

FOSTERING RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE QUR'AN

Abdul Haris^{1*}

Universitas Islam Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia

abd.haris@uinjkt.ac.id

(*) Corresponding Author

abd.haris@uinjkt.ac.id

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 20-04-2026

Revised : 07-05-2026

Accepted : 15-06-2026

KEYWORDS

Religious Tolerance;
Qur'anic Perspective;
Freedom of Religion;
Interfaith Relations;
Peaceful Coexistence

ABSTRACT

Religious tolerance has become a crucial issue in contemporary pluralistic societies. This study aims to examine the Qur'anic concept of religious tolerance by exploring its theological foundations and practical implementation in early Islamic history. The study employed a qualitative library research design using a thematic Qur'anic (maudhu'i) approach. Primary data were derived from relevant Qur'anic verses, while secondary data consisted of classical and contemporary tafsir literature, scholarly books, and academic publications. Data were analyzed through qualitative content analysis to identify key themes related to freedom of belief, interfaith relations, and social coexistence. The findings indicate that the Qur'an promotes religious tolerance through the principles of non-coercion in religion, recognition of human diversity, respect for religious communities, and constructive dialogue. These principles were historically reflected in the practices of Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslim community in fostering peaceful coexistence and protecting religious freedom. This study contributes to the discourse on religious tolerance by demonstrating that the Qur'an provides a normative and ethical framework for strengthening interfaith harmony and social cohesion in multicultural societies.

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license.



INTRODUCTIONS

Religion remains one of the most influential forces shaping human behavior, social relations, and collective identities across societies. Despite the rapid advancement of science, technology, and secularization in many parts of the world, religious beliefs continue to play a significant role in public and private life (Fauzhan'Azima, 2023). Throughout history, religion has served not only as a source of spiritual guidance but also as a determinant of cultural values, political orientations, and social cohesion. At the same time, religious differences have often become a source

of tension and conflict, making the issue of religious tolerance an increasingly important subject of scholarly inquiry (Khan et al., 2022).

Various historical and contemporary conflicts demonstrate how religious sentiments can influence social stability and intergroup relations. Tensions between different religious communities have appeared in many regions, including the Middle East, South Asia, and Europe. In numerous cases, religious identity has been intertwined with political, ethnic, and territorial disputes, resulting in prolonged social divisions (Idris et al., 2024). Such realities have encouraged international organizations, governments, and religious leaders to promote interfaith dialogue and mutual understanding as essential foundations for peaceful coexistence in pluralistic societies.

The growing diversity of modern societies further highlights the importance of religious tolerance. Globalization, migration, and technological connectivity have intensified interactions among people from different religious backgrounds (Muhja & Shahnaz, 2026). Consequently, maintaining social harmony requires not only legal protections for freedom of religion but also ethical and theological frameworks that encourage respect for religious diversity. In this context, religious traditions are increasingly examined for their contributions to peacebuilding, social integration, and the promotion of human dignity (Fahmi et al., 2021).

Islam, as one of the world's major religions, provides extensive guidance regarding relations with people of different faiths. The Qur'an presents itself as a universal source of guidance for humanity and contains numerous teachings concerning justice, compassion, dialogue, and coexistence (Syarifudin & Affandi, 2025). At the same time, misconceptions persist regarding Islamic teachings on religious diversity, particularly the assumption that Islam promotes coercion in matters of faith. Such perceptions have generated academic debates concerning the relationship between Islamic doctrine, religious freedom, and tolerance toward non-Muslim communities (Rohman et al., 2024).

From a Qur'anic perspective, religious tolerance is closely related to the recognition of human dignity and diversity as part of God's design. The Qur'an portrays Islam as a religion that upholds justice, compassion, and mercy for all humanity, encouraging believers to interact with others through wisdom, fairness, and mutual respect. Consequently, tolerance is not merely a social necessity for maintaining harmony in diverse societies but also a theological principle embedded within the Islamic worldview (Rohmah, 2025).

This principle is reflected in the Qur'anic emphasis on freedom of belief and the prohibition of coercion in religious matters. At the same time, the Qur'an promotes respectful dialogue and cooperation among different religious communities in pursuit of shared moral values and social welfare. These teachings provide an important foundation for understanding how Islam conceptualizes interfaith relations and peaceful coexistence within pluralistic societies (Nugroho, 2024).

The Qur'an explicitly emphasizes that faith cannot be imposed upon individuals. Several Qur'anic passages affirm the principle of freedom of belief and acknowledge human responsibility in choosing between faith and disbelief (Solikah & Wardini, 2025). In addition, the Qur'an encourages believers to engage with followers of other religions through wisdom, constructive dialogue, and respectful interaction. These teachings suggest that tolerance is not merely a social necessity but also a religious principle rooted in the Islamic worldview. Consequently, understanding the Qur'anic foundations of religious tolerance is essential for addressing contemporary challenges related to religious diversity (Hidayah, 2024).

Beyond its theological teachings, the historical experiences of early Islamic society provide important evidence regarding the practical implementation of religious tolerance. The Prophet Muhammad and his companions established various forms of interaction with non-Muslim communities, including agreements of protection, interreligious dialogue, and guarantees of religious freedom (Khodijah et al., 2025). These historical precedents demonstrate that tolerance in Islam was not limited to doctrinal statements but was also reflected in social and political practices aimed at preserving peaceful coexistence among diverse religious groups.

Although numerous studies have examined religious tolerance in Islam, most have focused either on normative interpretations of selected Qur'anic verses or on contemporary socio-political issues related to interfaith relations. Previous research has often discussed freedom of religion, coexistence, and dialogue separately, without providing an integrated analysis that connects the theological foundations of tolerance in the Qur'an with their historical implementation during the formative period of Islam. As a result, the relationship between Qur'anic principles and their practical application in the life of the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslim community remains insufficiently explored. This study seeks to address this gap by offering a comprehensive examination of religious tolerance that combines thematic Qur'anic analysis with historical evidence, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of how Islamic teachings contribute to contemporary discussions on religious diversity and social harmony.

Based on these considerations, this study examines religious tolerance from the Qur'anic perspective by analyzing its theological foundations, fundamental principles, and historical implementation during the early period of Islam. Through a qualitative library research approach, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the Qur'an conceptualizes religious tolerance and how these teachings contribute to contemporary discussions on interfaith relations, religious freedom, and social harmony in multicultural societies.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative library research design to examine the concept of religious tolerance from the Qur'anic perspective. Library research was selected because the study focuses on the analysis of textual and documentary sources rather than empirical field data. The primary source of data was the Qur'an, particularly verses related to freedom of religion, religious diversity, interfaith relations, dialogue, and peaceful coexistence. Secondary sources consisted of classical and contemporary Qur'anic commentaries (tafsir), scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and historical literature relevant to religious tolerance in Islam. The selection of secondary sources was based on their scholarly relevance, authority in Qur'anic studies, and direct discussion of themes associated with tolerance and interreligious relations.

The study adopted a thematic Qur'anic (maudhu'i) approach. The research process began by identifying key concepts associated with religious tolerance, such as freedom of belief, non-coercion in religion, recognition of diversity, interfaith dialogue, and social cooperation. Qur'anic verses containing these themes were subsequently collected and compiled through thematic classification. Each verse was then analyzed in relation to its textual meaning, contextual background (asbab al-nuzul), and interpretation within both classical and contemporary exegetical traditions. To ensure a comprehensive understanding, the analysis referred to major tafsir works, including those of Ibn Kathir, Al-Maraghi, Al-Zamakhshari, Rashid Rida, and other recognized Muslim scholars representing different interpretative perspectives.

Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The selected verses and supporting literature were systematically coded and categorized into four principal themes: (1) the prohibition of religious coercion, (2) theological foundations of tolerance, (3) principles of interfaith relations and social cooperation, and (4) historical implementation of religious tolerance in early Islam. Following the categorization process, the findings were interpreted through comparative analysis of exegetical viewpoints and historical sources to identify recurring patterns, points of convergence, and broader implications. This procedure enabled the study to develop a comprehensive understanding of how the Qur'an conceptualizes religious tolerance and how these teachings remain relevant to contemporary multicultural societies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Qur'anic Principle of Non-Coercion in Religion

The analysis revealed that the Qur'an establishes freedom of belief as a fundamental principle in religious life. Several verses explicitly reject any form of coercion in matters of faith and emphasize that religious commitment must emerge from individual conviction. The Qur'an recognizes that faith is a personal response to divine guidance and cannot be imposed through force or intimidation. This principle demonstrates Islam's acknowledgment of human agency and moral responsibility in choosing a religious path (Utama & Mubarak, 2024).

The strongest evidence supporting this principle is found in Qur'an 2:256, which states, "There shall be no compulsion in religion." This verse is widely interpreted by classical and contemporary Muslim scholars as a clear prohibition against forcing individuals to embrace Islam. Similarly, Qur'an 10:99 emphasizes that even the Prophet Muhammad was not authorized to compel people to become believers. These verses indicate that acceptance of faith must be based on understanding and willingness rather than external pressure.

The findings further show that the Qur'anic approach to da'wah is primarily persuasive rather than coercive. The role of Muslims is to communicate religious teachings through wisdom and good counsel, while the final decision remains with each individual. Consequently, the Qur'an differentiates between inviting others to Islam and compelling them to accept it. This distinction forms one of the most important foundations of religious tolerance within Islamic teachings.

This finding contributes to ongoing scholarly debates regarding the relationship between Islamic teachings and religious freedom. While some interpretations have emphasized the expansion of Islam through political authority, the present analysis demonstrates that Qur'anic guidance consistently places faith within the realm of personal conscience. Classical exegetes generally viewed Qur'an 2:256 as a foundational principle governing religious choice, whereas contemporary scholars increasingly interpret it as evidence of Islam's compatibility with modern concepts of human rights and freedom of religion. This study argues that the principle of non-coercion should not be understood merely as a legal norm but as a theological affirmation of human moral agency, thereby strengthening the ethical foundation of religious tolerance in Islam.

Theological Foundations of Religious Tolerance

The study found that religious tolerance in the Qur'an is grounded in a theological recognition of humanity's diversity. The Qur'an repeatedly presents religious plurality as part of God's wisdom and design for human existence. Although Islam maintains its theological claims regarding truth and guidance, it also acknowledges the reality of different religious communities and encourages respectful engagement among them (Qotadah et al., 2022).

Another significant finding concerns the Qur'anic recognition of previous prophets and revealed religions. Muslims are instructed to believe in all prophets sent by God without discrimination, including those associated with Judaism and Christianity (Akmansyah et al., 2024). This principle creates a theological basis for respecting followers of earlier monotheistic traditions. The Qur'an therefore promotes continuity among divine revelations while maintaining the finality of the message brought by Prophet Muhammad.

The analysis also demonstrates that tolerance in Islam does not imply theological relativism. The Qur'an invites all people to accept Islamic teachings while simultaneously recognizing their freedom to accept or reject that invitation. Thus, tolerance refers to respect for the rights and dignity of others rather than acceptance of all religious doctrines as equally true (Shobri, 2025). This balance between religious conviction and respect for diversity constitutes a distinctive feature of the Qur'anic perspective on tolerance.

A significant implication of this finding is that Qur'anic tolerance emerges from a balance between religious conviction and recognition of diversity. Unlike approaches that equate tolerance with theological relativism, the Qur'anic framework maintains commitment to religious truth while safeguarding the dignity and rights of those holding different beliefs. This perspective distinguishes the Qur'anic concept of tolerance from secular models that often separate tolerance from religious commitments. The novelty of this study lies in highlighting how theological

exclusivity and social inclusivity coexist within the Qur'anic worldview, offering a more nuanced understanding of interreligious relations.

Principles of Interfaith Relations and Social Cooperation

The findings indicate that the Qur'an encourages constructive interaction between Muslims and followers of other religions. Interfaith relations are not solely based on coexistence but also on cooperation in matters that promote social welfare and moral goodness. The Qur'an calls for justice, fairness, and ethical conduct in dealing with all people regardless of their religious affiliation.

The study identified several Qur'anic principles supporting positive interfaith engagement. These include cooperation in righteousness (Qur'an 5:2), dialogue conducted in the best manner (Qur'an 29:46), and the protection of places of worship. Such principles demonstrate that religious diversity should not become a source of hostility or social exclusion. Instead, differences in belief can coexist alongside shared commitments to justice, peace, and human welfare.

The Qur'an permits various forms of social interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims, including economic cooperation, neighborly relations, and certain family relationships. These provisions indicate that Islam does not advocate social isolation from other religious communities. Rather, the Qur'an envisions a society in which diverse groups interact peacefully while maintaining their respective religious identities (Zahara et al., 2024).

The findings further suggest that the Qur'an conceptualizes interfaith relations not only as peaceful coexistence but also as active social cooperation. This interpretation expands the understanding of tolerance beyond passive acceptance toward collaborative engagement in addressing shared social concerns. Compared with previous studies that primarily focus on dialogue and coexistence, the present analysis emphasizes the Qur'an's encouragement of collective responsibility in promoting justice, welfare, and social harmony. Such an approach is particularly relevant in contemporary multicultural societies where religious communities are increasingly required to cooperate in responding to social and humanitarian challenges.

Historical Implementation of Religious Tolerance in Early Islam

The analysis of historical sources revealed that the principles of religious tolerance articulated in the Qur'an were implemented during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad and the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. Historical accounts describe numerous instances in which non-Muslim communities were granted protection, freedom of worship, and opportunities for dialogue (Mahrus & Afandi, 2024). These practices demonstrate the practical application of Qur'anic teachings in the governance of a pluralistic society.

One notable example concerns the delegation of Christians from Najran who visited Medina to engage in theological discussions with the Prophet Muhammad. Historical records indicate that they were treated respectfully and were allowed to perform their religious worship during their stay. Such events illustrate how interreligious dialogue and mutual respect were integrated into the social and political life of the early Muslim community (Supadi, 2024).

The study also found that Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab established important precedents regarding the protection of non-Muslim citizens. Agreements made during his administration guaranteed security for religious communities, protected their places of worship, and ensured their freedom to practice their faith. These historical experiences suggest that religious tolerance was not merely a theoretical ideal in Islam but a principle actively implemented in the administration of early Islamic society (Apriudianisti, 2025).

The historical evidence indicates that religious tolerance in Islam functioned as a practical governance principle rather than a purely theological ideal. This finding is important because contemporary discussions often focus on doctrinal texts without sufficiently examining their historical implementation. By connecting Qur'anic teachings with policies enacted during the Prophet's leadership and the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, this study demonstrates the continuity between normative principles and social practice. The analysis therefore contributes

a more integrated perspective that links scriptural foundations, historical experience, and contemporary discourse on religious tolerance.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that religious tolerance in the Qur'an is fundamentally rooted in the principle of freedom of belief. The prohibition of coercion in religion, as expressed in Qur'an 2:256 and reinforced by Qur'an 10:99, indicates that faith must arise from personal conviction rather than external pressure. This finding challenges the common misconception that Islam promotes forced conversion and instead confirms that the Qur'anic approach to religious propagation is based on persuasion, dialogue, and moral example. The emphasis on voluntary acceptance of faith highlights the Qur'an's recognition of human free will and moral responsibility in responding to divine guidance.

The study also reveals that religious tolerance is closely connected to the Qur'anic understanding of human diversity. Religious plurality is not presented as an accidental social phenomenon but as part of God's wisdom in creating humanity. This perspective encourages Muslims to acknowledge the existence of different religious communities while maintaining their own theological convictions. Similar findings have been reported in contemporary Islamic studies, which argue that the Qur'an promotes respect for diversity without abandoning the distinctive identity and truth claims of Islam. Thus, tolerance in the Qur'anic framework is characterized by respect and coexistence rather than theological relativism.

Another important finding concerns the recognition of previous prophets and revealed traditions as a foundation for interfaith relations. The Qur'an instructs Muslims to believe in all prophets sent by God and acknowledges the existence of earlier religious communities, particularly Jews and Christians. This theological continuity creates a basis for mutual respect and constructive engagement among followers of Abrahamic religions. The findings suggest that the Qur'anic worldview encourages dialogue based on shared ethical and spiritual values while allowing differences in doctrine to remain. Such an approach is particularly relevant in contemporary multicultural societies where interreligious interaction is increasingly unavoidable.

The results further indicate that the Qur'an promotes active cooperation between people of different faiths in matters related to social welfare, justice, and moral responsibility. Commands to cooperate in righteousness and engage in respectful dialogue demonstrate that religious differences should not become barriers to collective efforts aimed at achieving the common good. These principles support contemporary initiatives in peacebuilding, social cohesion, and interfaith collaboration. In this regard, the Qur'anic model of tolerance extends beyond passive acceptance and encourages positive social engagement among diverse communities.

Finally, the historical experiences of the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslim community provide practical evidence that Qur'anic teachings on tolerance were translated into social and political reality. The protection granted to non-Muslim communities, the recognition of their religious rights, and the preservation of their places of worship illustrate the implementation of tolerance as a governing principle in early Islamic society. These historical precedents reinforce the argument that religious tolerance is not merely a theoretical concept in Islam but an integral component of its ethical and social teachings. Therefore, the Qur'anic perspective on religious tolerance offers valuable insights for promoting peaceful coexistence and mutual respect in contemporary pluralistic societies.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that religious tolerance constitutes a fundamental principle within the Qur'anic worldview. The findings demonstrate that the Qur'an promotes tolerance through the principles of non-coercion in religion, recognition of human diversity, respectful dialogue, and social cooperation. Rather than viewing tolerance as a mere social necessity, the Qur'an presents it as an ethical and theological commitment that respects the rights and dignity of individuals while maintaining religious convictions. Historical evidence from the life of the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslim community further confirms that these principles were translated into practical policies and social relations that supported peaceful coexistence among diverse religious groups.

The main contribution of this study lies in its integrated analysis of religious tolerance by linking Qur'anic theological foundations with their historical implementation in early Islamic society. While previous studies have often examined doctrinal teachings or contemporary interfaith relations separately, this study demonstrates the continuity between scriptural principles and historical practice, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the Qur'anic concept of tolerance. The findings also enrich contemporary discussions on religious freedom, interfaith engagement, and social cohesion in multicultural societies.

This study is limited by its reliance on library research and textual analysis. As a result, it does not examine how Qur'anic principles of religious tolerance are interpreted and practiced within contemporary Muslim communities. Future research is therefore encouraged to employ empirical approaches, such as case studies, surveys, or field research, to investigate the application of these principles in modern multicultural contexts and their potential contribution to conflict resolution, interreligious harmony, and sustainable peacebuilding.

REFERENCES

- Akmansyah, M., Azizah, U. Y., & Nurnazli, N. (2024). Fostering religious harmony: nurturing tolerance in islamic boarding schools through kiai's exemplary, curriculum, and daily activities. *Ijtima'iyya: Jurnal Pengembangan Masyarakat Islam*, 17(1), 43–66.
- Apriudianisti, S. (2025). The Role of Islam in Building Interfaith Tolerance in Indonesia. *Journal of Scientific Studies and Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(2), 211–218.
- Fahmi, E. N., Mujahidin, E., & Rahman, I. K. (2021). Development of religious tolerance of high school levels. *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 10(01), 163–196.
- Fauzhan'Azima, M. (2023). Ulumul Hadis Dan Modernisme Islam: Analisis Pemikiran Hadis Mahmud Yunus. *Ikhtisar: Jurnal Pengetahuan Islam*, 3(1), 71–83.
- Hidayah, M. A. (2024). Critical reflections on the role of Islamic early childhood educators in building tolerance awareness in educational setting. *Al-Athfal: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak*, 10(2), 151–163.
- Idris, M., Willya, E., & Mokodenseho, S. (2024). Strengthening religious tolerance with Islamic views in the era of diversity in Indonesia. *West Science Islamic Studies*, 2(02), 106–113.
- Khan, N. A., Ambreen, M., & Rasheed, B. (2022). Muslims Of Indian Subcontinent Struggle For Freedom On The Basis Of Culture Differences: An Analyze. *International Research Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1(1), 1–15.
- Khodijah, S., Surawan, S., & Fajariah, F. (2025). Religious Moderation Within the Frame of Tolerance: Islamic Studies and Diversity in Central Kalimantan. *Bulletin of Islamic Research*, 3(2), 281–296.
- Mahrus, M., & Afandi, N. K. (2024). Building tolerance from an early age: Instilling religious moderation values in elementary schools. *EDUKASIA Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran*, 5(2), 159–168.
- Muhja, Z. A., & Shahnaz, L. (2026). Developing a Culture of Tolerance Through Islamic Religious Education. *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education*, 10(1), 1–19.
- Nugroho, M. A. (2024). Religious tolerance model in Salatiga: Analysis of the implementation of religious moderation concept in a multicultural city. *International Journal on Advanced Science, Education, and Religion*, 7(4), 27–43.
- Qotadah, H. A., Syafri, I., & Achmad, A. D. (2022). Fostering Religious Inclusivism Attitudes in School Through Learning The Quran and Hadith. *International Journal of Islamic Thought and Humanities*, 1(2), 145–155.
- Rohmah, N. (2025). Religious Tolerance in Islam and Hinduism: A Comparative Analysis of the Holy Qur'an and the Vedas. *Abrahamic Religions: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama*, 5(1), 24–36.
- Rohman, F., Kesgin, S., Fahmi, M., Sucipto, A. Q. N. E. D., & Syaifuddin, S. (2024). Fostering tolerance and countering extremism: Religious moderation efforts in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Surabaya. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)*, 12(2), 243–262.
- Shobri, M. (2025). Religious Moderation in the Perspective of the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic Education: Efforts to

- Strengthen the Value of Tolerance through Service to the International Community. *Global Sustainability and Community Engagement*, 1(4), 233–242.
- Solikhah, I., & Wardini, S. U. (2025). Multicultural Islamic Education In Fostering Tolerance: Strategies And Challenges In Indonesia. *Journal of Education and Learning Sciences*, 5(1), 39–58.
- Supadi, A. (2024). The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Building Tolerance between Religious People. *Journal Corner of Education, Linguistics, and Literature*, 4(001), 279–289.
- Syaifudin, M., & Affandi, A. (2025). Christian Engagement with The Qur'an in Egypt: A Sociological and Phenomenological Study of Interreligious Tolerance and Social Coexistence. *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu'ashirah: Media Kajian Al-Qur'an Dan Al-Hadits Multi Perspektif*, 22(2), 441–458.
- Utama, M. S., & Mubarak, M. Z. (2024). Integrating the concept of unity in diversity and quranic values in multicultural education to foster tolerance-based character in Indonesia. *Social Studies in Education*, 2(1), 45–58.
- Zahara, A. N., Sumbulah, U., & Zenrif, F. (2024). Islamic Tolerance in Qur'an and Hadith: Implications for Educational Institutions. *Khazanah Pendidikan Islam*, 6(3), 219–230.