Mahakam Ulu Regency and The Muslim Minority: Strategies for Sustaining Islamic Communities in Religious Life

Paisal Akbar
Universitas Mulawarman, Samarinda, Indonesia
Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta,Indonesia
paisalakbar@fisip.unmul.ac.id

Zuly Qodir
Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta,Indonesia
zuliqodir@umy.ac.id

Hasse Jubba
Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta,Indonesia
hasse@umy.ac.id

Achmad Nurmandi
Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta,Indonesia
nurmandi_achmad@umy.ac.id

Dyah Mutiarin
Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta,Indonesia
dyahmutiarin@umy.ac.id

Sunyoto Usman
Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta,Indonesia
sunyoto.usman@umy.ac.id

Abstract
Minority religious communities often face significant challenges and social friction in various aspects of life. In Indonesia, several regions have a minority Muslim population; Mahakam Ulu Regency is one of them. This study aims to understand how the Islamic community in Mahakam Ulu Regency is undergoing religious rituals and living a life of religious tolerance. The research data consisted of primary and secondary data, with the primary data being semi-structured interviews conducted with several informants of Islamic religious leaders in Mahakam Ulu Regency. Meanwhile, secondary data is produced from reports of government agencies to meet the data needs of this study. The interview data were then processed using NVivo 12 Plus. The results of the study are divided into two sub-parts. In the first part, we map the secondary data obtained by identifying pockets of the Islamic population in each area of Mahakam Ulu Regency and then focusing on them. In the second part, we analyzed the strategies carried out by the Islamic community of Mahakam Ulu Regency so that they can continue to carry out religious rituals and can exist in a living social and economic life in Mahakam Ulu Regency. Some of the strategies carried out are by limiting the culture of worship by restricting loudspeakers used in mosques in Mahakam Ulu Regency, so that when the azan resounds, prayers are carried out without using a high volume of sound. Besides that, another strategy is to increase tolerance

and concern for all elements of society, regardless of their religious background.
Keywords: *Islamic Community, Minority, Mahakam Ulu Regency, Existence Strategy*

Abstrak
Komunitas minoritas dalam ranah agama kerap kali menghadapi resistensi yang tinggi terhadap gesekan dalam berbagai aspek kehidupan. Di Indonesia, beberapa daerah memiliki populasi Muslim minoritas; Kabupaten Mahakam Ulu adalah salah satunya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana komunitas Islam di Kabupaten Mahakam Ulu menjalani ritual keagamaan dan menjalani kehidupan toleransi beragama. Data penelitian terdiri dari data primer dan sekunder, dengan data primer berupa wawancara semi-terstruktur yang dilakukan dengan beberapa informan tokoh agama Islam di Kabupaten Mahakam Ulu. Sementara itu, data sekunder dihasilkan dari laporan instansi pemerintah untuk memenuhi kebutuhan data penelitian ini. Data wawancara kemudian diolah menggunakan Nvivo 12 Plus. Hasil penelitian dibagi menjadi dua sub-bagian. Pada bagian pertama, kami memetakan data sekunder yang diperoleh dengan mengidentifikasi kantong-kantong populasi Islam di setiap wilayah Kabupaten Mahakam Ulu dan kemudian memfokuskannya. Pada bagian kedua, kami menganalisis strategi yang dilakukan oleh komunitas Islam Kabupaten Mahakam Ulu sehingga mereka dapat terus menjalankan ritual keagamaan dan dapat eksis dalam kehidupan sosial dan ekonomi yang hidup di Kabupaten Mahakam Ulu. Beberapa strategi yang dilakukan adalah dengan membatasi budaya beribadah dengan membatasi penggunaan pengeras suara di masjid-masjid di Kabupaten Mahakam Ulu, sehingga ketika azan berkumandang, salat dapat dilaksanakan tanpa menggunakan volume suara yang tinggi. Selain itu, strategi lainnya adalah meningkatkan toleransi dan kepedulian terhadap seluruh elemen masyarakat, tanpa memandang latar belakang agamanya.
Kata Kunci: *Komunitas Islam, Minoritas, Kabupaten Mahakam Ulu, Strategi Eksistensi*

INTRODUCTION

Social life is commonly structured around two groups distinguished by their numerical size: the majority and the minority group. These groups are fundamentally at odds with each other, both in the realm of thought and in the physical realm, and in many cases, the minority community in the realm of religion is often faced with high resistance and friction in various aspects of life.[1] Such tensions are not limited to social relations but also extend to the practice of religious rituals.[2]

Moreover, religious minority communities tend to face the absence of inclusivity in accessing various public services that should be provided by the central and regional governments.[3] This injustice

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[1] Mohammad Ridwan and Sulis Maryati, "Dari Tradisi Ke Masa Depan: Tantangan Pendidikan Islam Dalam Masyarakat Kontemporer," *Dirasah: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 2 (2024): 630–41; Khomsinnudin Khomsinnudin et al., "Modernitas Dan Lokalitas: Membangun Pendidikan Islam Berkelanjutan," *Journal of Education Research* 5, no. 4 (2024): 4418–28; Achmad Nur Ferdianto et al., "Dinamika Pelestarian Tradisi Maulid Diba'oleh Kader Pemuda NU: Antara Ketahanan Budaya Dan Adaptasi Di Era Society 5.0," *Journal of Science and Education Research* 4, no. 2 (2025): 21–28.

[2] H F Hasan, "A Tragedy Islamic Minority of Ar-Rawhinja in Myanmar & Attitude of International Organizations," *Tikrit Journal For Political Science*, 2019, https://www.iasj.net/iasj/article/178610.

[3] Muhammda Sya'rani, "Dinamika Dan Problematika Pendidikan Agama Masyarakat Minoritas Islam Wetu Telu Di Lombok Nusa Tenggara Barat," *Jurnal Penelitian Tarbawi*. 4 (2019): 37–38, http://jurnal.iaihnwpancor.ac.id/index.php/tarbawi/article/view/234; A Suaedy, "Islam, Identitas Dan Minoritas Di Asia

in public services has the potential to exacerbate social inequality and weaken social cohesion between religious communities at the local level.

In the social context, society is often divided into majority and minority groups, which are determined by numerical size but also by political and social influence.[4] Majority groups typically have greater control over religious policies, social norms, and practices, while minority groups often face discrimination and limitations in their social and religious life.[5] In the religious context, the Muslim minority in Indonesia faces challenges in gaining equal access to public services, spaces of worship, and social recognition from the majority community.[6]

According to Smith, minority communities often develop social and religious adaptation strategies to maintain their identity. This strategy can be in the form of compromises in religious practices, building internal social networks, and strengthening dialogue with majority communities to create social harmony. Research from Gurr[7] suggests that inequalities in access to public facilities and inequities in policies can reinforce tensions between groups, thereby affecting social stability at the local level. Studies on social interaction and religious harmony in minority communities show that the level of harmony is influenced by government policies, social support, and attitudes of majority communities.[8] In Bali, for example, the Muslim community as a minority is able to carry out religious life in relative harmony because of local policies that support pluralism and interfaith dialogue. However, in other regions such as West Papua and West Nusa Tenggara, the Muslim community faces obstacles in building houses of worship and carrying out religious rituals due to pressure from the majority community.[9]

According to Maarif et al., effective religious pluralism can be achieved if minority communities gain formal recognition from the government and are given space to exercise their

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Tenggara," *Jurnal Kajian Wilayah*, 2016, http://jkw.psdr.lipi.go.id/index.php/jkw/article/view/286; Hasan, "A Tragedy Islamic Minority of Ar-Rawhinja in Myanmar & Attitude of International Organizations."

[4] Siti Munifah, "Solidaritas Kelompok Minoritas Dalam Masyarakat (Studi Kasus Kelompok Waria Di Pondok Pesantren Waria Al Fatah Yogyakarta)," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama* 11, no. 1 (2018): 109, https://doi.org/10.14421/jsa.2017.111-07.

[5] Syamsul Hadi Untung and Eko Adhi Sutrisno, "Sikap Islam Terhadap Minoritas Non-Muslim," *Kalimah* 12, no. 1 (2014): 27, https://doi.org/10.21111/klm.v12i1.217.

[6] Hasan, "A Tragedy Islamic Minority of Ar-Rawhinja in Myanmar & Attitude of International Organizations"; Suaedy, "Islam, Identitas Dan Minoritas Di Asia Tenggara."

[7] Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel, Why Men Rebel* (Routledge, 2015), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315631073.

[8] Idi Warsah, *Pendidikan Islam Dalam Keluarga: Studi Psikologis Dan Sosiologis Masyarakat Multi Agama Desa Suro Bali* (Tunas Gemilang Press, 2020).

[9] Sulanam Sulanam, "Persepsi Minoritas Muslim Terhadap Model Kerukunan Dalam Membangun Harmoni Sosial," *An-Nas*, 2018, https://doi.org/10.36840/an-nas.v2i1.95; Ismail Suardi Wekke, "Migrasi Bugis Dan Madura Di Selatan Papua Barat: Perjumpaan Etnis Dan Agama Di Minoritas Muslim," *Jurnal Intelektualita: Keislaman, Sosial Dan Sains* 6, no. 2 (2017): 163–80, https://doi.org/10.19109/intelektualita.v6i2.1603.

religious identity.[10] In this context, local governments play a crucial role in formulating inclusive policies and facilitating social integration. Government support for minority communities therefore constitutes a key element in fostering social and religious harmony. Research by Suaedy[11] shows that local governments in Indonesia often experience a dilemma in setting policies related to religious life due to pressure from the majority group. For instance, in West Nusa Tenggara, the local authorities encountered opposition from the majority community when they permitted the construction of mosques in a predominantly Hindu neighborhood.[12]

According to Annisa & Tabassum,[13] a multicultural approach in public policy can increase inclusivity and reduce tensions between religious groups. Moreover Annisa & Tabassum, it also recommended that the government implement affirmative policies that provide legal protection and support to minority communities in carrying out their social and religious lives. In the case of Mahakam Ulu, the local government policies that facilitate access to places of worship and support the religious activities of the Muslim community have become key factors in fostering social harmony.

Several studies on Muslim communities as minorities in Indonesia show similar patterns of social and religious adaptation. Research in West Papua[14] indicates that Muslim communities in the region faced challenges in carrying out religious rituals due to pressure from the majority Christian community. The strategy used is to build internal social networks and increase interfaith dialogue to create a more inclusive social space.[15] Research Warsah[16] in Bali shows that the Muslim community is able to carry out religious rituals openly because of regional policies that support pluralism. However, in areas with a Hindu majority population, Muslim communities still face obstacles in building mosques and performing religious rituals [17]. In the context of Mahakam Ulu, the strategies of Muslim

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[10] Ahmad Syafii Maarif, Ihsan Ali-Fauzi, and Syamsu Rizal Panggabean, *Politik Identitas Dan Masa Depan Pluralisme Kita* (Pusat Studi Agama dan Demokrasi (PUSAD), Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina, 2010).

[11] Suaedy, "Islam, Identitas Dan Minoritas Di Asia Tenggara."

[12] Sya'rani, "Dinamika Dan Problematika Pendidikan Agama Masyarakat Minoritas Islam Wetu Telu Di Lombok Nusa Tenggara Barat."

[13] Neng Nur Annisa and Nabila Tabassum, "Challenges of Multiculturalism: Integration of Religion in State Policy," *Religion and Policy Journal* 1, no. 1 (2023): 8–15.

[14] Ismail Suardi Wekke, "Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam Muslim Minoritas: Pesantren Nurul Yaqin Papua Barat," *Madrasah* 6, no. 2 (2016): 26, https://doi.org/10.18860/jt.v6i2.3298.

[15] M Saerozi, "From Controversy to Tolerance: Dynamics of the Development of Istiqomah Mosque in Front of a Church in Ungaran Central Java Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 11, no. 2 (2017): 423–58, https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2017.11.2.423-458; M Mubasirun, "Persoalan Dilematis Muslim Minoritas Dan Solusinya," *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman*, 2015, https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2015.10.1.99-122.

[16] Warsah, *Pendidikan Islam Dalam Keluarga: Studi Psikologis Dan Sosiologis Masyarakat Multi Agama Desa Suro Bali*.

[17] K D Pratama, "Akulturasi Psikologis Remaja Islam Bali Sebagai Muslim Minoritas Di Kecamatan Abiansemal, Badung, Bali," *Jurnal Riset Mahasiswa Bimbingan Dan …*, 2015, https://journal.student.uny.ac.id/index.php/fipbk/article/view/283%0Ahttps://journal.student.uny.ac.id/index.php/fipbk/article/download/283/258.

communities in maintaining their religious existence can be identified by comparing patterns of adaptation in other regions that have similar social and religious dynamics.

In Indonesia, several districts and cities have Muslim population that constitute a minority. These areas include regions in West Papua Province[18], in West Nusa Tenggara Province[19], and in the Province of Bali.[20] In addition to these provinces, East Kalimantan Province, also has an area where Muslim population as a minority group, namely in Mahakam Ulu Regency.[21]

Mahakam Ulu Regency is the youngest regency in East Kalimantan Province, which was established in 2013 based on Law Number 2 of 2013 concerning the Establishment of Mahakam Ulu Regency in East Kalimantan Province. This district consists of five sub-districts, namely Long Hubung District, Laham District, Long Bagun District, Long Pahangai District, and Long Apai District, with a total of fifty villages.[22]. Based on the latest census data, the population in Mahakam Ulu Regency reached 35,274 people with the majority of the population converting to Catholicism.[23]

The history of Mahakam Ulu as a newly established autonomous region has significantly shaped its social and religious dynamics. As an area with mountainous topography and difficult accessibility, Mahakam Ulu faces challenges in the provision of public services and infrastructure development[24] including in the provision of religious facilities. At the same time, the Muslim community in Mahakam Ulu lives in the midst of the dominance of a Catholic society that has long been socially and culturally entrenched. This condition creates its own challenges for the Muslim community in carrying out worship and building social harmony. In this context, examining the strategies employed by the Muslim community to sustain its religious existence becomes particularly relevant, especially in addressing limited religious infrastructure and promoting interfaith dialogue as a means of maintaining social cohesion.

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[18] Ismail Suardi Wekke, "Kepemimpinan Sekolah Islam Terpadu Di Minoritas Muslim Papua Barat," *Akademika* (core.ac.uk, 2016), https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/355098542.pdf.

[19] Sya'rani, "Dinamika Dan Problematika Pendidikan Agama Masyarakat Minoritas Islam Wetu Telu Di Lombok Nusa Tenggara Barat."

[20] Pratama, "Akulturasi Psikologis Remaja Islam Bali Sebagai Muslim Minoritas Di Kecamatan Abiansemal, Badung, Bali."

[21] Viva Budy Kusnandar, "Mayoritas Penduduk Mahakam Ulu Beragama Katolik Pada Juni 2021," databoks, 2022, https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2022/02/03/mayoritas-penduduk-mahakam-ulu-beragama-katolik-pada-juni-2021.

[22] BPS Mahakam Ulu, "Statistik Daerah Kabupaten Mahakam Ulu 2020," 2020.

[23] BPS Mahakam Ulu, "Kabupaten Mahakam Ulu Dalam Angka 2023" (Kabupaten Mahakam Ulu, 2023).

[24] Bambang Irawan et al., "Development Planning to Accelerate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mahakam Ulu Districts as a New Autonomous Region," *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan Dan Politik* 34, no. 2 (2021): 184, https://doi.org/10.20473/mkp.v34i22021.184-195.

As far as the results of our observations have been made in previous studies related to the Muslim minority community in Indonesia, there has been no scientific research that specifically addresses the phenomenon of the Muslim minority community in Mahakam Ulu Regency. Therefore, this study aims to understand how the strategy of the Muslim community in Mahakam Ulu Regency in carrying out religious rituals, maintaining social existence, and building a harmonious religious life in the midst of the dominance of the majority Catholic community. Thus, this study is expected to make an empirical and conceptual contribution in understanding the dynamics of Muslim life in areas with a non-Muslim majority population, as well as providing a basis for the formulation of inclusive policies that support interreligious harmony.

METHODS

This research is qualitative research using an exploratory approach to the phenomenon being studied. An exploratory approach was chosen to provide a complete and in-depth picture.[25] Related to how the Islamic community in Mahakam Ulu Regency can sustainably carry out religious life even though Islam has the status of a minority religion. Exploratory research allows researchers to explore in detail the social, cultural, and economic factors that affect the sustainability of religious life in minority communities.[26]

The research data used consisted of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was generated from semi-structured interviews conducted with representatives of Islamic religious leaders in Mahakam Ulu Regency. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because this method gives researchers the flexibility to dig into more detailed information and allows for the emergence of new perspectives from respondents.[27] The interviews were conducted directly with several informants in five sub-districts in Mahakam Ulu Regency, namely Long Manggi District, Laham District, Long Bagun District, Long Pahangai District, and Long Apai District. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling techniques to ensure that the information obtained came from individuals who had first-hand knowledge and experience related to religious life in minority communities. The identities of the research informants are not presented in this study to maintain the privacy of the

[25] Ridho Al-Hamdi et al., *Penelitian Kualitatif Pegangan Mahasiswa Ilmu Pemerintahan*, ed. Queena Ns, 01, Oktobe ed. (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2020); John W Creswell and J David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Sage publications, 2017); Imam Gunawan, "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif: Teori Dan Praktik," *Jakarta: Bumi Aksara*, 2014.

[26] Donna M Mertens, "Transformative Research Methods to Increase Social Impact for Vulnerable Groups and Cultural Minorities," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 20 (2021): 16094069211051564.

[27] Melyana R Pugu, Sugeng Riyanto, and Rofiq Noorman Haryadi, *Metodologi Penelitian; Konsep, Strategi, Dan Aplikasi* (PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia, 2024).

study respondents. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from official reports of relevant government agencies such as the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Mahakam Ulu Regency, the Ministry of Religion, and regional policy documents related to the management of religious life. Secondary data also include relevant academic literature and previous research on religious life in minority communities in Indonesia.[28]

Data collection was carried out through three main methods, namely semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews are conducted with a list of open-ended questions to facilitate in-depth discussions and allow the informant to provide additional relevant information. Participatory observation allows researchers to participate in the social activities and religious rituals of the Muslim community in Mahakam Ulu Regency in order to understand firsthand the dynamics of religious life that take place. In addition, documentation is carried out by collecting policy documents, official reports, and statistical data to reinforce findings from primary data.

The interview results were processed using NVivo 12 Plus as one of the qualitative data analysis software (QDSA). The analysis process involves several stages, namely interview transcription, coding, categorization, and linkage analysis.[29] The interviews were transcribed verbatim, then coded to identify the main patterns and themes related to the strategy of the existence of the Muslim community in Mahakam Ulu Regency. The coding results are then categorized into several main themes, such as social strategies, religious ritual strategies, and economic adaptation strategies. Furthermore, NVivo 12 Plus is used to visualize the relationship between themes and strategies, so that researchers can identify the relationships between factors that affect the sustainability of religious life in the Muslim community.

The exploratory approach was chosen because this research approach aims to understand a phenomenon that has not been widely explored in the context of the Muslim minority community in Indonesia, especially in Mahakam Ulu Regency. Sugiyono[30] states that exploratory research is effectively used to explore complex and contextual social phenomena because it provides space for researchers to discover new factors that may not have been identified in previous research. By using this method, it is hoped that the research can provide a comprehensive picture of the strategies of the

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[28] Al-Hamdi et al., *Penelitian Kualitatif Pegangan Mahasiswa Ilmu Pemerintahan*.

[29] Patricia Bazely and Lyn Richards, *The NVivo Qualitative Project Book*, *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling*, vol. 53, 2013, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004.

[30] Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif: Untuk Penelitian Yang Bersifat: Eksploratif, Enterpretitif, Dan Konstruktif*, *Alfabeta* (Bandung, 2017).

Islamic community in Mahakam Ulu Regency in maintaining their existence in the midst of a non-Muslim majority community.

DISCUSSION

The findings and discussion of this research are organized into two main sub-sections. In the first part examines the existence of the Muslim community in Mahakam Ulu Regency by mapping clusters of the Muslim population across five sub-districts: Long Hubung District, Laham District, Long Bagun District, Long Pahangai District, and Long Afari District. This mapping aims to identify the geographical distribution of Muslim communities as well as the patterns of social and religious adaptation that form in each region. Furthermore, the analysis of Muslim population clusters serves as a foundation for understanding the social dynamics and interactions between the Muslim minority and the Catholic majority in Mahakam Ulu Regency.

In the second part analyzes the strategies employed by the Muslim community in the Mahakam Ulu Regency to sustain religious life and perform religious rituals. This analysis aims to identify adaptive patterns that enable the Muslim community to preserve its religious identity within a predominantly Catholic social environment.

Population and Distribution of the Muslim Population in Mahakam Ulu Regency

Regional expansion has a significant impact on the dynamics of development and demographics in the new autonomous region. It is often associated with accelerating infrastructure development, public services, and improving community welfare.[31] Mahakam Ulu Regency, which has established through the administrative expansion of West Kutai Regency in 2013, representing a tangible example of the positive impacts of regional expansion. One indicator of this impact is the significant increase in population in Mahakam Ulu Regency, suggesting that the expansion has contributed to the region's social and economic development (see Table 1). The population in Mahakam Ulu Regency has grown quite rapidly over the past eight years. Based on data from BPS Mahakam Ulu[32], the population in 2014 was recorded at 24.314, then increased to 35.274 in 2021. The increase in population is primarily driven by growth in Long Bagun District, the government center of Mahakam Ulu Regency in the Ujoh Bilang area. In 2014, the population in Long Bagun District was only 6.696 people, but by 2021, it had more than doubled to 14.541 people.

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[31] Irawan et al., "Development Planning to Accelerate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mahakam Ulu Districts as a New Autonomous Region."

[32] BPS Mahakam Ulu, "Kabupaten Mahakam Ulu Dalam Angka 2023."

Several factors contribute to this significant population increase, including increased regional accessibility, the development of basic infrastructure like roads and bridges, and the influx of immigrants from surrounding areas for economic and social purposes [33]. Long Hubung, Laham, Long Pahangai, and Long Apari districts also showed population increases, although not as large as Long Bagun District. The distribution of the population in these five sub-districts can be seen in detail in the following table:

Year	Total Population in the Regency	Total Population of the District				
		Long Bagun	Long Hubung	Laham	Long Pahangai	Long Apari
2014	24.314	6.696	6.862	2.429	4.712	3.615
2015	24.291	6.726	6.902	2.448	4.685	3.530
2016	24.381	8.104	6.349	2.249	4.397	3.282
2017	26.938	9.610	6.848	2.109	4.683	3.688
2018	28.833	10.712	7.261	2.251	4.771	3.838
2019	30.321	11.726	7.617	2.403	4.665	3.910
2020	35.010	14.462	8.604	2.749	4.978	4.217
2021	35.274	14.541	8.538	2.810	5.028	4.254

Table 1. Total Population of Mahakam Ulu Regency from 2014 to 2022

Alongside the continued population growth in Mahakam Ulu Regency, the distribution of population by religious affiliation indicates that Catholicism constitutes the majority religion, with a total percentage of population reaching 62% or approximately 21,805 people. Islam represent the second position, comprising 23% of the population, or 8,189 people. Christianity ranks third, with 5,207 adherents, accounting for 15% of the total population of Mahakam Ulu Regency. Adherents of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and other belief systems, constitute only a small proportion of the population in Mahakam Ulu Regency. A detailed breakdown of religious affiliation is presented in Figure 1 and Table 2.

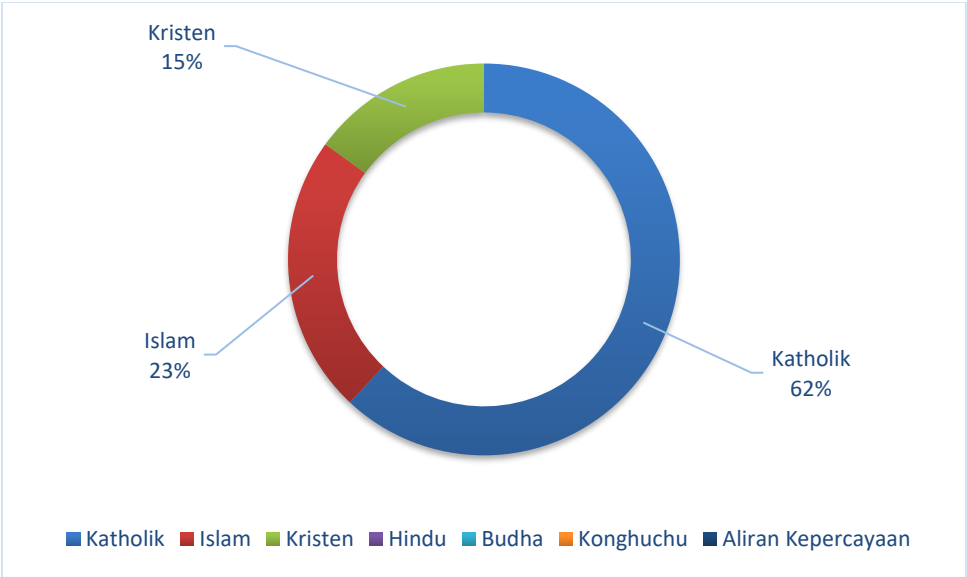[33] BPS Mahakam Ulu, "Mahakam Ulu Dalam Angka 2024," *BPS Mahakam Ulu* (Kabupaten Mahakam Ulu, 2024), https://doi.org/10.1128/AAC.03728-14.

Figure 1. Population by religion for the 2021 period of Mahakam Ulu Regency

Yes	Religion	Man		Woman		Sum	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
1	Roman catholic	11.535	61	10.270	62	21.805	62
2	Islam	4.454	24	3.735	23	8.189	23
3	Christian	2.804	15	2.403	15	5.207	15
4	Hindu	35	0	32	0	67	0
5	Buddhist	1	0	2	0	3	0
6	Konghuchu	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	Stream of Trust	1	0	2	0	3	0
	Sum	**18.830**	**100**	**16.444**	**100**	**35.274**	**100**

Table 2. Percentage of population by religion for the 2021 period of Mahakam Ulu Regency

Furthermore, this study examines each sub-district in Mahakam Ulu Regency to gain a more detailed understanding of the spatial distribution of Muslim population clusters. A comparative analysis across sub-districts shows that Long Bagun District in Mahakam Ulu Regency has the largest absolute number of Muslims, totaling 4.113 people, with Ujoh Bilang village recording the highest Muslim population at the village level. However, when considering the proportion of Muslims relative to the total population in each sub-district, Laham District has the highest percentage of Muslim population, reaching 39%. In contrast, Long Bagun District only reaches 28%. Detailed data are presented in Table 3.

Previously, Long Bagun District identified Ujoh Bilang Village as having the highest Muslim population. Similarly, in Long Hubung District, Lutan Village has a Muslim population of 474 people,

equivalent to 55% of the total population. Furthermore, in Laham District, the village with the largest Muslim population is Long Gelawang Village with a total Muslim population of 357 people, equivalent to 24% of the total population in Long Gelawang Village. In Long Pahangai District, the village with the highest number of Muslim residents is Long Pahangai II Village, with a Muslim population of 190 people, or equivalent to 73% of the total village population. Moreover, in Long Apari District, the village with the largest Muslim population is Tiong Ohang Village, which has 163 Muslims, or 25% of the village's total population.

The number of Muslims in each village across the five sub-districts of Mahakam Ulu Regency has also influenced the establishment of Islamic houses of worship, particularly mosques, for the local Muslim community. Mosque construction has generally been concentrated in villages with relatively larger Muslim population. The spatial distribution of mosques across the regency is illustrated in Figure 2.

To date, a total of 17 mosques have been established in Mahakam Ulu Regency, with the largest concentration in Long Bagun District, which has six mosques. In contrast, in Long Apari District, there is only one mosque. The availability of mosque houses of worship in Mahakam Ulu Regency has been adjusted to the number of Muslim populations in each sub-district. For example, Laham District has three mosque worship facilities, even though it generally has a small population. However, considering the total percentage of the Muslim population, it is natural that Laham District has a relatively large number of mosques. The growth of the Muslim population in Mahakam Ulu Regency directly correlates with the need for places of worship. The comparative availability of worship facilities over the five years of the development period in Mahakam Ulu Regency is detailed in Table 4 below.

The construction of this mosque reflects the support from the community and the local government in facilitating the religious needs of Muslims in the midst of the dominance of the Catholic population. The mosque is also a symbol of the Muslim community's presence in social and religious life in the Mahakam Ulu Regency. Thus, the distribution of the Muslim population in Mahakam Ulu Regency demonstrates a strong pattern of adaptation and survival strategies amidst the dominance of the Catholic majority. The presence of religious facilities like mosques is an indicator of how the Muslim community maintains its identity and performs religious rituals sustainably in Mahakam Ulu Regency.
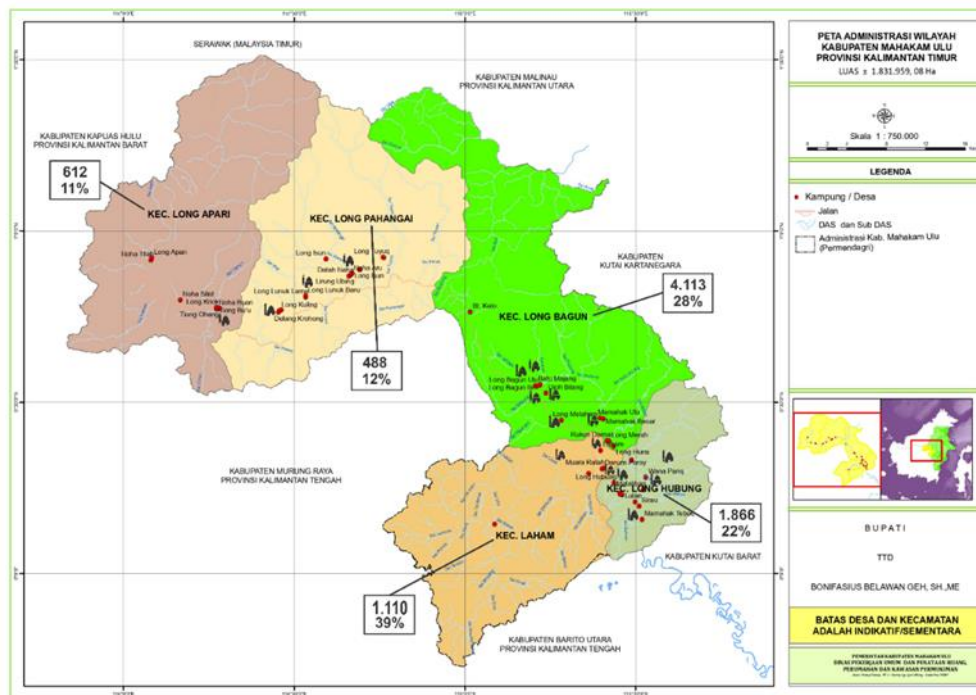
Yes	District															
---	Long Bagun			Long Hubung			São Paulo			Long Pahangai			Long Apari		
	Village	MP	%	Village	MP	%	Village	MP	%	Village	MP	%	Village	MP	%
1	Long Hurai	50	14	Long Hubung	77	9	Laham	107	9	Delang Kerohang	191	97	Long Penaneh I	51	13
2	Long Melaham	428	24	Memahak Teboq	345	24	Long Gelawang	357	24	Long Pakaq	27	4	Long Kerioq	67	15
3	Memahak Besar	230	16	Lutan	474	55	Muara Ratah	217	55	Long Lunuk	30	8	Long Penaneh II	13	7
4	Memahak Ulu	269	97	Matalibaq	128	13	Danum Paroy	339	13	Long Isun	22	5	Tiong Ohang	163	25
5	Batu Majang	328	26	Datah Bilang Ilir	596	39	Nyaribungan	90	39	Naha Aru	11	5	Long Penaneh III	15	7
6	Ujoh Bilang	1.334	28	Datah Bilang Ulu	68	9	-	-		Datah Naha	4	1	Tiong Bu'u	122	21
7	Long Bagun Ilir	226	22	Tri Pariq Makmur	2	1	-	-		Lirung Ubing	16	8	Naha Buan	36	6
8	Long Bagun Ulu	661	44	Wana Pariq	16	16	-	-		Long Pahangai I	19	2	Naha Tifab	14	6
9	Batoq Kelo	473	50	Datah Bilang Baru	86	7	-	-		Long Pahangai II	190	73	Naha Silat	2	1
10	Long Merah	35	8	Sirau	33	25	-	-		Long Tuyoq	13	3	Long Apari	5	1
11	Rukun Damai	79	10	Long Hubung Ulu	41	9	-	-		Liu Mulang	7	4	-	-	-
12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		Long Pakaq Baru	16	4	-	-	-
13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		Long Lunuk Baru	66	12	-	-	-
Sum		**4.113**	**28**		**1.866**	**22**		**1.110**	**39**		**488**	**12**		**612**	**11**

Remarks: MP = Muslim Population, % = Percentage of Islamic Population compared to other religions.
Source: [34]

Table 3. Distribution of Muslim population in each sub-district

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[34] BPS Mahakam Ulu, "Kabupaten Mahakam Ulu Dalam Angka 2023."

Figure 2. Population according to the 2021 period of Mahakam Ulu Regency

| Yes	District	Mosque		Protestant Church		Catholic Church		Pura		Vihara	
		2017	2022	2017	2022	2017	2022	2017	2022	2017	2022
1	Laham	3	3	1	4	7	8	0	0	0	0
2	Long Hubung	4	4	6	16	9	9	0	0	0	0
3	Long Bagun	5	6	4	18	6	7	0	0	0	0
4	Long Pahangai	2	3	0	4	10	8	0	0	0	0
5	Long Apari	1	1	0	1	8	6	0	0	0	0
	Sum	**15**	**17**	**11**	**43**	**40**	**38**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Table 4. Comparison of the number of houses of worship in Mahakam Ulu Regency before and after the Mahakam Ulu Expansion

Strategies for the Existence of Islamic Communities in Mahakam Ulu Regency

Based on interviews conducted with several informants who are Islamic religious leaders in each sub-district in Mahakam Ulu Regency, this study identifies five key strategies that have been implemented by the Muslim community to sustain their religious existence and maintain harmony in social and religious life. These strategies include: (1) Avoiding Conflict, (2) Focusing on Commonality, (3) Participating, (4) Strengthening Interpersonal Relationships, and (5) Strengthening Islamic Identity. These five strategies emerge from adaptive responses to social and religious dynamics within the heterogeneous society of Mahakam Ulu Regency. Through coding

the interview data using NVivo 12 Plus, it was found that the strategies employed are closely related and mutually reinforcing in fostering social harmony within the Muslim community.

The Strategy to Avoid Conflict is one of the main steps implemented by the Muslim community in maintaining a balance of social life and religious diversity.[35] This approach is carried out by avoiding friction that could cause tension in the community. The results of the interviews show that the Muslim community tries not to be reactive in dealing with social problems by prioritizing the principle of *tabayun* or clarification to reduce tension and minimize misunderstandings. One of the tangible forms of implementing this strategy can be seen from the restriction on the use of loudspeakers in mosques to respect the activities of non-Muslim people living around mosques. This approach has proven to be effective in preventing conflicts rooted in differences in religious customs and traditions.
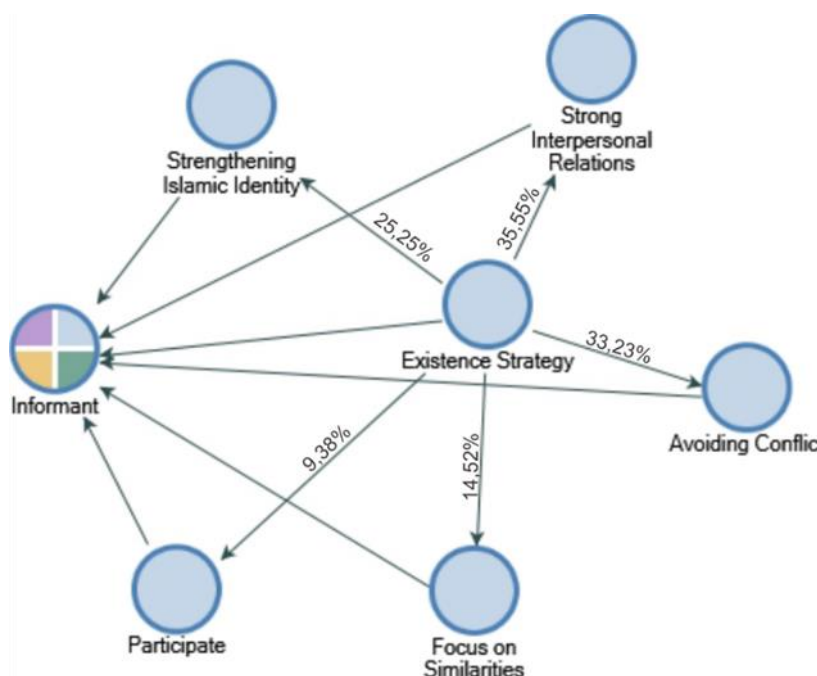
Figure 3. Percentage of Muslim Survival Strategy

Furthermore, the Focus on Commonality strategy is carried out by emphasizing the values of equality in social life.[36] The Muslim community in Mahakam Ulu Regency, most of whom belong to the Dayak Bahau tribe, has strong cultural ties, with tribe-based family values serving as the

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[35] Zuhriyandi Zuhriyandi, "Harmoni Beragama Dan Pencegahan Konflik: Perspektif Moderasi Menurut Al-Qur'an Dan Alkitab," *MODERATIO: Jurnal Moderasi Beragama* 3, no. 2 (2023): 218–32.

[36] Ruslan Ibrahim, "Pendidikan Multikultural: Upaya Meminimalisir Konflik Dalam Era Pluralitas Agama," *El-Tarbawi* 1, no. 1 (2008): 115–27; Siti Kholidah Marbun, "Analisis Pemahaman Dan Implementasi Nilai-Nilai Multikulturalisme Dalam Hadis Sebagai Landasan Untuk Membangun Harmoni Sosial Di Era Globalisasi," *Jurnal Ilmiah Research and Development Student* 1, no. 1 (2023): 74–87.

primary foundation for building social harmony.[37] Both Muslim and non-Muslim communities respect each other's differences in religious practices and strive to find common ground in daily life, such as in cooperative activities and the celebration of religious holidays. These shared values are the social glue that strengthens the stability of community life in Mahakam Ulu.

The Participation Strategy is also a form of active involvement of the Muslim community in building social and religious life.[38] This involvement is seen in a variety of religious and social activities, such as helping with preparations for Christmas celebrations in churches or participating in interfaith social activities. This attitude reflects the spirit of togetherness and solidarity, providing a strong foundation for maintaining tolerance between religious communities in Mahakam Ulu. This participation not only strengthens the relationship between citizens but also increases the sense of mutual ownership and respect for the differences that exist in the community.[39]

The most dominant and most frequently applied strategy is the Strengthening Interpersonal Relationships strategy. Based on the results of analysis through NVivo 12 Plus, this strategy has the highest coverage rate of 35.55%. This strategy is carried out by building close relationships between fellow communities through intensive and continuous social interaction.[40] Good communication between residents is the primary key to building a family atmosphere and trust in a heterogeneous society.[41] The interactions built into everyday life create a healthy space for dialogue and strengthen interfaith and cultural social ties.[42]

In addition, the strategy of Strengthening Islamic Identity is also an important step carried out by the Muslim community in Mahakam Ulu in maintaining the existence of Islam. This strategy is carried out through routine religious activities such as recitations, *yasinan*, and celebrations of Islamic holidays involving all levels of Muslim society, including the younger generation. The involvement of young people in religious activities is a strategic step in ensuring the sustainability of Islamic traditions in a society that continues to experience social changes[43]. Through this identity

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[37] Novianus Isang and Silpanus Dalmasius, "Mengembangkan Moderasi Beragama Berorientasi Pada Kearifan Lokal Dayak Bahau Bateq," *Gaudium Vestrum: Jurnal Kateketik Pastoral*, 2021, 98–111.

[38] Isang and Dalmasius.
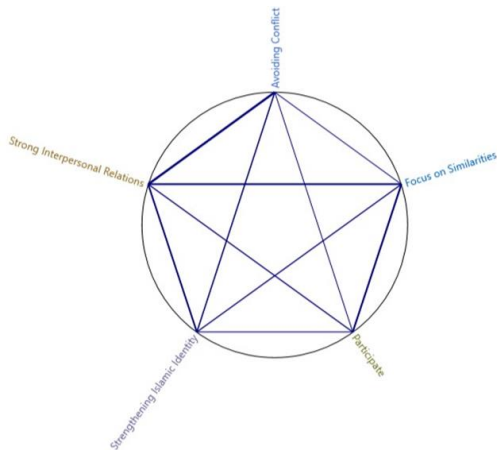
[39] Isang and Dalmasius.

[40] Badrus Sholeh, "Peran Dan Kontribusi Tokoh Islam Indonesia Dalam Proses Resolusi Konflik," *Jurnal Madania* 17, no. 1 (2013): 31–38; Ali Amran and Zaim Rais, "Moderasi Beragama Di Kalangan Minoritas Muslim Di Indonesia," *Hikmah* 19, no. 1 (2025): 41–58.

[41] Rafli Kahfi et al., "Heterogenitas: Kerukunan Masyarakat Di Desa Perkotaan, Kecamatan Air Putih, Kabupaten Batu Bara," *Jurnal Abdimas Indonesia* 4, no. 3 (2024): 1468–80; Ibrahim, "Pendidikan Multikultural: Upaya Meminimalisir Konflik Dalam Era Pluralitas Agama."

[42] Zuhriyandi, "Harmoni Beragama Dan Pencegahan Konflik: Perspektif Moderasi Menurut Al-Qur'an Dan Alkitab."

[43] Ferdianto et al., "Dinamika Pelestarian Tradisi Maulid Diba'oleh Kader Pemuda NU: Antara Ketahanan Budaya Dan Adaptasi Di Era Society 5.0"; Khomsinnudin et al., "Modernitas Dan Lokalitas: Membangun Pendidikan

strengthening, the Muslim community can maintain and strengthen its existence in the midst of multicultural life in Mahakam Ulu.

Items clustered by word similarity		
Code A	**Code B**	**Pearson Correlation Coefficient**
Strong Interpersonal Relations	Avoiding Conflict	0.839108
Participate	Focus on Similarities	0.689644
Strong Interpersonal Relations	Focus on Similarities	0.645892
Strong Interpersonal Relations	Strengthening Islamic Identity	0.620105
Strengthening Islamic Identity	Avoiding Conflict	0.501130
Strengthening Islamic Identity	Focus on Similarities	0.436886
Strong Interpersonal Relations	Participate	0.431980
Strengthening Islamic Identity	Participate	0.357772
Participate	Avoiding Conflict	0.341543

Figure 4. The resulting correlation between each Existence Strategy

Furthermore, the correlation analysis of strategies using NVivo 12 Plus shows that there is a close relationship between each strategy. The strategy of strengthening interpersonal relationships has the highest correlation with avoiding conflict, with a total score of 0.839108. This linkage reflects that the Muslim community in Mahakam Ulu is actively fostering harmonious social relations to prevent tensions and conflicts that could arise from religious and cultural differences. Likewise, the strategy of Focus on Equality and Participation, which positively correlates with other strategies, reflects the existence of healthy social dynamics in the life of the Muslim community in Mahakam Ulu. These strategies form a solid framework for social adaptation, allowing the Muslim community in Mahakam Ulu to continue to exist and play an active role in social life in the midst of existing diversity.

Through the combination of these five strategies, the Muslim community in Mahakam Ulu Regency has shown adaptive and flexible abilities in facing social challenges and religious diversity. This strategy not only maintains the stability of religious life, but also strengthens the position of the Muslim community in social life in Mahakam Ulu. This strategy based on the values of

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Islam Berkelanjutan"; Ridwan and Maryati, "Dari Tradisi Ke Masa Depan: Tantangan Pendidikan Islam Dalam Masyarakat Kontemporer."

tolerance, kinship, and respect for differences, has become the primary foundation in building a harmonious and inclusive community life in Mahakam Ulu Regency.

Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing Existence Strategies

In implementing the strategy for existence in Mahakam Ulu Regency, the Muslim community faces various challenges and opportunities arising from the existing social dynamics and cultural diversity. The main challenge faced is to maintain a balance between Islamic identity and involvement in inclusive social life in a heterogeneous society.[44] One of the significant problems in emerging is the potential for tension due to differing views on implementing religious teachings and local traditions that are deeply rooted in people's lives. The Muslim community in Mahakam Ulu, which is predominantly immigrant and a minority, is often faced with the challenge of adapting to the customs and traditions of the Dayak people who have different cultural values. But on the other hand, many Dayak people then adhere to Islam as their religion.

Another challenge is maintaining harmony in social interactions amid differences in beliefs. Although the Muslim community in Mahakam Ulu has made efforts to implement a strategy of Avoiding Conflict and Focusing on Commonality, the potential for tension remains, especially in certain religiously sensitive situations as well as political moments of legislative and executive elections.[45] However, one of the real examples of potential tension known in the results of the research observation is the use of loudspeakers in mosques, which had triggered discomfort among non-Muslim communities. This problem then requires a careful and wise approach in maintaining a balance between the implementation of worship and respect for the non-Muslim community. In addition, differences in policy-making related to the ceremonial celebration of religious holidays are among the issues that require open dialogue and intensive communication between religious communities.

In addition to challenges, implementing existing strategies opens up great opportunities for the Muslim community to strengthen its position and role in social life in Mahakam Ulu. One of the main opportunities is the strengthening of social solidarity through active participation in interfaith and cultural activities. The Participation Strategy carried out by the Muslim community has made a positive contribution to strengthening inter-religious relations in Mahakam Ulu. The

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[44] Arman Hanafi and Muhammad Yasin, "Upaya Memperkuat Hubungan Sosial Dalam Kehidupan Bermasyarakat," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan & Sosial (Sinova)* 1, no. 2 (2023): 51–62; Kahfi et al., "Heterogenitas: Kerukunan Masyarakat Di Desa Perkotaan, Kecamatan Air Putih, Kabupaten Batu Bara."

[45] Hasse Jubba et al., "How Do Muslim-Majority Countries Respond to Islamic Political Parties? Research Trend Studies and Theme Mapping," *Otoritas : Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan* 12, no. 2 (2022): 108–27, https://doi.org/10.26618/ojip.v12i2.8152; Abdul Halim, "Using: Study of Multiculturalism and Identity Politics on Local Islam," *Millati: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 4, no. 1 (2019): 69–86.

involvement of the Muslim community in social activities such as cooperation, interfaith religious celebrations, and cooperation in maintaining public facilities has created a sense of togetherness and mutual respect among the Muslim and non-Muslim communities.[46]

Another opportunity that arises is to strengthen the role of the younger generation in maintaining Islamic identity and strengthening social relations.[47] The Strategy to Strengthen Islamic Identity, implemented through religious recitation, *yasinan*, and educational activities for the younger generation, positively impacts the continuity of Islamic traditions amid changing social dynamics. The involvement of young people in religious activities creates a more open and inclusive space for dialogue, facilitating the transfer of Islamic values that adapt to the local social and cultural context.

In addition, the strategy of Strengthening Interpersonal Relationships also provides opportunities to build trust and cooperation between religious communities in Mahakam Ulu. Strong social relationships between individuals create a solid foundation for dealing with potential conflicts and building social resilience. The harmony in community life allows the Muslim community to actively participate in various aspects of social life, including decision-making related to development and public policy in Mahakam Ulu.

The correlation between strategies shown through the NVivo 12 Plus analysis indicates positive dynamics in the implementation of the existence strategy in Mahakam Ulu. The strategy of strengthening interpersonal relationships, which has a high correlation with the strategy of avoiding conflict (0.839108), indicates that strong social relationships can potentially reduce tension in social life. Likewise, the strategy of Focus on Equality and Participation has a positive correlation (0.689644), indicating that active involvement in social life strengthens social bonds and fosters mutual respect amid religious and cultural diversity.

By identifying the challenges and opportunities faced by the Muslim community of Mahakam Ulu Regency, the community can have a strong foundation to continue to maintain its existence in community life. The strategy not only focuses on strengthening Islamic identity but also emphasizes strengthening harmonious and inclusive social relations. Success in overcoming these challenges and taking advantage of these opportunities is the primary key to building an adaptive and sustainable Muslim community in Mahakam Ulu.

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[46] Moh Syaeful Bahar, Ahmad Khubby Ali, and Dodik Harnadi, "Exploring The Representation of Friendly Islam in Muslim-Non-Muslim Relations in Banyuwangi," *Millati: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 8, no. 2 (2023): 145–68.

[47] Ibrahim, "Pendidikan Multikultural: Upaya Meminimalisir Konflik Dalam Era Pluralitas Agama."

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the research data, the largest concentration of the Muslim population in Mahakam Ulu Regency is found in Long Bagun District. In addition, smaller clusters of Muslim residents are also present in several villages across other sub-districts. In maintain their religious and social life, the Muslim community in Mahakam Ulu implements five main strategies: Avoiding Conflict, Focusing on Similarities, Participating, Strengthening Interpersonal Relationships, and Strengthening Islamic Identity. The Strategy to Strengthen Interpersonal Relationships is the most dominant strategy with the highest percentage of coverage, indicating that strong interpersonal relationships between the Muslim and non-Muslim communities are key to maintaining the existence of the Muslim community in Mahakam Ulu.

This study represents an initial step toward advancing scholarly understanding of the dynamics experienced by Muslims minority groups in Mahakam Ulu. Given that research on this topic remains limited, the findings of this study are expected to provide a foundation for future research examining strategies of existence and adaptation employed the Muslim communities amid evolving social and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, this study has several limitations, including the limited scope of data and the need for more in depth-analysis to capture the complexity of interreligious relations in Mahakam Ulu. Therefore, further studies employing broader data coverage and a more comprehensive methodological approaches are necessary to refine and expand upon the findings presented in this research.

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