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Interpretative Analysis of Religious Tolerance Practices in Urban Communities an Existentialist Philosophy's Perspective

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Abstract: Religious tolerance in urban communities is a crucial issue in the context of religious diversity and social interaction. Interactions between individuals from different religious backgrounds often challenge freedom, moral responsibility, and authenticity in

pluralistic city environments. This study explores how existentialist principles, such as individual freedom, ethical responsibility, and authenticity, influence attitudes and practices of religious tolerance in urban society. The research uses a qualitative approach. Data was collected through field observations and interviews, supported by a literature review. The study employed purposive sampling with three religious leaders as the sample. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather in-depth and focused data on the research topic. A philosophical approach was employed to analyse how individuals understand and practice religious tolerance in urban environments. The study results show that from an existentialist perspective, religious tolerance is a human effort to break free from irrational and immoral actions that bind the mind. Ultimate truth is returned to God as the absolute reference, while humans remain contingent. The analysis of religious tolerance practices in Bandung reveals that tolerance has a strong foundation as long as it is grounded in authentic awareness and individual autonomy. This research concludes that the existentialist approach provides new insights into understanding the dynamics of religious tolerance in urban communities and that authenticity and moral freedom play a crucial role in shaping tolerant attitudes amidst religious plurality.

Keywords: Religious Tolerance, Existentialism, Urban Society.

Introduction

In the current era of globalisation, urban communities are becoming increasingly diverse regarding ethnicity, culture, and religion. This condition creates a dynamic and challenging environment, especially regarding religious diversity. Religion in urban society is no longer understood as something settled and practised, as it is in rural communities. For urban dwellers, religion often creates tension that produces differences in meaning and values. Religious practices considered commonplace in villages, such as the ability to recite the Qur'an, may be seen as extraordinary in the city. Still, they might lack significance if not connected to economic gain or material happiness (Hidayatulloh & Saumantri, 2024). The perception of values and life goals differs between rural and urban societies.

According to Rupke (2020), changes in religious practices in urban communities are influenced by two main factors. First, the emergence of the post-secular era, where religion is viewed as an essential element in the phenomenon of super-diversity. This diversity arises from converging various complex social processes and hegemonic categories, such as current discourses on Muslims in Europe. Second, the flow of globalisation drives urbanisation and pluralization and creates trans-local cities, enabling major religions to influence local religious practices.

Urban religiosity creates space for various complex religious phenomena and movements. Garbin and Strhan (2017) identify three critical implications in studying urban religion. First, the primary object of study is globalisation, with religion serving as a lens to understand the global lives of urban communities and their interactions. Second, religion cannot be defined based on specific spatial properties in the context of globalisation; rather, it must be understood in terms of the situations produced by globalisation. Third, the city is not a place that produces

cultural order but is a space where differences emerge and dissolve amid the ambiguous rationality of society (Garbin & Strhan, 2017).

Rupke (2020) explains that religious practices in urban communities cannot be entirely regarded as rational practices. The social-bureaucratic rationality proposed by Weber (2001) is not wholly manifested in the spiritual aspects of urban society. The tensions of urban life make religious practices in cities more complex than in rural communities. One prominent phenomenon in this regard is the presence of both religious tolerance and intolerance, occurring not only between followers of different religions but also among adherents of the same faith.

Religious tolerance is often seen as a practical solution to overcome conflicts and tensions between religious groups, especially in large, pluralistic cities. However, reality shows that religious tolerance is still marked by challenges such as prejudice, stereotypes, and subtle discrimination (Saumantri, 2023b). In urban communities, interreligious interactions are not only shaped by formal policies or regulations but also by the existential experiences of the individuals involved.

Currently, movements promoting tolerance tend to develop more in urban areas than rural ones. In major cities in Indonesia, for example, there has been an increase in activities and studies on religious moderation, the establishment of exemplary spaces for tolerance, such as tolerance villages, and government policies that support religious tolerance. Socio-cultural activities that focus on tolerance are also more frequently found in urban communities, which is rarely observed in rural societies.

In urban societies like Bandung, Indonesia, there is a religious phenomenon that rejects the categorization of the city as a locus of rationality and human liberation, as Weber (2001) mentioned. The religiosity of urban communities, which ideally should reflect the concept of human autonomy in modernity as proposed by Wagner (, actually contradicts the realities on the ground. Urban religious adherents do not automatically play the role of rational actors in their daily lives.

From an existentialist perspective, theological beliefs serve as the primary foundation for human actions, oscillating between anxiety and tranquillity and manifesting existence and reason (Tillich, 1944). Through their beliefs, individuals shape their concrete identities through their lives and actions. However, in this process, reason is often neglected as it becomes overshadowed by those beliefs. Karuvelil (2012) explains that actions taken in the name of religion, whether positive or negative, represent existential expressions trapped in extremities, particularly anxiety. Individuals who engage in extreme actions, such as violence in the name of religion, have existentially surrendered themselves to certain beliefs and neglected the aspect of reason and consideration for the existence of others.

In urban religiosity, such as in Bandung, theological ambivalence and the paradox of cultural-religious values create existential tensions for religious adherents. They find themselves caught between the fast-paced, competitive, productive, rational urban life and individualistic, materialistic lifestyles, alongside the boundary situations they experience, such as fatigue, boredom, and alienation. Efforts by urban communities to foster tolerance, as seen

in the tolerance villages of Bandung, only add to this existential-theological complexity (Saumantri, 2023c). Therefore, understanding urban religiosity through an existentialist perspective can provide more precise insights into the dynamics of religiosity that involve existential-theological tensions while also revealing the characteristics of urban life and its implications for the individuals engaged in that context.

Research Problem

With their diversity, urban communities often serve as arenas for complex interreligious interactions. On the one hand, cities provide space for pluralism and religious freedom; on the other hand, social tensions and subtle discrimination frequently emerge in everyday life. This phenomenon raises questions about the extent to which religious tolerance is genuinely created and practised in an urban environment filled with differences.

From an existentialist philosophical perspective, this research emphasises individual freedom, responsibility, and moral choices, presenting challenges in understanding how individuals in urban society confront religious differences and make decisions within the framework of tolerance. Thus, the main issues in this research are:

1. How can religious tolerance in urban communities be understood through the lens of existentialist philosophy?
2. How does each individual in urban society interpret tolerance within religious pluralism?

Research Focus

This research analyses religious tolerance practices in urban communities from an existentialist philosophical perspective. It explores how individuals in urban environments confront and respond to religious diversity and how core values in existentialism, such as freedom, responsibility, and authenticity, shape their moral decisions related to tolerance. Specifically, it examines the existential experiences of individuals in dealing with religious differences and the role of personal freedom and responsibility in shaping religious tolerance practices.

Research Aim and Research Questions

This research aims to analyse religious tolerance practices in urban communities through an existentialist philosophical perspective, emphasising how individual freedom, moral responsibility, and authenticity play roles in shaping attitudes toward religious diversity. Through a philosophical approach, this study explores how individuals, as free agents, make moral decisions when confronted with religious pluralism and how their awareness of social and ethical responsibility contributes to fostering a genuine atmosphere of tolerance.

Research Questions

1. How can religious tolerance in urban communities be understood through the lens of existentialist philosophy?

This question aims to understand the relationship between existentialist principles, such as individual freedom and responsibility, and attitudes and behaviours of religious tolerance in the city. The analysis includes how individuals' moral decisions reflect their freedom to choose and act in interreligious interactions.

2. How does each individual in urban society interpret tolerance within religious pluralism?

This question examines how individuals perceive and practice tolerance amidst the religious diversity present in urban communities. The focus is on individuals' understanding of that diversity.

Literature Review

Research on the religiosity of urban communities has been extensively studied across various disciplines, including sociology, religious studies, and philosophy. Numerous studies focusing on urban religiosity practices, particularly related to urban theology, have been conducted from diverse perspectives. Research by Genevieve (2016) indicates that religious teachings, through appropriate theological interpretations, can significantly promote social transformation in urban environments. Similar studies by Dias (2019) assert that religion, through religious institutions such as religious organisations, mosques, churches, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and other institutional frameworks, must play a secular role to contribute to urban life in the post-religious era, especially by strengthening community movement ethos.

Greenway (1979) presents an intriguing perspective on cities and urban societies as unique phenomena of religion. Cities are often identified as citadels of sin, where religion is seen as irrelevant due to the dominance of human rationality. However, in some religious allegories, cities are also viewed as the ideal embodiment of religious aspirations for a progressive, prosperous, and civilised life (the city of God). Therefore, studies on urban theology must be flexible, considering the dynamic elements of urban life. The dynamics and dialectics of religion in urban communities can also be examined in the context of family life (Greenway, 1979). This is illustrated in research by Muslimin et al. (2021), which reveals that social transformation in urban societies tends to encourage individualism and independence, ultimately contributing to increased family breakdowns.

In a more specific context, studies on the religiosity practices of urban communities can be observed in previous research about the city of Bandung. For example, research by Kusumalestari (2020) highlights how religious practices in urban areas like Bandung are often influenced by instant piety through the Hijrah movement, reflecting the commodification of religion. Religion serves as an escape from modern urban life's banal and secular nature. Another finding can be seen in the study by Viktorahadi and Ziaulhaq (2021), which indicates that in pluralistic, multicultural, and increasingly secular urban societies, religion becomes a subjective choice free from specific hegemonies, reflecting the maturation process of both religion and society itself. Meanwhile, research by Zulaiha et al. (2020) reveals that the diversity of culture, traditions, and religious understandings in urban communities leads to a growing interest in conservative and fundamentalist religious views among urban youth, as these offer

clear and straightforward solutions that resonate with the psychological conditions of young people in cities.

Studies conducted by Dozan and Hadi (2020) and Saefulloh (2021) indicate that urban communities' religious practices are undergoing significant changes in line with the development of information and communication technology. Many religious communities have emerged within urban society, where members interact online through various social media platforms. Information and communication technology has become crucial in developing religious teaching and outreach, simultaneously strengthening the urban community's connection to their religious groups. In a similar perspective, research by Idris and Zubair (2019) reveals that the practical nature of social relationships heavily influences the religious behaviour of urban residents. Social integration among adherents of different religions can occur when other factors unite their interest.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach to explore the practices of religious tolerance in urban communities through the lens of existentialist philosophy. A qualitative method is chosen for its ability to provide an in-depth and holistic understanding of individuals' experiences in navigating religious pluralism in the city. This research focuses not only on collecting empirical data but also on interpreting meanings and existential experiences related to attitudes and practices of religious tolerance. In-depth interviews and field observations are the primary strategies used in this study, concentrating on the subjective understanding of participants regarding freedom, responsibility, and authenticity in facing religious pluralism.

The sampling in this study was conducted using purposive sampling. This method deliberately selects participants based on specific criteria to ensure the involvement of individuals with relevant experience and perspectives on religious tolerance practices in urban communities. The sample consists of three religious leaders chosen based on their active participation in social and spiritual activities in a community known for its values of tolerance. This technique is supported by a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews to obtain comprehensive data on the participants' experiences and views. The interviews were conducted with three religious leaders: Ahmad Zaini, an Islamic cleric actively engaged in social and spiritual activities in Tolerance Village; Michael Simanjuntak, a Christian pastor who plays a significant role in the local Christian community; and Tenzin Lama, a Buddhist monk involved in spiritual and social activities in the village. These semi-structured interviews allow for in-depth exploration and flexibility in gathering data on the studied topic, thus enriching the researcher's understanding and analysis of the issue under investigation.

The main instrument used for data collection was field observation. Field observations were conducted semi-structured to provide flexibility in exploring participants' perspectives on religious tolerance. The observations focused on examining the experiences of individuals interacting with people from different faiths and their reflections on the meanings of authenticity, freedom, and responsibility in facing religious differences. Data triangulation techniques were employed to validate the findings, ensuring the consistency and accuracy of the data gathered from observations.

Research using a qualitative approach aims to seek holistic explanations while deeply testing the utilised theories based on findings and interpretations of the data collected in the field. In this context, this study also endeavours to create a description that explains the concepts and practices of religious tolerance and intolerance within urban communities from an existentialist perspective.

Data obtained from field observations were analysed using thematic analysis, where the data was read repeatedly to identify the main themes related to individual freedom, moral responsibility, and authenticity in religious tolerance. This analysis aims to understand how these concepts influence attitudes and practices of tolerance in pluralistic urban communities.

Results

Awareness of the Facticity of Life and Limits

Facticity encompasses characteristics identified through an objective third-party perspective, such as natural, social, psychological, and historical traits. However, individuals do not initially recognise their facticity through these external viewpoints. Awareness of facticity emerges as a burden in one's mood, representing the demand to "be." Although a person can adopt an objective perspective toward themselves, this is considered erroneous in existential philosophy, as an individual's existence cannot be fully defined by facts or third-party views (Deketelaere et al., 2019).

From the perspective of existential philosophy, humans must initially realise that their existence in the world is a kind of thrownness that occurs without request. Individuals cannot choose their place of birth, family, time, or life circumstances. Certain situations are predetermined as the starting points of their existence (Van Dung, 2020). In this context, a life filled with individual diversity, differing choices, ideas, decisions, and habits are part of the facticity that must be accepted as the fundamental condition of human existence.

Such life facticity can ultimately limit individual choices, including matters of faith, recognition of values, and the construction of differing thoughts. For instance, a person born into a Muslim family will automatically be introduced to Islamic teachings, just as someone born in a Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Confucian, or other belief environment will be. These initial situational differences in existential philosophy should be understood as an essential capital for realising that certain aspects of life are indeed outlined differently. An individual cannot demand that others be the same as them if their initial capital and the conditions they face are different (Jarvis, 2015). This awareness is crucial for fostering a more authentic understanding of religious tolerance.

In Kierkegaard's view, awareness of the differences in modalities of life and the limitations of choices should encourage individuals not merely to follow their desires. These limitations and differences are a destiny that must be ethically accepted for life to become more meaningful and for personal quality to be enhanced (Aditama et al., 2023). This awareness signifies a transition from the aesthetic stage, where individuals only care about themselves, to the ethical stage, where individuals begin to pay attention to others and have a more meaningful communal life. In the moral stage, morality becomes the standard in determining life choices,

replacing personal passions. Reason and conscience are crucial in guiding individuals to distinguish between morally good and evil, enabling self-control over desires and actions.

The facts about the factuality of human life and the limiting situations from birth to death indicate that individual choices are often constrained in terms of religious belief. From the very beginning of life, certain conditions can lead a person to adopt specific religions and teachings, causing them to grow up within that faith. Ideally, religious belief should result from a free and rational subjective awareness, as faith in God and religious teachings should not be based on coercion (Buben, 2013). In Islam, the testimony of faith must be performed voluntarily and with full awareness. However, the limiting situations an individual faces from an early age, such as family influence, environment, education, and cultural values, often shape one's beliefs as something external sources accept (Bhat, 2016).

This situation makes it difficult to regard a person's faith as the result of conscious and rational choice, as belief is often a product of life conditions and the limiting situations experienced. According to Moyn (2012), from the perspective of existentialist philosophy, adhering to a particular religion is not merely a matter of divine guidance but also the result of an individual's struggle with life's limitations that make them more accepting of certain teachings while rejecting others. Ideally, each individual should deeply search for truth, explore religious teachings, and ultimately make decisions regarding faith based on well-considered understanding. A faith that has been tested is a faith that is more worthy of being held. However, this ideal condition is rarely found in society. Most people become trapped in the routines of life that consume their time and energy, leaving little room to contemplate existential or spiritual issues. They tend to passively accept the teachings instilled in them from an early age without much questioning. Only a few genuinely undertake a serious quest for existential questions, sometimes even postponing their beliefs in favour of deeper exploration (Nasution, 2022).

Awareness of human limitations in faith and the search for truth should open new perspectives to strengthen the foundation of religious tolerance. The plurality of beliefs and differing convictions is a reality that cannot be ignored, as the available choices are often the result of situations that cannot be deeply considered (Saumantri, 2023a). In this context, blaming other beliefs usually lacks a clear foundation, given the limitations of the human capacity to determine their faith. From Kierkegaard's perspective, these limitations should encourage individuals not only to be passive observers of religious tolerance but also to become active participants who prioritise moral standards as a reference for their attitudes and actions (Irwin, 2017).

This perspective implies that one cannot engage in actions that harm others in public spaces or the context of communal life. Recognition of personal freedom must be accompanied by respect for the freedom of others. A genuinely free individual acts according to the guidance of reason, making choices based on rationality and moral necessity. If conditional desires still determine a person's actions or are not based on reason, then that individual remains bound by external factors and has not yet achieved true freedom. Crime, for example, reflects individuals' inability to free themselves from impulses conflicting with reason.

In the context of religious tolerance, tolerant behaviour is not a conditional choice but a necessity that arises from a sound mind. Tolerance is a rational choice that is essential for achieving harmonious coexistence. Being tolerant reflects an individual's freedom from desires driven by egoism or lust, which are not based on moral considerations. Therefore, this understanding is crucial for strengthening the ethical foundation of religious tolerance, where living peacefully alongside one another is an indispensable need, not merely a choice made under specific conditions (Saumantri, 2023d).

Individuals who live solely at the aesthetic stage, focused on fulfilling their desires and personal wants, will ultimately end up in despair. This state eventually compels individuals to take a stance regarding their conflicts. They must be brave and decisive in choosing whether to remain in despair or to move toward a higher stage of existence. Kierkegaard describes this situation as the choice to remain trapped in the aesthetic stage, surrounded by the limited allure of sensual pleasures, or to transcend the aesthetic boundaries to achieve a deeper existence (Irwin, 2017).

Meanwhile, individuals who have transcended the aesthetic stage and reached the ethical stage will regard the existing norms and rules as important boundaries for themselves and their lives. This happens because they implement these rules with awareness and without coercion. For them, the rules serve as guidelines that guide and direct their lives. In this condition, individuals will recognise the existence of freedom for themselves and others, which in turn fosters a sense of mutual respect. According to Kierkegaard, this condition represents the essence of an ethical human being who possesses true freedom.

Tolerance as a Rational and Free Subject

Tolerance amid dynamic and plural urban societies is a rational choice, where rationality becomes a key characteristic of urban communities. Weber (2001) describes the city as a locus of rationality that liberates humans from irrationality. In this context, urban societies acknowledge truths grounded in science, allowing individuals to think scientifically and measure their decision-making processes. However, in Bandung, the recognition of rationality does not eliminate space for religious beliefs; instead, these beliefs serve as cultural rationality that helps the community navigate the challenges of modernity and globalisation.

Empirical data shows that religious tolerance in the urban community of Bandung has been well-established, mainly through the presence of tolerance villages. In this context, the rationality of the city should align with individual rationality, thereby encouraging ethical actions in public spaces as a manifestation of the community's freedom from the shackles of irrationality and immorality. Consequently, intolerant actions would have no justification or place in the urban society of Bandung.

Urban life often presents situations that trap individuals in a prison of irrationality, where their actions are frequently unjustifiable. Realising an ideal condition in urban society becomes a challenge, especially with the various temptations of interests, the urge to win in competition, the quest for opportunities, and the emergence of new values from the rapid development of global culture (Dias, 2019). Under such pressures, individuals may lose their sense of reason, become unable to reason, and rely solely on fulfilling pragmatic interests.

In this context, it is unsurprising that crime rates in urban areas tend to be higher than those in rural areas. The pressures faced by urban residents can lead to stress and depression, limiting their capacity for rational thinking. Individuals become aware that available opportunities are not evenly distributed and that positive outcomes often require time and effort. In urgent situations, when immediate solutions are needed, irrational actions that lack rational basis are frequently chosen. The opportunity to achieve quick gains, even though unethical means, becomes a primary option, resulting in individuals being unable to consider the moral aspects and the common good of living together (Agbaria, 2019).

This situation is not ideal for fostering religious tolerance. In a pressure-filled urban society, tolerance requires higher ethical awareness and rationality. When genuine rationality and spiritual consciousness, which can prevent evil actions, are lacking, tolerance becomes a rare commodity. However, if tolerance still exists in Bandung, as expressed by interview respondents, it may be a form of superficial tolerance. Conversely, it could also reflect a strong foundation of community awareness regarding the plurality of beliefs and religious consciousness that prevents irrational actions and crime.

Being kind to others, respecting differing beliefs without focusing on differences, and accepting the presence of others with various shared interests align with rational considerations and ethical principles. Tolerant actions are an unconditional obligation, undertaken not out of specific interests but as a realisation that it is correct. Therefore, when religion teaches its adherents to respect other beliefs as part of the divine order in life, it reflects the alignment of religious teachings with the inherent nature of human reason.

Tolerance as an Authentic Action

Authentic religious practice manifests the implementation of tawhid teachings in Islam, which emphasise God's pure oneness. Tawhid makes God the primary support and the sole purpose of human life, asserting that nothing is more important than Him. Everything belongs to Him, so nothing else is worthy of worship or idolatry. Although tawhid is a core teaching in Islam, its values and spirit can also be found in the teachings of other religions.

The enforcement and practice of tawhid teachings negate the existence of anything besides God but do not eliminate the existence of the subject who worships. Individuals remain aware of their contingent existence, which depends on the absolute existence of God, the cause of human presence in the world. In Islamic teachings, humans are created to worship Him, yet this determination of mission does not restrict individual freedom. On the contrary, this mission liberates humans from idols and illusions that can trap them in irrational desires and actions (Hidayatulloh & Saumantri, 2023). God, as *causa prima*, is the only rational being worthy of worship and the ultimate purpose of human life.

The belief in tawhid can save humans from various illusions, which Nietzsche called "gods" that must be killed, as these illusions obstruct the achievement of a valid reason. These illusions trap individuals in narrow perceptions of truth, closing space for broader understanding. The truth is a belief accepted without scrutiny, becoming an absolute measure in life, such as economic interests (money), political power, and cultural identity (Bamford, 2008). The practice of religious tolerance functions as an effort to return individuals to true tawhid, which,

from the perspective of existentialist philosophy, frees individuals from the prison of illusions and idols, allowing for more authentic actions.

Referring to tawhid as a spirit of liberation from the prison of illusions and idols created by humans, religious tolerance must be understood as an effort to free society from specific illusions and idols that ensnare them (Nasser, 2022). Religious tolerance is not a restriction on the freedom of expression in belief but rather an affirmation that assumptions and religious interpretations held as absolute truths can be illusions (Lestari, 2020). In this context, existentialist philosophy teaches that tolerant actions toward individuals with differing beliefs do not tarnish one's faith; instead, they affirm the awareness of the potential illusions and idols within oneself that can lead to arrogance and a closed-off attitude toward those who possess actual truth, which is God.

Tolerance liberates society from the illusions and idols of restricted truths, essential for returning urban communities to their primordial roots that unify their lives. City life, often filled with idolised elements such as work, ambition, power, and community identity, can potentially distance people from true unity. The primordial unity that fundamentally binds humanity lies in the testimony of truth and the absolute existence of God as the only necessary being (Genevieve, 2016). Structures, cultures, values, and interests are merely profane and temporary bonds. The existential testimony that all human beings are contingent existences before God should foster the awareness that no individual has the right to deem themselves as the most righteous or powerful.

Tolerance as the Ethics of an Autonomous Self

Subject autonomy in communal life refers to an individual's ability to make decisions and act based on rational considerations, free from external coercion or the influence of other factors. This autonomy is reflected in the individual's ability to express their views amidst the flow of societal opinions, which may not always be rational, and in the courage to assert right and wrong without fear of being ostracised or treated differently by their social environment.

The condition of subject autonomy is difficult to achieve, especially when individuals are trapped within the voice and will of the masses. In religious behaviour, this autonomy is often lost due to the domination of communal teachings that suppress personal opinion (Muchlis, 2022). Additionally, freedom can be eroded when individuals become trapped in religious habits that prevent personal spiritual or existential-religious experiences. For example, many people are caught in the routine of communal worship without a deep understanding of the meaning and value of the rituals, or they engage in religious practices merely for the sake of appearance in front of others.

Religious teachings emphasise the importance of cleansing the heart from envy, jealousy, and the desire for recognition, with the primary goal of restoring individual autonomy. The absence of jealousy toward others should arise from the understanding that everything others possess belongs to the God whom one worships. Furthermore, virtuous actions should not be motivated by the recognition of others, for God knows all human deeds, whether good or bad. If God becomes the sole purpose and source of value for one's actions, it is inappropriate for individuals to feign or seek excuses for their behaviour. Acts of tolerance should not be aimed

at garnering praise but rather as an affirmation of one's autonomy in social life (Syafaah & Saumantri, 2024).

Religious tolerance in society serves to cultivate an individual's ethical capabilities. From an existentialist philosophical perspective, humans are subjects who define the meaning of their own lives and bear responsibility for their choices. Thus, individuals are accountable for how they live their lives to recognise their facticity and affirm their existence in the world. Through this process, individuals are encouraged to say "Yes" to life and to persevere within it (Hoffman, 2012). Conversely, those who evade responsibility for their actions reflect cowardice and refuse to face their destiny. In existentialist thought, such individuals become slaves to the thoughts and fears they have created.

The ability to say "Yes" to life affirms individual existence amidst absurd choices that compel humans to accept their fate sincerely. For those who are not religious, this attitude reflects a rational ethic that enables individuals to take pride in their lives and find happiness within themselves. However, for the religious, this stance signifies total submission to the will of God, living the life placed before them with sincerity and in the best possible way. This attitude is not fatalism, surrendering to life, but rather a declaration of readiness to fulfil the mission of life according to God's decree, marking the absolute submission of humans to their Creator.

Being tolerant while expressing love for God and His teachings through symbols and specific expressions is a practice of saying "Yes" to the life mission that God has outlined. Individuals must realise that their presence in the world is not merely a choice but a divine purpose that can be understood through concrete actions of doing good for fellow creatures (Hoffman, 2012). The diversity of beings and differences in belief regarding God are not meant to indicate who is astray but serve as an exercise in accepting the paradoxes and absurdities of life as part of God's decree with the utmost sincerity.

In the context of communal life amidst differences in faith and belief in the city of Bandung, individuals must realise that they cannot be solely fixated on fulfilling personal desires, which, in Kierkegaard's view, is referred to as the aesthetic stage (Czakó, 2015). Every person must develop an ethical awareness, including an understanding of morality and living together. This awareness can only be cultivated adequately if individuals can restrain their desires and direct their efforts toward achieving a more meaningful life through fulfilling moral responsibilities. However, it is essential to note that, as Kierkegaard explained, individuals should not remain at the ethical stage alone but must strive to advance to the higher religious stage.

The ethical stage, while essential, also has its limitations. One of these arises when individuals follow established rules and values, but the context of those rules is limited. Humans may adhere to rules, yet under certain conditions, those rules apply universally only within their specific group (Czakó, 2015). For example, the rules established by a community in one region may have different characteristics and principles than those in another.

The weakness of the ethical stage lies in the temporary and impermanent nature of human-made rules, which can conflict with other sets of rules. This means that every rule humans create is not eternal and can change over time. Focusing solely on the ethical stage may

trap individuals within narrow, temporary regulations. According to Kierkegaard, this condition can lead to despair, especially when a person who strictly follows norms feels pressured by the reality that these norms are only universal within a particular community. As a result, the individual might long for a more universal and harmonious set of rules without conflicting with others (Buben, 2013). In this context, Kierkegaard urges the individual to rise above the ethical stage and seek a higher, more enduring foundation for life, often found in the religious stage, where the ultimate truth lies in a relationship with the divine.

For Kierkegaard, the ethical stage is a transitional phase in which individuals experience a shift toward a higher stage. However, during this stage, individuals have not fully resolved certainty-related issues. Kierkegaard explains that individuals at the ethical stage realise that their ethical life is insufficient to solve their problems and life choices (Králík, 2015). At this stage, individuals often feel a sense of failure because they cannot navigate the extraordinary situations they encounter, which are usually complex and contradictory. Ultimately, they reach the final stage, known as the religious stage, where they emerge in their authenticity as a unique individual before God. The spiritual stage, or the stage of faith, is characterised by a total surrender to God as the ultimate source of law and morality.

In the religious stage, individuals no longer rely on standardised morals but instead adopt an inner approach (faith) toward God. Humans exhibit a profound commitment to God at this stage, freeing them from meaninglessness and anxiety in making life decisions. This stage is regarded as the highest, as individuals no longer discuss concrete matters but have penetrated the deepest essence of human existence (Soggie, 2009). At this stage, individuals can recognise their equality before a higher power. They are not trapped in narrow and exclusive beliefs but fully surrender to God and strive to attain His forgiveness. Thus, humans have achieved deep tolerance without formal rules at this religious stage.

Discussion

Religious tolerance reflects the conflict between the awareness of a free self and a self bound by circumstances and choices. On one hand, individuals have the freedom to choose their own beliefs as an expression of autonomous existence. On the other hand, they are bound by social realities involving interactions with others with different beliefs. Tolerance becomes the result of balancing personal freedom with social demands, where individuals must acknowledge the freedom of others without sacrificing their principles. This aligns with the research by Jones et al. (2022), which explains that individuals with a strong awareness of their freedom are more likely to exhibit higher levels of tolerance when they feel able to express their beliefs without feeling threatened by the existence of other beliefs.

In addition, the study by Ali and Hassan (2023) emphasises that social conditions, including government policies and social pressures within residential environments, influence religious tolerance. In urban communities, where interfaith interactions are more frequent, individuals who engage in shared social activities tend to be better equipped to navigate the conflict between personal freedom and social norms, ultimately fostering a deeper sense of tolerance.

This is consistent with existentialist philosophy, which offers the perspective that religious tolerance is a form of recognition of the existence of others. According to Sartre, every individual possesses both the freedom and the responsibility to acknowledge the existence of others, particularly in the context of differing beliefs (Thompson, 2008). Therefore, religious tolerance becomes a concrete manifestation of full recognition of every individual's existential freedom and diversity.

The findings of this study support this concept, showing that individuals involved in interfaith practices are more likely to demonstrate an attitude of recognising the existence of others. This is reinforced by the research (Hermanto, 2022), which explains that active participation in interfaith dialogue helps individuals understand tolerance as an existential acknowledgement rather than merely a social obligation.

In existentialist philosophy, the central core is individual freedom to choose amidst limitations. Every person is regarded as an independent subject, yet often trapped by choices restricting their freedom. To achieve true freedom, one must wisely use reason, dare to think independently, and make decisions autonomously (Thompson, 2007). However, this freedom often applies only in the private-subjective realm. In the public sphere, where interactions with others occur, this freedom becomes constrained by the presence and rights of others (Purba et al., 2023). In this context, individual freedom must align with rationality that acknowledges the rights and freedoms of others and is grounded in moral principles and sound reasoning.

Religious tolerance, from the perspective of existential philosophy, is a manifestation of the individual's freedom to act by reason, conscience, and rational intuition. A sound mind will recognise pluralism as a fact of life, and acceptance and respect for existing differences are an ethical necessity. An individual who practices tolerance merely as a command or conditional obligation has not yet acted by reason and the principles of freedom (Jacobs, 2011). Therefore, existential philosophy emphasises that awareness of religious tolerance must be rooted in a profound understanding of rational ethical choices so that tolerance becomes a necessity rather than just an obligation. In this context, the knowledge of tolerance cannot be separated from the individual's awareness of their moral responsibility towards others, which includes recognition of the dignity and rights of each person.

This aligns with Kierkegaard's view, which states that individuals trapped in hedonistic attitudes or the pursuit of personal pleasure cannot be considered truly free. Freedom focusing solely on fulfilling personal desires and passions can lead to boredom, saturation, exhaustion, and a meaningless life. Conversely, true freedom can only be achieved when individuals free themselves from the entanglements of desires and base instincts that can lead to wrongdoing (Králík, 2015). True freedom is responsible freedom, safeguarding oneself and life from destructive things.

In existentialist thought, religion is confronted with the challenge of proving itself as a source of freedom and not merely as a limiting norm. Religion serves as a spirit of self-liberation aligned with the existentialist vision through teachings of virtue that resonate with human reason. When religion prohibits its followers from stealing others' rights or engaging in actions that endanger themselves and harm others, such prohibitions are not restrictions but efforts to free humanity from irrational actions stemming from imprisoning elements (Muttaqin, 1970).

In this context, the spirit of liberation in religious tolerance finds its meaning; individuals are not only asked to respect other beliefs as a theological paradox but are also encouraged to adopt a tolerant attitude. Intolerance allows individuals to free themselves from the illusions of beliefs that hinder freedom.

As entities with self-awareness, individuals are confronted with the search for deeper meaning and purpose in life, which often leads to reflection on the existence of God. The authenticity of the subject is manifested through existential awareness that God is the ultimate goal and the only actual existence. As contingent consciousness, humans depend on God as the owner of life (Ibrarullah & Inamullah, 2022). Therefore, every decision and action taken must involve the existence of God. This existential understanding applies only to individuals who have faith and genuinely practice tawhid. In existential philosophy, self-authenticity is determined by the ability to act and behave according to reason. In contrast, in religious teachings, authenticity is determined by individuals' ability to free themselves from things that distance them from God as the foundation of life (Nandini, 2023).

In the search for authentic meaning in life, individuals often find that their relationship with God becomes the centre of all their thoughts and actions. The authenticity of the subject is manifested through existential awareness that God is the ultimate goal and the only actual existence. As contingent consciousness, humans depend on God as the owner of life (Thompson, 2007). Therefore, every decision and action taken must involve the existence of God. This existential understanding applies only to individuals who have faith and genuinely practice tawhid. In existential philosophy, self-authenticity is determined by the ability to act and behave according to reason. In contrast, in religious teachings, authenticity is determined by individuals' ability to free themselves from things that distance them from God as the foundation of life.

Amid complex social dynamics that often demand adherence to certain norms, individuals may become trapped in behaviours that do not reflect their true selves. An existentialist approach to tolerance can help individuals break free from the false attitudes that frequently arise in urban social life. In this context, individuals may appear friendly outwardly while behaving oppositely behind the scenes, showing acceptance in front of others but quietly rejecting it. Such insincerity is common daily, filled with individualism and competition for personal interests. By fostering tolerance, individuals can express authentic attitudes that reflect their true personalities rather than merely conforming to social norms that demand inauthentic appearances.

In the search for the meaning of life, individuals face the challenge of finding the true significance of their existence, where the meaningfulness of life is a personal endeavour. According to Kierkegaard's existentialism, life has no inherent meaning; religion also lacks significance if not adequately understood (Webster, 2004). Therefore, an accurate understanding of religious teachings is crucial, as a narrow understanding can limit interpretation and trap individuals within the confines of truths they have constructed for themselves.

Individuals are responsible for determining the values that guide their lives in the search for meaning. In existentialist philosophy, meaning can only be created by formulating values

and existence through human consciousness. Therefore, religious understanding should serve as a means for individuals to be themselves and achieve happiness; if practices and expressions of belief lead to anxiety, this indicates a misunderstanding of the religious teachings they possess.

Amid life's uncertainties, individuals often face dilemmas regarding their purpose and meaning, manifesting as existential questions. These questions are typically answerable only through the experience of absolute existence (God) as the source of all that is. Individuals who are religious yet feel doubt and do not find peace in the differences of faith indicate that the process of formulating a true belief is still incomplete, which does not guarantee their existence as servants of God who are journeying toward Him.

Conclusions and Implications

Religious tolerance, from the perspective of existentialist philosophy, represents an effort to liberate individuals from irrational and immoral actions that bind them to their own illusions and mental idols, thus allowing them to lead a more authentic and meaningful life. In this context, actual truth is understood as something that is returned to God, who serves as the sole reference for absolute truth and necessary existence, providing a solid moral foundation for human actions. Humans, with their faith and the truths they hold, are merely contingent entities with no right to declare themselves as the sole embodiment of actual truth; instead, they must acknowledge the existence of other truths that are also valid within the context of plurality. An existentialist analysis of religious tolerance in Bandung City indicates that religious tolerance in this region has a strong foundation, primarily when rooted in the awareness of authentic and autonomous subjects within the community who can appreciate differences and seek a deeper understanding of others' beliefs.

This research has significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it expands the understanding of religious tolerance through the lens of existentialist philosophy, which emphasises freedom, moral responsibility, and individual authenticity while contributing to the academic discourse on the relationship between existentialist philosophy and social practices in urban society. These findings can serve as a basis for formulating social policies and educational programs that promote interreligious tolerance, focusing on individual awareness of freedom and responsibility. Furthermore, the results of this study are relevant for religious organizations and community leaders in developing more authentic and inclusive interfaith dialogues.

Suggestions for Future Research

This research opens opportunities for further studies on religious tolerance in urban societies. First, comparative studies across cities in Indonesia and other countries could enrich understanding tolerance dynamics in different cultural contexts. Second, future research could explore the role of social media and technology in shaping perceptions and practices of religious tolerance in urban communities. The influence of digitalisation on interfaith interactions and the dissemination of existentialist values is also an interesting area for further investigation.

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