democratic Virtues," *Educational Theory* 73, no. 2 (April 19, 2023): 273–91, <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12578>.

religious understanding in preventing issues that may disrupt social harmony.⁶⁴ This shows that communication functions not merely as an exchange of information but also as a mechanism for building trust, reducing prejudice, and maintaining relations between religious groups. Religious leaders therefore act as communicative mediators who connect different perspectives and support peaceful interaction. This finding is consistent with studies showing that local wisdom and community leadership help strengthen interfaith communication and prevent conflict.⁶⁵ Acceptance of differences is strengthened when government institutions, religious leaders, and communities jointly develop inclusive social relations.⁶⁶

From the perspective of Islamic ethics, dialogical communication reflects the practice of *tasāmuḥ*. *Tasāmuḥ* is not limited to acknowledging the existence of other groups; it also involves developing social relations based on respect, openness, and recognition of differences. Zilio-Grandi explains that *tasāmuḥ* in Islamic tradition contains moral values of openness and good treatment toward others without requiring the abandonment of religious identity.⁶⁷ Therefore, communication practices in Plajan demonstrate that tolerance is constructed through interaction that respects differences rather than through the elimination of religious distinctions.

This process is closely related to *ta'āruḥ*, which refers to mutual acquaintance and understanding among different groups.

⁶⁴ H. Kartono, S.E., Head of Plajan Village, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

⁶⁵ Dewa Agung Gede Agung et al., "Local Wisdom as a Model of Interfaith Communication in Creating Religious Harmony in Indonesia," *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 9 (2024): 100827, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.100827>.

⁶⁶ Mohamad Anas et al., "Acceptance of 'the Others' in Religious Tolerance: Policies and Implementation Strategies in the Inclusive City of Salatiga Indonesia," *Heliyon* 11, no. 2 (January 2025): e41826, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2025.e41826>.

⁶⁷ Zilio-Grandi, "The Virtue of Tolerance: Notes on the Root *s-m-ḥ* in the Islamic Tradition."

Ta'aruf enables communities to recognize the identities, values, experiences, and needs of others while maintaining their respective beliefs. Armayanto et al. explain that *ta'aruf* provides an important foundation for interreligious relations because it encourages openness and recognition of diversity without weakening religious identity.⁶⁸ In Plajan, *ta'aruf* appears through village deliberations, shared activities, neighborhood relations, and participation in public spaces. These interactions allow residents to understand not only the presence of other religious groups but also their perspectives and social needs.

The practice of dialogical communication is also evident in the focus group discussion conducted in this study, which involved representatives from various social and religious groups, including the village government, Banser, the Village Consultative Body, Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Hindu communities. Each participant was given equal opportunity to express their perspectives on tolerance without domination by any particular group.⁶⁹ This condition reflects *ta'aruf* in the public sphere, as communication becomes a process of mutual learning and recognition. Bohman argues that inclusive public communication requires the participation of affected groups so that collective decisions gain social legitimacy.⁷⁰ Similarly, research on interfaith initiatives shows that dialogue can improve understanding, reduce prejudice, and strengthen trust among different religious communities.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Harda Armayanto, Amir Sahidin, and Pujangga Aji Mukti, "Konsep Ta'aruf Quraish Shihab Dan Relevansinya Bagi Hubungan Antar Umat Beragama Di Indonesia," *Al-Mubith: Jurnal Ilmu Qur'an Dan Hadits* 5, no. 1 (January 14, 2026): 18, <https://doi.org/10.35931/am.v5i1.5752>.

⁶⁹ Sholikhin, S.E., Plajan Village Secretary, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

⁷⁰ James Bohman, *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity, and Democracy* (Cambridge: MIT press, 2000), 27.

⁷¹ Hannah J. Visser, Anke I. Liefbroer, and Linda J. Schoonmade, "Evaluating the Learning Outcomes of Interfaith Initiatives: A Systematic

Dialogical communication is further institutionalized through village deliberations (MUSDES), where residents from different backgrounds discuss shared interests. Such participation indicates that tolerance in Plajan extends beyond individual attitudes into a social mechanism for managing diversity. Inclusive public reasoning is essential because legitimate decisions in plural societies depend on opportunities for citizens to participate and exchange reasons.⁷² Moreover, interfaith dialogue helps reduce religious prejudice and promote social inclusion.⁷³

Thus, dialogical interreligious communication in Plajan demonstrates how *tasāmuḥ* is practiced through *ta'aruf*. Through continuous interaction, residents develop familiarity, reduce prejudice, and strengthen shared life amid religious diversity. Tolerance in Plajan is therefore not merely the absence of conflict but a social process continuously reproduced through communication, openness, and mutual understanding.

2. Deliberation as a Space for Practicing *Tasāmuḥ* and Building Mutual Understanding

Communicative action is oriented toward mutual understanding through the exchange of reasons, needs, values, and interests without coercion or domination. This process relates to deliberation, understood as form of public communication in which participants rationally exchange arguments to reach decisions acceptable to all parties. In this study, deliberation is not limited to formal political institutions but refers to social communication practices through which communities resolve shared problems.⁷⁴

Literature Review," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 45, no. 4 (October 17, 2024): 689–712, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2023.2196486>.

⁷² Kenneth Baynes, "Public Reason and Personal Autonomy," *The Handbook of Critical Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996, 243–54.

⁷³ Marselius Sampe Tondok, Suryanto Suryanto, and Rahkman Ardi, "Intervention Program to Reduce Religious Prejudice in Education Settings: A Scoping Review," *Religions* 13, no. 4 (March 30, 2022): 299/1-18, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040299>.

⁷⁴ Viktorija Portere and Vladimirs Morevs, "Dialogue Is a Sign of

In Plajan Village, deliberative practice is evident in the agreement regarding loudspeaker use during Nyepi. This decision was not imposed unilaterally by the village government but emerged through communication between village authorities and religious leaders.⁷⁵ Muslim residents living near Hindu temples voluntarily reduced the use of *musala* loudspeakers during Nyepi, and this practice was later followed by visitors passing through Plajan during *takebiran*.⁷⁶ This practice demonstrates that deliberation functions not merely as a decision-making mechanism but as a process of developing mutual understanding. Tolerance in this context is not a form of a unilateral concession by the majority to the minority, but a reciprocal relationship based on respect and awareness of shared needs.

From the perspective of *tasāmuh*, this practice reflects the active dimension of tolerance, namely, the willingness to understand and protect others' religious space. *Tasāmuh* does not eliminate differences in belief but enables communities to maintain their identities while developing respectful social relations.⁷⁷ This condition is closely related to *ta'āyush*, which refers to the ability of different religious groups to live together through social arrangements that acknowledge diversity.

The concept of *ta'āyush* emphasizes that diversity is not a problem to be removed but a social reality that must be managed through dialogue, respect, and cooperation. Khambali explains that *fiqh al-ta'āyush* provides a framework for building shared life in diverse societies while maintaining religious identity.⁷⁸ Similarly,

Constructiveness in Mediation,” in *Research for Rural Development*, 2020, 296–302, <https://doi.org/10.22616/rrd.26.2020.043>.

⁷⁵ H. Kartono, S.E., Head of Plajan Village, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

⁷⁶ Fatih Munawar, Head of Banser, Plajan Village, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

⁷⁷ Rasidin et al., “Tasamuh Village: A Model of Realizing Tolerance Values as an Antidote to Intolerance to Realize Religious Moderation in Indonesia.”

⁷⁸ Mohd Khambali Hambali, “Kepelbagaian Dan Kesatuan Dalam Konteks

Abdullah and Fathil emphasize that *ta'āyush* does not mean merging differences but creating conditions in which various communities can coexist peacefully through recognition and mutual respect.⁷⁹ In Plajan, this principle is reflected in the ability of religious communities to negotiate differences through communication and shared social arrangements without weakening their respective beliefs.

Therefore, deliberation in Plajan represents a concrete practice of *tasāmuh* through *ta'āyush*. Harmony is not achieved by removing differences but by translating different needs into agreements that can be accepted collectively. This finding is consistent with studies showing that interreligious relations develop from tolerance to solidarity when communities engage in supportive interactions and cooperation on social and humanitarian matters.⁸⁰ Religious leaders also play an important role in sustaining this process. Tupomo, a religious figure and Nahdlatul Ulama administrator in Plajan, emphasized the importance of religious understanding and mutual agreement among leaders to maintain

Fiqh Al-Ta'ayush Di Malaysia Menurut Perspektif Pemikiran Islam.”verse 13. However, diversity also triggers different ideologies that cause problems especially in relation to the religious community. As such, diversity and unity is one of the point of questions that requires particular attention in the context of Malaysia’s own diverse ethnicity and racial beliefs community. The question of diversity and unity is not a straight forward matter as it relates to all aspects of life as a medium in the relationship of religious community in the context of fiqh al-ta'ayush (co-existence

⁷⁹ Asilatul Hanaa Abdullah and Fauziah Fathil, “The Concept of Al-Ta'ayush in Islamic Cosmopolitanism: From Medina to Istanbul and Malacca,” *Islamiyyat* 43, no. 1 (June 1, 2020): 163–71, <https://doi.org/10.17576/islamiyyat-2021-4301-14>. Islam is often associated with jihad or holy war waged against non-Muslims. In the Western view, multiculturalism and religious pluralism have neither a place in Islam nor Islamic state, therefore, making Islam look very intolerant and non-inclusive towards other faiths and cultures. This research aims to elucidate how multiculturalism under the concept of Al-Ta'ayush was practised by two Muslim governments, first as manifested in the Millet system (independent court for personal law

⁸⁰ Harmakaputra and Rahman, “From Toleration to Solidarity: Muslim-Christian Relations in Indonesia during the COVID-19 Pandemic.”

harmony.⁸¹ This reflects Habermas's concept of *Verständigung*, where understanding is achieved through communication free from coercion.⁸² Mutual understanding does not require complete agreement but recognition that different groups have legitimate reasons and needs.

The importance of communication becomes clearer because conflicts in multireligious societies often emerge from misunderstanding and prejudice rather than religious differences alone. Interfaith dialogue that addresses concrete social issues can strengthen trust and reduce tension between groups.⁸³ Repeated interaction among different communities also helps reduce prejudice and increase interreligious trust.⁸⁴ The conflict prevention mechanism described by Didi Wahyudi, Head of GP Ansor Plajan, further illustrates this communicative approach through dialogue, clarification, education, and personal engagement to prevent conflicts from escalating.⁸⁵

Thus, deliberation in Plajan extends beyond decision-making. It becomes a communicative space that strengthens *tasāmuḥ* and develops *ta'āyush* through mutual understanding. The willingness of residents to adjust their religious practices demonstrates that tolerance is constructed through recognition of differences and negotiation of shared needs rather than through the elimination of religious identity.

⁸¹ Tupomo, Religious Leader and Nahdlatul Ulama Administrator in Plajan Village, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

⁸² Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, 1:286–287.

⁸³ Wasisto Raharjo Jati et al., “From Intellectual to Advocacy Movement: Islamic Moderation, the Conservatives and the Shift of Interfaith Dialogue Campaign in Indonesia,” *Ulumuna* 26, no. 2 (December 31, 2022): 472–99, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v26i2.572>.

⁸⁴ Nathanael Gratias Sumaktoyo, “Faith and Friendship: Religious Bonding and Interfaith Relations in Muslim Countries,” *Politics and Religion* 14, no. 4 (December 24, 2021): 634–62, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755048320000589>.

⁸⁵ Didi Wahyudi, Head of GP Ansor, Plajan Village, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

3. *Ta'āwun* and Social Consensus in Strengthening *Tasāmuḥ* in Multireligious Life

Social consensus refers to an agreement reached through dialogical communication and accepted through intersubjective understanding. From Habermas's perspective, legitimate consensus does not emerge from pressure, domination, or particular interests, but from the exchange of arguments that enables different parties to understand one another's reasons and needs.⁸⁶ Therefore, consensus is not merely the outcome of deliberation but a communicative process that builds trust, recognition, and shared legitimacy.

In Plajan Village, social consensus is reflected in the Tri Tunggal cemetery, a shared space used by Muslim, Christian, and Hindu communities. This practice demonstrates that residents have developed social arrangements for managing shared spaces without eliminating religious identities. The term Tri Tunggal does not represent theological unification among religions but reflects social awareness that diversity can be managed through shared institutions.⁸⁷ Such practices show that interreligious harmony is sustained not only through passive tolerance but through social mechanisms that strengthen cohesion and solidarity.⁸⁸

Another example of social consensus appears in agreements regarding animal slaughter during Hindu religious celebrations. According to Sholikhin, residents agreed that animals intended for Muslim guests would be slaughtered by Muslims. This arrangement ensures the fulfillment of Islamic requirements while respecting

⁸⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge: MIT press, 1996), 360.

⁸⁷ H. Kartono, S.E., Head of Plajan Village, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

⁸⁸ Tri Susanto, "Ethnography of Harmony: Local Traditions and Dynamics of Interfaith Tolerance in Nglinggi Village, Indonesia," *Asian Anthropology* 24, no. 2 (April 3, 2025): 146–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1683478X.2024.2434988>.

Hindu traditions.⁸⁹ The practice illustrates that consensus in a multireligious society does not require identical perspectives; rather, it involves creating mutually acceptable arrangements that allow each group to maintain its religious practices. This reflects the principle of reciprocity in deliberative democracy, in which each party provides reasons that others can understand and accept.⁹⁰ Consensus must also remain open to evaluation to prevent majority domination over minority groups.⁹¹

Social consensus in Plajan demonstrates the *ta'āwun* dimension of *tasāmuh*. While *tasāmuh* provides an ethical foundation for respecting differences, *ta'āwun* represents its practical realization through cooperation in social and humanitarian matters. In Islamic ethics, *ta'āwun* does not require similarity of identity or belief; rather, it emphasizes cooperation to achieve shared benefits.⁹² Therefore, interreligious cooperation in Plajan shows that tolerance develops beyond recognition of others into concrete social solidarity.

These practices indicate that interreligious relations in Plajan are constructed not only through communication and symbolic respect but also through collective participation in managing social life. Agreements regarding religious activities, shared spaces, and community events demonstrate residents' ability to translate *tasāmuh* into practical cooperation. Research on interreligious relations confirms that solidarity between groups develops when communities have opportunities to interact, cooperate, and build

⁸⁹ Sholikhin, S.E., Plajan Village Secretary, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

⁹⁰ Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge: Harvard university press, 1996), 52.

⁹¹ Iozif Zinovievich Aronov and Olga Vladimirovna Maksimova, "Modeling Consensus Building in Conditions of Dominance in a Social Group," *Computer Research and Modeling* 13, no. 5 (October 2021): 1067–78, <https://doi.org/10.20537/2076-7633-2021-13-5-1067-1078>.

⁹² Harmakaputra and Rahman, "From Toleration to Solidarity: Muslim-Christian Relations in Indonesia during the COVID-19 Pandemic."

trust in everyday life.⁹³ Similarly, Suarni et al. explain that *ta'āwun* is a form of social solidarity that encourages communities to share responsibility and support one another in addressing humanitarian challenges. In plural societies, *ta'āwun* transforms relationships from simple coexistence into active cooperation.⁹⁴

Thus, the social consensus formed in Plajan represents the interaction between communicative action and Islamic ethical values. Dialogue facilitates shared agreements, while *ta'āwun* provides the moral foundation that transforms these agreements into cooperation and solidarity. The experience of Plajan demonstrates that harmonious multireligious life is not achieved by removing differences but by managing diversity through continuous communication, mutual recognition, and collective action.

4. Non-Dominating Communication as a Practice of 'Adl-Based Tasāmuḥ

Non-dominating communication is a process in which every individual and group has equal opportunities to express opinions, provide reasons, raise objections, and participate in collective decision-making. For Habermas, communication distorted by power inequality, pressure, or domination can undermine genuine mutual understanding. However, non-dominating communication does not imply the complete absence of power differences; rather, it functions as a normative principle for ensuring that all groups

⁹³ Mohd Khambali[–] Hambali, “Kepelbagaian Dan Kesatuan Dalam Konteks Fiqh Al-Ta'ayush Di Malaysia Menurut Perspektif Pemikiran Islam.” verse 13. However, diversity also triggers different ideologies that cause problems especially in relation to the religious community. As such, diversity and unity is one of the point of questions that requires particular attention in the context of Malaysia's own diverse ethnicity and racial beliefs community. The question of diversity and unity is not a straight forward matter as it relates to all aspects of life as a medium in the relationship of religious community in the context of fiqh al-ta'ayush (co-existence

⁹⁴ Suarni Suarni et al., “Islamic Solidarity and Ta'awun: A Case Study of Community Responses to Rohingya Refugees in Sabang, Aceh,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu'ashirah* 21, no. 2 (December 10, 2024): 256, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jim.v21i2.25680>.

have fair opportunities to participate and have their perspectives considered.⁹⁵ An apparently open public sphere may still reproduce inequality when certain groups have greater access to influence decisions than others.⁹⁶ Therefore, non-dominating communication requires social conditions that enable different groups to be heard and respected.

From the perspective of *tasāmuḥ*, this principle is closely connected with *‘adl* (justice). Tolerance is not merely the acceptance of different groups but also the recognition of equal rights, participation, and dignity in public life. Thus, *tasāmuḥ* should not be understood as an act of generosity by the majority toward minorities but as a social relationship based on equality and mutual recognition.⁹⁷ Justice provides the normative foundation that prevents tolerance from becoming a one-sided relationship.

In Plajan Village, non-dominating communication is reflected in the representation of different religious groups within social structures and community organizations. The involvement of Muslim and Hindu representatives in the position of *mudin*, as well as Christian, Hindu, and Muslim participation in Karang Taruna leadership, indicates an effort to develop inclusive social representation.⁹⁸ Such representation suggests that minority groups are not merely accepted symbolically but are also given opportunities to participate in community life. Research also indicates that the visible representation of minority groups can strengthen perceptions of legitimacy, recognition, and trust in social institutions.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2: Lifeworld and System*, 150.

⁹⁶ Victor Kempf, “The Public Sphere in the Mode of Systematically Distorted Communication,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 50, no. 1 (January 27, 2024): 43–65, <https://doi.org/10.1177/01914537231203553>.

⁹⁷ R’boul, “Alternative Theorizing of Multicultural Education: An Islamic Perspective on Interculturality and Social Justice.”

⁹⁸ Interview with Sholikhin, S.E., Plajan Village Secretary, July 22, 2025.

⁹⁹ Nazita Lajevardi, Moa Mårtensson, and Kåre Vernby, “The Empowerment

This condition reflects the principle of ‘*adl* within *tasāmuh*, where every citizen has equal rights to participate regardless of religious background. Sholikhin, the Village Secretary of Plajan, emphasized that religious beliefs are a matter of individual choice and should not be imposed on others. Whereas social life requires collective responsibility to maintain harmony.¹⁰⁰ This distinction between personal belief and shared social life is consistent with Habermas’s view that religious values may enter the public sphere. Nevertheless, arguments used in collective decision making should be expressed in ways that are accessible to all citizens.¹⁰¹ Therefore, non-dominating communication does not require the elimination of religious identity from public life but seeks to ensure that different groups interact on relatively equal terms.

The principle of ‘*adl* within *tasāmuh* also requires justice beyond formal recognition. Elmahjub explains that Islamic jurisprudence emphasizes justice as a foundation for achieving social good in plural societies, ensuring that differences do not become a basis for restricting social rights.¹⁰² Similarly, Abdillah highlights that *al-musāwāh* (equality) does not erase differences but guarantees equal respect and participation in social life.¹⁰³ In

Effect of Visible Political Representation: Examining the Impact of Muslim Representation on Political Outcomes,” *Electoral Studies* 87 (February 2024): 102741/1-7, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2023.102741>.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Sholikhin, S.E., Plajan Village Secretary, July 22, 2025.

¹⁰¹ James Gordon Finlayson, “No Proviso: Habermas on Rawls, Religion and Public Reason,” *European Journal of Political Theory* 20, no. 3 (July 14, 2021): 443–64, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474885118804797>.

¹⁰² Ezieddin ELMAHJUB, “Transformative Vision of Islamic Jurisprudence and the Pursuit of Common Ground for the Social Good in Pluralist Societies,” *Asian Journal of Comparative Law* 14, no. 2 (December 12, 2019): 305–35, <https://doi.org/10.1017/asjcl.2019.34>.

¹⁰³ Masykuri Abdillah, “Equality from The Perspective of Islamic Constitutional Law Al-Musāwāh & Legal Equality in Islamic Constitutional Frameworks,” *AHKAM : Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 25, no. 2 (December 28, 2025): 267–84, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v25i2.46563>. focusing on al-musāwāh within the framework of human rights and modern political systems. Using the Quran, ḥadīth, and the opinions of ulama and Muslim intellectuals, analyzed via *uṣūl al-fiqh* with attention to *maqāḍ* id

this sense, ‘*adl*-based *tasāmuh* transforms tolerance from simple acceptance into a system of social relations based on fairness and recognition.

However, non-dominating communication must also be examined critically. Fraser argues that public spaces may appear inclusive while still being shaped by social inequalities related to gender, class, age, and status.¹⁰⁴ In Plajan, interreligious representation has developed, but broader social inclusion remains a challenge. Kasirah, Head of Muslimat Plajan, noted that young women’s participation in social and religious organizations still requires strengthening.¹⁰⁵ This indicates that religious inclusivity does not automatically guarantee broader social equality. Substantive tolerance therefore requires spaces in which different groups can express their views and participate meaningfully in shaping shared social life. Studies of interfaith dialogue further indicate that inclusive communication can contribute to mutual understanding, reduce prejudice, and strengthen social cohesion among diverse communities.¹⁰⁶

Therefore, ‘*adl*-based *tasāmuh* in Plajan should not be assessed solely by the absence of conflict but also by the extent to which different groups have meaningful opportunities to participate. Non-dominating communication illustrates how tolerance can extend from the acceptance of difference toward participatory justice, in which religious communities and other social groups share space and opportunities in shaping collective life.

al-sharī’ah, the study highlights that most contemporary scholars uphold equality as a foundational principle of society and the state. Here, equality refers to legal equality (al-musāwah al-qānūniyyah or al-musāwah amām al-qā’ā).

¹⁰⁴ Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990): 56, <https://doi.org/10.2307/466240>.

¹⁰⁵ Kasirah, Head of Muslimat, Plajan Village, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

¹⁰⁶ Visser, Liefbroer, and Schoonmade, “Evaluating the Learning Outcomes of Interfaith Initiatives: A Systematic Literature Review.”

5. The Public Sphere as a Practice of *Raḥmah*-Based *Tasāmuḥ* in Multireligious Life

The public sphere constitutes an important dimension of social communication. It is not merely a physical space but also a communicative network through which citizens exchange opinions, express interests, and develop mutual understanding. From Habermas's perspective, a healthy public sphere enables citizens to participate in rational public deliberation and collective decision-making without domination by particular groups.¹⁰⁷ However, an open public sphere does not automatically guarantee inclusion; its inclusiveness depends on whether different groups have meaningful opportunities to participate and build social relations.

In Plajan Village, the public sphere can be understood as an arena for the actualization of *raḥmah* within *tasāmuḥ*. While *ʿadl* provides the foundation of justice in social relations, *raḥmah* contributes an emotional and moral dimension through care, empathy, and concern for the common good. Therefore, tolerance is sustained not only through formal agreements but also through human relationships that recognize different groups as part of a shared community. Studies on Islamic compassion indicate that *raḥmah* encourages social relations grounded in care, respect, and protection of human dignity.¹⁰⁸

Punden Balai Romo represents an important historical public space in Plajan. Previously used as a meeting place for village elders, it has developed a space for interaction among residents from different religious backgrounds. Its role in social and religious activities suggests that shared spaces have symbolic significance in the construction of collective memory and social identity.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, the Village Hall serves as a formal public

¹⁰⁷ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, 30.

¹⁰⁸ Alharbi and Al Hadid, "Towards an Understanding of Compassion from an Islamic Perspective."

¹⁰⁹ Sholikhin, S.E., Plajan Village Secretary, Interview, Plajan, July 22, 2025.

space for deliberation, social activities, interfaith gatherings, and the resolution of community issues. At the same time, informal spaces such as coffee stalls, sports fields, agricultural areas, and youth gathering places facilitate everyday interaction.¹¹⁰ Sholikhin explained that young people in Plajan strengthen social relations through activities such as *jagongan*, gathering, and participation in Karang Taruna.¹¹¹ These interactions suggest that tolerance is sustained through everyday experiences that foster familiarity and trust. This pattern is consistent with Dryzek's argument that deliberative communication develops through both formal institutions and informal spaces within civil society.¹¹²

Through these spaces, *tasāmuh* is reinforced through the dimension of *rahmah*, which extends tolerance beyond mere acceptance toward active care and social responsibility. Alharbi and Al Hadid explain that *rahmah* encompasses empathy and concern for others, indicating that tolerance requires not only recognition of difference but also a commitment to protecting shared well-being.¹¹³ Respect for human dignity further strengthens inclusive relations among different groups.¹¹⁴ Therefore, the public sphere in Plajan functions not only as a space for interaction but also as a communicative environment in which empathy, trust, and harmonious relations are continuously cultivated.

The public sphere in Plajan is also constructed through symbolic communication. Messages of tolerance, conveyed

¹¹⁰ H. Kartono, S.E., Head of Plajan Village, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

¹¹¹ Sholikhin, S.E., Plajan Village Secretary, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

¹¹² John S Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations* (OUP Oxford, 2002), 1.

¹¹³ Alharbi and Al Hadid, "Towards an Understanding of Compassion from an Islamic Perspective."

¹¹⁴ Onur Muftugil, "Human Dignity in Muslim Perspective: Building Bridges," *Journal of Global Ethics* 13, no. 2 (May 4, 2017): 157–67, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449626.2017.1376700>.

through banners and public statements by village authorities and religious leaders, reinforce the idea that diversity is part of the collective identity.¹¹⁵ Symbols contribute to the transmission of shared values and to emotional attachment to social norms.¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, digital communication has expanded opportunities for interreligious interaction among younger generations, although challenges such as fragmentation, unequal access, and information asymmetry remain significant concerns.¹¹⁷

The practice of *rahmah*-based *tasāmuḥ* demonstrates that tolerance in a multireligious society is sustained not only by formal regulations but also by social relationships built through empathy and shared humanity. Burhani explains that Indonesian Islam develops through interaction between religious identity and social diversity, giving rise to inclusive forms of religious expression that appreciate plurality.¹¹⁸ Thus, the public sphere in Plajan functions as a communicative infrastructure through which *tasāmuḥ* is continuously sustained through practices of *rahmah*. Tolerance is sustained because residents have access to spaces to cultivate care, empathy, and meaningful relationships across religious differences.

Conclusion

This study finds that interreligious *tasāmuḥ* in Plajan Village is not a naturally occurring condition but an ongoing communicative process sustained through social interaction. The

¹¹⁵ H. Kartono, S.E., Head of Plajan Village, Focus Group Discussion, Plajan, August 2, 2025.

¹¹⁶ Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 134.

¹¹⁷ Jürgen Habermas, "Reflections and Hypotheses on a Further Structural Transformation of the Political Public Sphere," *Theory, Culture & Society* 39, no. 4 (July 5, 2022): 145–71, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764221112341>.

¹¹⁸ Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Defining Indonesian Islam: An Examination of the Construction of the National Islamic Identity of Traditionalist and Modernist Muslims," in *Islam in Indonesia* (Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 25–48, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9789048516254.003>.

principal finding is that *tasāmub* in this multireligious society is constructed through five interrelated communicative practices grounded in Islamic ethics. Dialogical communication fosters *ta‘āruf* (mutual acquaintance) as a basis for understanding the identities of other groups; deliberation facilitates *ta‘āyush* (coexistence) by enabling differences to be managed peacefully; social consensus facilitates *ta‘āwun* (cooperation) in matters of common concern; non-dominating communication reflects *‘adl* (justice) through fair participation; and the public sphere facilitates the practice of *rahmah* (care and social empathy) through sustained human interaction. These findings suggest that *tasāmub* in Plajan extends beyond the recognition of diversity but develops into social practices that support interreligious relations characterized by fairness, cooperative, and oriented toward the common good.

The contribution of this study lies in developing the perspective that communicative action in a multireligious society can be interpreted through the ethical dimensions of Islamic *tasāmub*. Communication has been shown to foster not only mutual understanding but also moral values such as mutual acquaintance, coexistence, cooperation, justice, and social care. At the practical level, sustainable tolerance requires inclusive spaces for communication, exemplary conduct by religious and local leaders, accommodation of village policies, and broader participation by women and young people in the public sphere. The experience of Plajan Village therefore provides a case illustrating how harmonious multireligious life can be sustained when tolerance is cultivated through fair and inclusive communication and supported by the humanistic values embedded in *tasāmub*.[]

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