



Tolerance Practices: Between Family and Religious Solidarity (Case Study of Chinese Ethnic Communities in the City of Surabaya)

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Abstract

Social conflicts originating from religious differences in Indonesia often occur between adherents of different religions and followers of the same faith. Though the ethnic Chinese community in Surabaya has different religions, they can foster positive behavior by respecting, accepting, and appreciating each other. This phenomenon is different from Conflicts between adherents of different religions that occurred in Tolikara District; conflicts caused by belief (religion) also appeared in Sampang and others. This study aims to explore the problem of religious difference conflict so that there is a solution. This research uses a qualitative approach designed to study the state of objects naturally. The theory used in this study is the theory of Cultural Pluralism. The result of this research is that the Chinese have various uniqueness, especially their religious tolerance, which various minorities in other cities should emulate. For them, religion is a human right of every person, so it does not become a barrier to interacting with one another.

Keywords: tolerance, conflict, Chinese ethnic

Paper type: Research paper

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Received: 25 January 2023; Received in revised form 28 March 2023; Accepted: 30 April 2023; Available online: 30 April 2023

Cite this document: Warsono, Kk. (2023). Tolerance Practices: Between Family and Religious Solidarity (Case Study of Chinese Ethnic Communities in the City of Surabaya). *The Journal of Society and Media*, 7(1), 210-227. DOI: 10.26740/jsm.v7n1.p210-227



INTRODUCTION

Socio-culturally, the Indonesian nation is a pluralistic society with various ethnicities, cultures, and religions. A pluralistic society is formed from the unification of ethnic communities by the national system, which is usually carried out by force (Febrianto, 2011). On the other hand, this pluralism can become development capital that can be managed as a source of income (Adeney-Risakotta, 2015, p. 23), such as in the tourism industry. But on the other hand, it can also be a potential for social conflict. They must accept living together peacefully, even though they still have an identity attached to themselves, groups, or classes (Rustanto, 2015, p. 90).

Social conflict describes the dispute, strife, tension, or conflict resulting from differences that arise in people's lives, both individual and group differences (Irwandi, 2017). Social conflicts originating from religious differences in Indonesia often occur between adherents of different religions and followers of the same faith. The emergence of stereotypes of one group against other groups of different religions usually triggers a conflict between religious communities, followed by attempts to attack each other, kill each other, and burn houses of worship and places of value for each religion (Yunus, 2014). Even though the root of the problem is not religion, religious differences often become a moderator variable for social conflict. An example of the social conflict that occurred in Poso (Alganih, I., 2006) and Ambon in 1998 involving followers of Islam and Christianity. The actual strife started with individual battles that happened to be of different religions (Islam and Christianity), then grew because of religious-based social solidarity. Even though they come from the same tribe, social solidarity based on religion is more substantial than ethnic ties.

Conflicts between adherents of different religions also occurred in Tolikara District, Papua, on July 17, 2015. The match was initiated by an attack by a group of Christian youths against Muslims carrying out Eid prayers. The burning of the mosque accompanied the invasion. The conflict occurred because there were simultaneous religious activities from two different groups, Muslims celebrating Eid al-Fitr prayers, while Christians also carried out spiritual revival services. The two actions brought together a large number of people. At the same time, the place

is also close. Each of them demands tolerance or considers the other to have no patience (Rosyid, 2017, p. 49)

Conflicts caused by belief (religion) also occurred in Sampang Madura in 2004, namely between groups of adherents of Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah and Shiites. Even though they claim to be Muslim and belong to the same ethnic group (Madura), their differences exist. The difference in understanding between the two and the lack of tolerance cause conflict (Ida Rahma, 2015).

Among the sources of social conflict caused by differences in ethnicity, custom, and culture, as well as religion, the potential for conflict originating from differences in religion is the highest. In the faith, there are beliefs about life in the afterlife (heaven and hell), so they are willing to die to defend their religious teachings (Warsono, 2022). Especially if religious differences go hand in hand with ethnic differences, the potential for conflict becomes even higher. This condition can trigger discriminatory behavior, such as SARA issues, disputes between groups, and even actions that lead to terrorism (Rado, 2016).

Tolerance is an attitude or human behavior that follows the rules, where one can respect, respect the behavior of others (Bakar 2015). Religious tolerance is one of the most critical points in the life of Indonesian people. In a plural society, there must be synergy between religious communities to respect and tolerate each other. In the worship of each religion, there should be no discrimination, intimidation, or provocation that undermines the integrity of religious harmony (Sofinadya, 2023). Surabaya, the capital of East Java Province, is an example of diversity because the people are multi-ethnic.

Even though Surabaya has various religions and Islam is the majority religion, religious harmony in Surabaya is relatively high. Reaction to the shocking suicide event bombings at three churches in Surabaya on 13 and 14 May, 2018 was proven. On Friday, 18 May 2018, an interfaith meeting was held at the Indonesian Christ Church (GKI). Daniel Hage, chairman of the GKI Diponegoro Surabaya Congregational Council, stated that the bombing of a church carried out by a terrorist group would not be able to shake up religious harmony in Surabaya. The bombing by terrorists does not create a bad stigma for any religion, including Islam (Mahendra, A. (2018).Jawapos.com, accessed on 2022-03-22 at 13.27 WIB).

The majority population in Surabaya is Javanese (83.68%). However, there are also various ethnic groups in Indonesia, such as Madurese (7.5%), Chinese

(7.25%), and Arabs (2.04%). Other foreign ethnicities include Balinese, Batak, Bugis, Manado, Minangkabau, Dayak, Toraja, Ambon, and Aceh (Soedarso et al., 2013). Multiculturalism in Surabaya is caused by waves of migration and urbanization from various regions (Basundoro, 2015). Surabaya is the second big city in Indonesia and a trading center since Dutch colonialism. However, they do not discriminate between ethnicity and religion so that they can live together in harmony and beauty. Willingness to accept, trust and live together is a cultural asset to strengthen multicultural life (Soedarso, 2013, p. 65).

History records the discriminatory treatment of Indonesians against the Chinese during the New Order era. In the New Order era, the government tried to eradicate Chinese people's culture. They are not allowed to practice and publicly teach their traditions and customs, including the prohibition of Chinese New Year celebrations, Cap Go Meh, and Lion Dance. Even worse, all pagodas had to be converted into monasteries. Confucianism is not recognized as an official religion in Indonesia.

Most Chinese communities in Surabaya live in Chinese villages or Chinatown villages located on the banks of the Kalimas River. One of the characteristics of the Chinatown village is the dominance of typical Chinese ornaments with high historical value. Apart from the decorations, there are still native Chinese descendants who maintain their culture. Since the Surabaya City Government is one of the tolerant areas in Surabaya, the harmony of ethnic Chinese spread across Surabaya has become a unique attraction. The Chinese ethnicity in Surabaya follows several religions, including Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, etc. (Source: Jawapos.com accessed on 15/5/2022 at 09.33 WIB).

Religious differences are not a reason for ethnic Chinese in Surabaya to be divided and cause social conflict. Even though the ethnic Chinese community in Surabaya has different religions, they can foster positive behavior by respecting, accepting, and appreciating each other.

The theory used in this study is the theory of Cultural Pluralism: Mosaic Analogy developed by Berkson. Berkson believes that every individual has the right to express culture democratically and freely. (Superman, 2001:15) freely. This

theory discusses actions that do not rule out specific cultural identities, including minority group identities (Khotimah & Januarizal, 2017, p. 119). Suppose in a society, some individuals adhere to Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. All can express their religious identity, forming a harmonious and peaceful life.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach designed to study the state of objects naturally, with the researcher as the primary tool (Creswell, 2013, p. 35). This research focuses on practicing religious tolerance in ethnic Chinese communities in Surabaya, which have different religions. The research location is the city of Surabaya, especially in the Chinese ethnic area known as Chinatown village.

Informants were selected by purposive sampling, which considers specific considerations (Agusta, 2003, p. 13). The informants chosen in this study were Mr. LK (Ethnic Chinese Christian), Mrs. LS (Ethnic Chinese Muslim), FJ (Ethnic Chinese Buddhist), and YN (Ethnic Chinese Catholic).

The data collection technique uses in-depth interviews to obtain data under the research focus—analysis using data analysis techniques Miles and Huberman. According to Emzir (2012: 37), the data obtained from the field is so large that it needs to be recorded carefully and in detail. Data reduction means summarizing, selecting points, focusing points, looking for the correct patterns, removing unwanted ones, and rearranging data. The data collected will be applied to the main research area.

In addition, data reduction and modeling are made by alternating between the two. The inference process can be done by alternating between data reduction and model inference. Then, if the data is insufficient during the closing process and conclusion, it can return to the initial data collection process to find and complete the data.

This study tests the validity of the data using source triangulation as a data validation technique to determine the accuracy and reliability of the results. Sources of data obtained from the effects of in-depth interviews, recorded interviews, and several other references such as journals and books can support the credibility and level of accuracy of the data (Sugiyono, 2011, p. 40).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chinese New Year as an Implementation of Religious Tolerance

China has a custom of celebrating the new year and traditional festivals. The Chinese New Year is one of the yearly festivals as a form of gratitude for all the gifts God has given to humans. Chinese New Year is one of the significant events that has grown into an annual festival always held in Surabaya's Chinatown. Myths related to Chinese New Year traditions have been passed down from ancestors orally from generation to generation. This tradition can last up to 2000 years and is continuing today.

All families with different religious beliefs continue to carry out the prayer tradition when entering the Chinese New Year. Even though they are Muslim, they still perform the ritual of burning money, which is dedicated to the spirits of their ancestors solemnly. Myths related to the Chinese New Year tradition have philosophical values originating from the local wisdom of the Chinese community, namely, the value of a child's devotion to his parents, the importance of family harmony, the value of self-reflection, and the value of optimism. This philosophical value makes the Chinese New Year a tradition the Chinese community must preserve.

The Chinese ethnic community in Surabaya still maintains a prayer altar to honor their ancestral spirits. Every family has a prayer altar, even though they have different beliefs in terms of religion. When welcoming the Chinese New Year, they burn pennies and send prayers to their ancestors by carrying out the ritual.

Traditions that have been mixed with a new religious practice, such as interfaith prayers carried out alternately. It is done when religious holidays or family events involving several religions gather. Mr. LK, a Surabaya Chinese ethnic activist who is a Christian, said,

"...My family, the first generation of the Chinese New Year Celebration, gathered in the living room to enjoy dinner. We pray together. My father is Confucian. He leads the prayer first, then prays according to his mother's Buddhist religion, followed by the religious prayer of my brother, who is

Muslim. Finally, I am a Christian. After we finished praying, we ate together. If you remember that that makes you miss, that's how we strengthen friendship "(Interview 10 May 2022)

The same thing was experienced by Mrs. LS's family, who are Muslim. He said something that was similar to Mr. LK.

"...Even though I am Muslim, there is still a place for prayer at my house. It is our tradition when we welcome the Chinese New Year. We burn coins dedicated to the spirits of our ancestors, and even though my family is Muslim, we still solemnly carry out the ritual. It is a form of tolerance and respect for ancestral spirits, and my grandparents are Confucianists." (Interview 25 May 2022)

Celebrating Chinese New Year is a place to build religious tolerance. The tradition built for a long time in the Surabaya Chinese ethnic community encourages them to maintain an attitude of mutual respect and appreciation. They can feel the benefits of tolerance from a safe, comfortable, peaceful, and prosperous life. On the other hand, family unity is far more important than religious differences. Different religions do not interfere with their relationship, let alone divide the family.

The Family Becomes a Space for Practising Religious Tolerance

To create a harmonious family, the role and function of parents is very decisive. Unhappy or disharmonious families result in a higher tendency for children to be emotionally unstable (Bakar 2018). Family relationships are complicated because they are in a close circle with values upheld together. Religion, as a belief, dramatically influences the life of family members. Therefore, it becomes natural if one family only adheres to one religion. However, in ethnic Chinese families, there is a uniqueness when one family adheres to a different belief, especially in the same house. For them, everyone has the freedom to embrace religion. As explained, Mr. LK is a Surabaya Chinese ethnic activist who is a Christian.

"...Religious tolerance has become a hereditary habit in my family. I am Christian, my brother is Muslim, while my father and mother are Buddhist and Confucian; until now, there have been no problems with families of different religions, and we are used to this. (Interview 10 May 2022).

Likewise, Mrs. LS as a follower of Islam also said the same thing,

"...During Eid al-Fitr celebrations, I always invite my extended family even though not all of my family are Muslim. We always start the event by praying interreligious, never forgetting. Likewise, when my relatives gather for Christmas celebrations" (Interview 25 May 2022)

YN, as an activist of the Surabaya Chinese ethnic group who is Catholic, also said the same thing, added by YN.

"...Often, during the celebration of Good Friday or Easter, when holding an event at home, the extended family is invited, be it Muslim or non-Muslim. Pray according to their respective beliefs in turn. During Good Friday or Easter, we always hold events at home and invite the extended family, both Muslims and non-Muslims, to eat together" (Interview, 26 May 2022).

Mr. LK, an activist of the Surabaya Chinese ethnic group who is a Christian, also said that if there is any religious activity, he will be pleased because he has spiritual wealth in his family.

"...I like it the most when visiting relatives' houses during the Eid al-Fitr celebrations because I always get much help. Since I was a teenager, I have accompanied my father to the pagoda to see Confucian worship. I know that Chinese people always apply the teachings of the Confucian Prophet in their lives. They understand the differences that exist and accept each other. Father liberated his children regarding religion, so from the beginning, my extended family lived in harmony despite many differences." (Interview 10 May 2022)

Family ties are far more critical for the Chinese community than religious ties. All family members will help each other if someone needs help. For them, there is a principle that as long as they are able and willing to benefit one another, they will help regardless of their religious background. The statement was conveyed by Mr. LK when welcoming the month of Ramadan every year; he said:

"...when my family welcomes the month of Ramadan, my father always wakes my sister for Sahur, and my mother cooks rice and side dishes. We eat together as a gesture of respect, and that's no problem" (Interview 10 May 2022)

For ethnic Chinese, family ties encourage them to develop religious tolerance. Freedom in religion has the consequence of having different faiths in one family, but differences in religion do not cause conflict. They help each other, including in carrying out worship.

The Social Environment Becomes a Space for the Practice of Religious Tolerance

As social beings, living together is a necessity that cannot be avoided. Even though there is an agreed-upon value system in society, they still have fundamental rights, including religion. Therefore, the diversity of beliefs in society must be addressed. The Chinese ethnic in the Chinatown village has good tolerance for religious differences, as stated by one of the respondents,

..." Moreover, they are also very tolerant of religious differences in the Chinatown neighborhood where I live. It is due to long historical factors. All people here are willing to live side by side, help each other, and not be separated from the teachings of their ancestors..." (Interview 10 May 2022)

The awareness to respect religious rights and to be tolerant towards followers of other religions has always been taught by ethnic Chinese families in Chinatown. They also often invite and attend events held by adherents of other religions within the family or the surrounding community. Especially within the scope of the family, a sense of kinship has been built up from generation to generation. As stated by FJ, who is a Buddhist,

"...Both of my parents always taught me tolerance from an early age every day; for example, I was still told to learn the lion dance, and I still prayed at the Horse Stable, respecting my ancestors even though I was Buddhist. Moreover, my mother's family was on average Christian, so during Christmas celebrations, we congratulated each other and family gatherings to eat together because there is awareness among families of the importance of maintaining tolerance" (Interview 26 May 2022)

Based on data collected from interviews, it can be analyzed that one of the ways to increase tolerance among ethnic Chinese in Surabaya is to recite interfaith prayers during religious holidays or at family events. The activity was done by the first generation of Chinese in Surabaya and passed on from generation to generation by the next generation. Through this activity, the community can

respect and appreciate each other so that there are no obstacles in carrying out activities to achieve comfort, peace, and prosperity between families.

The results of the interview above show that there is an awareness that humans, as social beings, cannot live alone without help from others. Everybody had service and interaction with each other to achieve goals. Every religion always teaches the best for its followers. In social life, one must have a sense of mutual understanding, love, and help.

Even though there are differences in religion in social life, they must maintain harmony and peace during worship because every citizen has the right to feel safe and comfortable carrying out daily activities without divisions between people. Mrs. LS as a member of the Chinese ethnic community in Surabaya who is Muslim, said,

"...When the Chinese New Year is celebrated and entering the time for the midday or asr prayers, my brothers remind me to pray, there is a prayer room at my house, and my brothers guard the door so that no one enters when I pray and wait until I finish praying" (Interview 25 May 2022)

The results of the interview above show that the Chinese community in Surabaya understands the importance of tolerance, mutual care, and respect for the rights of all people in society. As humans, we should build good relationships with each other because humans are social beings who cannot live alone but need the help of others.

For ethnic Chinese, tolerance of religion has been applied for generations. This tolerance attitude is the basis for the harmony of the Chinese ethnic community in Surabaya so that there are no significant inter-religious conflicts. If there is conflict, it is caused by accident and occurs naturally. The tolerance of ethnic Chinese is also visible in the public space. As YN said as an activist of the Surabaya Chinese ethnicity, who is a Catholic, said,

"...Religious tolerance is practiced during Chinese New Year and earth alms celebrations; this event is held annually. These two celebration activities are a place for interfaith communities to gather regardless of religious status" (Interview 26 May 2022)

On the other FJ's hand, a Buddhist ethnic Chinese community said,

"Routine activities every Sunday, yes clean the village, during this pandemic, there is a tough Wani Jogo village event, all people work together regardless of religious status, moreover gentlemen like gathering at Kamling posts with coffee together hehe" (Interview 26 May 2022)

In addition to Chinese New Year celebrations and earth alms, coffee gatherings and Pos Kamling are an arena for building religious tolerance, as expressed by Ms. LS, of Chinese ethnicity who is Muslim,

"...during Chinese New Year celebrations, activities at the security post on August 17 were very crowded. Even when the competition took place, it entered prayer time, and the call to prayer was heard. The community understood, meaning they stopped activities for a while to respect Muslims. Many people are involved even though they have different religions, which has become common. I have never looked at someone from any group" (Interview 25 May 2022)

The same thing was expressed by Mr. LK ethnic Chinese who is Christian.

"...When there are joint village clean-up activities and voluntary work, I always participate, as well as other people who are always enthusiastic about participating in working together and working together in the name of religion because all are the same; there are no differences" (Interview 10 May 2022)

They maintain good relations with residents despite many differences, including an attitude of tolerance between religious communities. The Chinese ethnic community in Surabaya already understands the importance of patience, mutual respect, and love for one another. The ancestral teachings to help each other are well implemented from generation to generation. All communities are united to work together and work together regardless of religious background. One of the forms of tolerance that are most interesting and in demand by young people is hospitality activities during the celebration of each religion. The Chinese ethnic community in Surabaya has long preserved the culture of visiting each other from house to house to share food and red packets to celebrate the holiday. As stated by YN as a Surabaya Chinese ethnic activist, who is Catholic,

"..During Eid al-Fitr, I always visit my neighbor's house and my Muslim friends. They serve cakes and rice boxes and then eat together. It's delicious; the sense of tolerance is like Muslims who visit each other between one Muslim and another." (Interview 26 May 2022)

Apart from that, YN also behaved the same way when Christmas Day arrived; many neighbors came to her house to express tolerance, among others.

"...Neighbors already know that on Christmas I always invite them to come to my house, as well as my friends from various religions, there is always a gift exchange and continued eating together" (Interview 26 May 2022)

Likewise, FJ, as a Chinese ethnic community who are Buddhists, said that,

"...Yesterday, during the commemoration of Vesak Day, my parents often invited the local community to eat together. There were Muslims and Christians who visited to congratulate and stay in touch. If sustenance is excess, distribute groceries to the less fortunate. This activity has been established for a long time and continues every year" (Interview 26 May 2022)

In line with FJ's statement, Mrs. LS, a Muslim, said something that was not much different.

"...My children were delighted during the Eid al-Fitr celebration because they always received Eid Angpao from visiting their friends' houses. The people here are very tolerant. Even though every community has a different religion, and they don't celebrate it, they are still willing to give Eid Angpao" (Interview, 25 May 2022).

The description above shows that joint activities, especially religious events carried out by ethnic Chinese in Surabaya, are usually held and animated by the general public and often across religions. Collaborative activities are used to get to know each other better. Everyday activities such as celebrating religious holidays are an excellent opportunity to foster brotherhood, tolerance, and interest in others, regardless of spiritual status. Patience creates a sense of brotherhood, mutual help, and mutual respect, regardless of group differences between individuals in society, creating a comfortable, peaceful, and prosperous country.

The Chinese ethnic community in Surabaya has a variety of religions, including Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and other beliefs. With these differences, it is not an obstacle for the Chinese community to maintain friendship by being tolerant of one another. They realize everyone can choose and carry out religious activities according to their beliefs. This awareness

is manifested in the spirit of cooperation, kinship, and not discriminating against differences.

Philip Quinn (Quinn, 2001, pp. 57–80; 2002, 533–537; 2005a, 136–139) argues that reflection on the reality of religious diversity can undermine perspectives that believe their religion is superior to other people's religions, resulting in religious tolerance. Thus a person will not be too aggressive toward other people's faiths and will prioritize acceptance rather than rejection. However, this statement was challenged by Alvin Plantinga (Plantinga, 1997, p. 296). He said there is no need to acknowledge that competitors of other religions are epistemically equal. Thus it is justified to maintain the perspective that religion itself is superior without seeing further reflection.

The debate about the superiority of religion, scientifically or in other ways, is unnecessary, whether epistemically superior or equal. Various philosophers also believe that individuals need more convincing that their religious viewpoint is excellent in some of these diverse perspectives. In a sense, he weakens his commitment. He assumes that epistemically they are equal and are not in a position to show that they are superior and are not justified in continuing to believe that their perspective, in reality, is excellent (Hasker, 2008). It is undeniable that this changing perspective is influenced by several important factors, one of which is a need that is more urgent than the matter at issue. There are more critical factors that can solve the problem. For the Chinese ethnic, there is an awareness that their identity is a minority ethnic group living in the area of the majority ethnic group so that they can foster a sense of togetherness, a sense of belonging, and mutual need for one another. Awareness and solidarity among ethnic minorities are stronger than seeing the differences in the religions they profess. In other words, solidarity as an ethnic minority is more vital than solidarity based on the same faith.

Discriminatory acts against minority groups in Surabaya can be said to be minimal because our ancestors have long passed down inter-religious harmony and have been adhered to by subsequent generations for generations. It is due to the long history of fellow emigrants. Ethnic Chinese respect their ancestors' teachings to maintain the family's integrity. They are also aware of their role as part of a pluralistic Surabaya. Therefore, social relations between religious

communities in the Chinese ethnic community in Surabaya always emphasize respect for differences.

Tolerance in religious life practiced by ethnic Chinese in Surabaya has reached a democratic stage marked by various practices of religious tolerance both within the family and within the community. One of the main factors of this good tolerance practice is cultural and ethnic similarities, which have a long history as fellow migrants.

These joint activities are intended to build a sense of kinship and mutual respect between people. A high sense of solidarity within each individual makes these activities run smoothly, regardless of differences in religious beliefs. Peace and prosperity among religious communities, especially in the ethnic Chinese community in Surabaya, are made aware of the spirit of cooperation and helping one another.

The ethnic Chinese in Surabaya do not care about religious differences in their environment. They still appreciate and respect each other. This sense of brotherhood, strong kinship, and adherence to the teachings of the Chinese ancestors can minimize the possibility of conflict between individuals, individuals, and groups and between religious groups. The Chinese ethnic community in Surabaya has upheld the process of tolerant life in social life so that unity is realized, which is a form of implementing the values of Pancasila in the third precept.

CONCLUSION

As an ethnic minority in Surabaya, ethnic Chinese have various uniqueness, especially their religious tolerance, which various minorities in other cities should emulate. For them, religion is a human right of every person, so it does not become a barrier to interacting with one another. The various religious activities were also animated by adherents of other religions, including family members, relatives, and neighbors of different religions. For the Chinese, family relationships are more important than religious identity. Thus, the friction between fellow ethnic Chinese in Surabaya caused by religion can be passed without causing division. Then Suggestion for the ethnic Chinese community in Surabaya, continue maintaining

and enhancing a sense of kinship and tolerance between religious communities. Refrain from being easily divided or provoked by outsiders who try to break the existing harmony. The Surabaya city government must provide fair and wise policies if conflicts between religious communities occur in the future. Surabaya government support is needed to maintain and preserve the existing diversity for people outside the city of Surabaya who also have a variety of religions if they can emulate the attitude of tolerance in religious life from the Chinese ethnic in Surabaya to be implemented in their respective neighborhoods.

Funding Acknowledgement

There is no funding for this research and no conflict of interest. This is independent research.

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