

The Role of a Harmonious Family in Shaping Tolerant Attitudes in a Multicultural Society

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of harmonious families in shaping attitudes of tolerance within multicultural societies, analyzed through the lens of symbolic interaction theory. In this context, a harmonious family serves as the primary social unit that provides a foundation for individuals to understand and appreciate social, cultural, and religious differences. Using a qualitative research approach based on a literature review, the study examines how symbolic interactions within the family, including open communication and constructive conflict resolution, foster tolerant attitudes toward diversity. The analyzed data indicate that harmonious families can instill values of empathy, fairness, and respect for differences, which are essential in multicultural societies. The study finds that families with open communication patterns and strong emotional support are more likely to produce individuals capable of resolving conflicts peacefully and contributing to inclusive communities. However, the study acknowledges limitations in empirical data and recommends further field research to explore the relationship between harmonious families and the development of tolerance in diverse environments. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights for policymakers and educators in strengthening the role of families in creating tolerant and peaceful societies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The family is the first and foremost institution in the life of every individual, playing a pivotal role in providing a foundation for education, morals, and social values from childhood (Sugitanata & Aqila, 2024). In this regard, a harmonious family life is often considered a strong foundation for shaping a stable personality, both emotionally and socially (Arif Sugitanata, 2024). Through interactions within the family, individuals learn fundamental values such as honesty, justice, empathy, and mutual respect (Sugitanata, 2024a). In the context of a society that continues to evolve with diverse cultures, religions, and ethnic backgrounds, the challenges faced by families in instilling positive values have become increasingly complex (Zhou & Chung, 2022). Modern life, characterized by various social, economic, and cultural dynamics, creates an urgent need for a deeper understanding of how families contribute to the development of attitudes and behaviors, particularly in embracing diversity within a multicultural society (Sugitanata & Nisa, 2023). A multicultural society refers to a community composed of various ethnic, religious, cultural, and value-based groups (Sugitanata et al., 2023). Amid such complexity, families are expected to serve as the primary social agents in instilling universal values such as tolerance, mutual respect, and social justice among their members.

Scholars have conducted research highlighting the critical role of families in shaping individuals who are tolerant within multicultural societies. Studies indicate that families act as the main agents in socializing values of tolerance or prejudice among children and adolescents. These studies underscore how families can foster tolerant attitudes or, conversely, perpetuate ethnic prejudices through daily interactions (Zagrean et al., 2022). Other research has also emphasized the importance of family communication in teaching tolerance to children. These studies find that an open family environment that encourages dialogue about differences in religion, culture, and worldviews can enhance children's ability to interact tolerantly within a multicultural society (Dursun-Bilgin et al., 2018).

Although the aforementioned studies provide a general understanding of the importance of socialization within families, there remains a gap in the literature concerning how harmonious families specifically contribute to the formation of tolerant individuals, particularly in the context of multicultural societies. Therefore, the focus of this study is to address this gap by deeply exploring the role of harmonious families in shaping tolerant individuals within multicultural societies. This study also aims to analyze the role of harmonious families in fostering tolerance in multicultural societies through the lens of symbolic interaction theory. This theory offers a conceptual framework for understanding how meanings, symbols, and interactions within harmonious families shape the perspectives and behaviors of family members in interacting with a multicultural society. Thus, this study not only highlights the importance of harmonious families in creating tolerant individuals within multicultural societies but also provides an in-depth analysis of the social processes involved in shaping such attitudes.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive-analytical approach based on a literature review. The primary data sources consist of books, journals, and relevant prior studies. The criteria for selecting the literature include several aspects, such as relevance to the research topic, theoretical and empirical coverage that supports the analysis, and the credibility of the sources, determined by publications in

reputable journals or credible academic publishers. The selected literature focuses on the role of harmonious families, symbolic interaction theory, and the formation of tolerance attitudes in multicultural societies.

The data analysis process is conducted thematically, where data are classified based on key themes emerging from symbolic interaction theory, such as symbolic meanings in family interactions, the role of communication in harmonious families, and their contribution to tolerance. The collected data are then linked to the core concepts of symbolic interaction theory, including symbols, meanings, and Mead's concept of social interaction (Blumer, 1986; Mead, 1934). Symbolic interaction theory is employed as the analytical framework to explain how meanings are constructed through interactions within the family. For instance, concepts such as "me" and "I" from George Herbert Mead are applied to identify how individuals internalize values of tolerance through dialogue and observation within the family. Additionally, Blumer's premises are used to interpret family interactions in creating situational definitions that foster attitudes of tolerance in multicultural societies.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Indicators of Family Harmony

Family harmony refers to relationships in which each member lives in an atmosphere of love, support, and effective communication (Halimatussyadiah & Andrian, 2024). Research shows that families with a high level of harmony exhibit good communication quality among their members. This harmony also involves a balance of roles and responsibilities among family members (Windarwati et al., 2021). Another study found that families who divide roles and responsibilities fairly have a 20% higher level of life satisfaction compared to families with imbalanced role distribution (Landolfi et al., 2021; Sirgy & Lee, 2023). This highlights the importance of balance in fostering family harmony.

One of the main indicators of family harmony is the quality of communication among members. Effective communication fosters understanding, trust, and emotional closeness (Abidin, 2011). Data indicates that families with open communication tend to experience 30% fewer prolonged conflicts compared to those facing communication barriers (Diana Divecha, 2020; Huang et al., 2023). Additionally, other studies reveal that 75% of couples participating in communication training programs report improved relationship quality (Tasha Seiter MS, 2021). Openness in communication also enables family members to share problems effectively, allowing them to be resolved before escalating into more serious issues (Agustina & Lestari, 2017).

Another crucial aspect of maintaining family harmony is emotional and economic support. Emotional support encompasses feelings of safety, love, and care shared among family members. Research indicates that children receiving emotional support from their parents have a 50% lower risk of developing anxiety or depression later in life (Anderson et al., 2024; Gariépy et al., 2016; Parenteau et al., 2020). From an economic perspective, meeting basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter is also vital. Studies show that families with economic stability are more likely to have stable relationships and lower divorce rates compared to families facing financial difficulties (Habib, 2020). Achieving a balance between emotional and economic support is essential for creating a stable family environment.

Values and norms upheld by the family also play a significant role in maintaining harmony. Research suggests that families with shared values, such as honesty, responsibility, and mutual respect, are less likely to experience conflicts that damage relationships (Cummings & Schatz, 2012). Moreover, other studies have found that families who internalize these values tend to have more productive members who contribute positively to society. Clear norms within the family help maintain order and provide guidance for daily behavior (Sugitanata, 2024a).

Another measure of family harmony is the ability of its members to balance personal and family life. Individuals who can allocate their time effectively between work and family exhibit a 22% higher level of happiness (Mehdizadeh, 2016). Harmonious families prioritize time spent together despite the pressures of modern life, such as work and education (Islam & Sugitanata, 2023; Sugitanata, 2020; Sugitanata & Zakariya, 2021; Yazid & Sugitanata, 2024). Activities like family dinners or vacations play a significant role in strengthening the emotional bonds among family members (Sugitanata, 2024b). Research indicates that families who regularly dine together have higher levels of interaction, and children in such families tend to achieve better academic performance (Ann Dolin, 2024).

The ability of families to manage conflicts is also a key indicator of harmony. Studies show that families employing constructive conflict resolution strategies, such as open communication and mediation, maintain healthier relationships and resolve conflicts more efficiently. Harmonious families focus on problem-solving rather than assigning blame, often viewing conflicts as opportunities to enhance understanding and strengthen relationships (Arif Sugitanata & Muannif Ridwan, 2024). This is supported by research showing that families prioritizing collaborative conflict resolution experience lower stress levels (NeuroLaunch Editorial Team, 2024).

Family harmony can also be assessed through the emotional and mental well-being of its members. Research suggests that families who support each other in personal achievements and appreciate one another's successes tend to be happier and share a stronger sense of connection (Aqila & Sugitanata, 2024). Providing support during challenging times, such as when a family member is ill or facing personal difficulties, plays a vital role in maintaining the emotional stability of the family (Sugitanata, 2024b). Another study shows that families with strong social support are better equipped to endure hardships without significantly affecting their harmony (Hasiolan & Sutejo, 2015).

Family harmony is also closely related to how families preserve traditions and rituals, which provide identity and a sense of belonging. Research demonstrates that families who maintain traditions such as holiday celebrations or regular family events foster closer relationships, and children in these families are more likely to develop strong moral values. These traditions not only strengthen bonds among family members but also instill important values passed down to the next generation (Sun et al., 2022). Other studies have found that families celebrating traditions together exhibit higher levels of emotional connectedness, which serves as the foundation of family harmony (Nasrullah & Elman, 2024). In conclusion, family harmony is a multidimensional concept encompassing emotional, social, and cultural aspects. While every family may adopt different approaches, harmony fundamentally depends on how family members interact, support, and value each other. Family harmony is not a static state but a dynamic process that evolves with the changes in family life.

3.2. From a Harmonious Family to a Tolerant Multicultural Society

A harmonious family is the cornerstone of fostering a society that respects diversity and promotes a tolerant life in multicultural environments (“Keluarga Cemara: Mengenal Lebih Dekat Konsep Keluarga Harmonis,” 2023; Natasya Lawrencia, 2024; Rizal, 2023). As the first social unit encountered by individuals, the family plays a fundamental role in shaping one's worldview, particularly in understanding and responding to social, cultural, and religious differences (Risnawati, 2019). In a harmonious family, there is a balance between interactions among members and the inculcation of values such as mutual respect, effective communication, and peaceful conflict resolution (Halimatussyadiah & Andrian, 2024). These principles not only form the foundation of family life but also prepare individuals to be part of a broader and more diverse society.

A harmonious family is characterized by several key attributes, such as openness in communication, mutual respect, and recognition of the emotional and psychological needs of each family member (Aqila & Sugitanata, 2024). Data indicates that families practicing open communication tend to have happier members with better emotional balance (Galvin et al., 2015, pp. 24–308). Furthermore, research shows that families with high levels of harmony report lower stress levels among their members, contributing to their psychological well-being (Soong et al., 2015). In this context, when every family member feels valued and heard, they are more likely to develop strong self-esteem and a high capacity for empathy toward others (Hasiolan & Sutejo, 2015). This ability to empathize forms a crucial foundation for tolerance, particularly when individuals face cultural or religious differences outside the family sphere (Jami et al., 2024; Monroe & Martinez-Martí, 2008). Data also reveal that in countries with high levels of tolerance, such as Canada and Sweden, families play a key role in teaching empathy to children, which subsequently reflects in their attitudes toward cultural diversity in society (Hafiz et al., 2024).

The socialization process within a harmonious family plays a critical role in teaching conflict resolution (Arif Sugitanata & Muannif Ridwan, 2024). Data suggest that families that emphasize peaceful conflict resolution tend to raise children who can address interpersonal conflicts at school and in the workplace in a constructive manner (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Conflict is an inevitable part of human interaction, both within families and in broader society (O'Toole et al., 2019). Families that teach constructive conflict resolution provide valuable tools for children to handle similar situations in the community (Cummings & Schatz, 2012). Consequently, individuals raised in harmonious families are more likely to respond to differences or disputes peacefully and openly, rather than with violence or exclusion (Devakumar et al., 2021). Evidence shows that individuals who grow up in families with harmonious communication patterns are more inclined to adopt inclusive approaches to conflict resolution in their social environments (Braithwaite & Suter, 2022; Chang et al., 2021). This is particularly significant in multicultural societies, where differences in perspectives, values, and beliefs often become sources of conflict.

At the same time, the education of tolerance values within families can be carried out both directly and indirectly. Directly, families can introduce the concepts of diversity and tolerance through discussions or daily experiences. For instance, parents can familiarize their children with various traditions, religions, and cultures through books, films, or family travel agendas (Tyas & Naibaho, 2020). By showing children that the

world is full of intriguing differences that deserve appreciation, they are more likely to be open to differing perspectives. This is supported by data indicating that children introduced to the concept of diversity through cultural travels or encounters with individuals from different backgrounds tend to exhibit a more open attitude toward differences (Vanessa LoBue, 2023). Indirectly, value education in harmonious families occurs through the example set by parents in their interactions with the environment. When children observe their parents interacting respectfully and understandingly with individuals from different backgrounds, they are likely to imitate such behavior (Sierra-Huedo et al., 2024; Zhou & Chung, 2022). This assertion is supported by research showing that children who witness their parents demonstrating respect toward others from different backgrounds are more likely to exhibit inclusive behavior at school and in their social environments (Sanders & Turner, 2018).

Research also indicates that families that adopt an upbringing style open to differences tend to have children who are better at adapting to multicultural environments (Kim, 2022). Additionally, studies on children's social development have found that parental involvement in teaching tolerance values contributes to children's inclusive attitudes in school and community settings. Values such as fairness, equality, and mutual respect taught at home serve as a foundation for children to act justly and tolerantly in a multicultural society (Hua et al., 2022; Ruziana Masiran, 2022; Tripon, 2024).

Multicultural societies are characterized by the presence of diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious groups coexisting within a shared social environment. Harmony in multicultural societies relies on the ability of individuals within them to accept and respect these differences (Acep et al., 2023; Azzahra et al., 2023; Sugitanata et al., 2023). Families, as the first social unit experienced by individuals, are where values of diversity are first taught and practiced (Härkönen et al., 2017). Therefore, researchers may argue that harmonious families are more capable of educating their members to become tolerant individuals who appreciate differences.

The values instilled in harmonious families, such as equality and respect for others (Sugitanata & Aqila, 2023), are fundamental to building an inclusive society. When these values are extended to external environments, individuals raised in harmonious families are more likely to collaborate with others regardless of their backgrounds. This becomes a crucial element in creating a peaceful and harmonious society, particularly in multicultural contexts where differences can easily become sources of tension if not properly managed (Wallace, 2019).

In the context of an increasingly interconnected global society, the importance of families as agents of socialization in shaping attitudes of tolerance becomes increasingly evident. Globalization brings various cultural and religious groups into closer interaction, making the ability to coexist peacefully ever more crucial (Digdoyo, 2018). Harmonious families play a vital role in preparing children to face these challenges. By teaching values of mutual respect and openness to differences (Sugitanata, 2024a), families help shape individuals who are ready to contribute to the development of inclusive and tolerant societies.

Harmonious families also play an essential role in fostering critical attitudes toward prejudice and discrimination. When children are taught to evaluate others based on their character and actions rather than stereotypes or biases, they are better equipped to reject discriminatory attitudes in society (Burkholder et al., 2019). This mindset is particularly important in multicultural societies, where prejudice against certain groups

often becomes a source of conflict. Harmonious families, through open dialogue and positive role modeling (Hadori & Minhaji, 2018), can nurture individuals who are more tolerant and open to differences.

Tolerance is one of the key pillars for maintaining harmony in multicultural societies (Sugitanata & Nisa, 2023). Without tolerance, cultural, religious, and ethnic differences can easily escalate into sources of discord (Nisa & Sugitanata, 2023). However, tolerance does not arise spontaneously; it must be taught, practiced, and reinforced through healthy social interactions (Parida et al., 2023). Harmonious families provide an ideal environment to initiate this process. Through healthy and respectful interactions, family members learn to appreciate differences in ways of thinking, behaving, and believing, which in turn prepares them to become more tolerant and inclusive members of society (Sugitanata, 2023).

Ultimately, the journey from a harmonious family to a tolerant multicultural society is a complex yet necessary process. Families play a central role in shaping individuals who can live harmoniously amidst diversity. Values such as respect for differences, openness in communication, and peaceful conflict resolution are among the many principles instilled in harmonious families and required in multicultural societies. Building a tolerant and inclusive society requires the contribution of every individual, and harmonious families are the first place where the foundations for tolerance and understanding are laid.

3.3. Integration of Symbolic Interaction Theory into the Role of a Harmonious Family in Shaping Tolerant Attitudes in a Multicultural Society

In the context of symbolic interaction theory developed by George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, a harmonious family plays a central role in shaping social identity and fostering individual capacities to live in a tolerant multicultural society. Symbolic interaction theory emphasizes that humans construct social meanings through their interactions with others, as well as through the symbols and language they use in daily interactions (Blumer, 1986; Mead, 1934). In a harmonious family, interactions among family members reflect values that serve as the foundation for developing an appreciation of diversity and practicing tolerance in broader social contexts.

According to Mead, individual development is inseparable from the social interactions that occur within the family environment. The family acts as the first agent of socialization that shapes the individual's "self," where the concepts of "me" and "I" (the social self and the individual self) evolve through internal and external dialogues (Mead, 1934). A harmonious family, characterized by open communication and values that respect others, instills healthy social interaction concepts ("Keluarga Cemara: Mengenal Lebih Dekat Konsep Keluarga Harmonis," 2023), ultimately forming the basis for acceptance of cultural, religious, and social differences in larger societal contexts. This aligns with the fundamental assumption of symbolic interaction theory that social meanings are not static but are continuously shaped and reshaped through dynamic interactions between individuals (Blumer, 1986).

Herbert Blumer, in his interpretation of Mead's theory, highlights three main premises. First, humans act based on the meanings they assign to objects or situations. Second, these meanings arise from social interactions. Third, meanings are continuously constructed and interpreted by individuals through the process of symbolic communication (Blumer, 1986). In the family context, this implies that values such as tolerance, respect, and empathy for differences are socialized through interactions among

family members, which ultimately shape how individuals respond to differences in broader social environments. In a harmonious family, children learn through observation and direct participation how to resolve conflicts, appreciate differing viewpoints, and understand the importance of constructive communication (Arif Sugitanata & Muannif Ridwan, 2024).

Symbolic interaction theory also underscores the importance of the “definition of the situation” in shaping individual actions (Blumer, 1986). In a harmonious family, members are given the space to define social situations positively and cooperatively, enabling them to approach similar situations outside the family in an inclusive and peaceful manner (Yazid & Sugitanata, 2024). This learning process is critical in the context of multiculturalism, where social and cultural differences often become sources of tension (Devakumar et al., 2021). By defining differences as positive and enriching elements, harmonious families contribute to shaping individuals who are capable of adapting to and responding to diversity productively, thereby helping to minimize potential conflicts in multicultural societies.

Mead and Blumer’s theory also emphasizes the crucial role individuals play within society (Blumer, 1986; Mead, 1934). In a harmonious family, each family member is educated or trained to understand (Sugitanata, 2024a) and fulfill their roles while respecting the roles of others and attending to the emotional and psychological needs of other family members (Aqila & Sugitanata, 2024). This pattern of interaction is then translated into broader social life, where individuals raised in harmonious families are more likely to appreciate the roles of others in a multicultural society. They tend to be more open to diverse perspectives, values, and cultural practices, as well as better equipped to avoid stereotypes and discrimination (Sugitanata, 2023), which are often sources of conflict in diverse societies.

Based on the explanation above, symbolic interaction theory provides a robust analytical framework for understanding how harmonious families can shape individuals capable of participating in a tolerant and inclusive society. Symbolic interactions within the family teach individuals to interpret social symbols positively and cooperatively, enabling them to respond to societal differences in a more peaceful and open manner. This is particularly important in the context of an increasingly interconnected global society, where the ability to appreciate cultural and religious differences is a vital requirement for building a harmonious community. Therefore, harmonious families are not only key to individual well-being but also to social stability and harmony within multicultural societies.

4. CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes that harmonious families play a crucial role in shaping attitudes of tolerance in multicultural societies. Values such as appreciation for differences, openness in communication, and peaceful conflict resolution are among the many values instilled in harmonious families that are essential for multicultural communities. Symbolic interaction theory provides a relevant analytical framework for understanding how meanings and symbols created within families contribute to shaping tolerant behaviors in multicultural societies.

In symbolic interaction theory, interactions among family members serve as a process through which social values are formed and continuously developed. A harmonious family becomes the first environment where individuals learn to understand and accept differences, both through direct communication and the observation of

behavior. This is particularly significant in the context of multicultural societies, where the ability to interact inclusively is highly needed. Through the process of socialization within harmonious families, individuals develop attitudes that value diversity, making them better equipped to contribute to creating peaceful and tolerant communities. However, this study also has limitations, particularly in terms of the empirical scope, which is restricted to existing literature. Further research is needed to examine in greater depth the direct relationship between harmonious families and the development of tolerant attitudes through field studies involving empirical data.

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