

Millennials as Religious Tolerance Agents

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Article info

Received: 12 May 2024

Revised: 09 June 2024

Accepted: 22 June 2024

Keywords: millennial generation; social media; tolerance

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Abstract

The 21st century is known to the public as the millennium era or the millennial generation. People who fall into this group are those born around the 1980s and 1990s, even up to the 2000s. The dynamics of social change experienced by the millennial dynasty is that it is routinely dominated by technology, especially the internet and smartphones. Millennials' morals and behavior experience abstract patterns, because they imitate from the internet, especially social media ranging from Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and others. Supposedly, the triumph of technology today is a tool to realize religious tolerance. However, until now the phenomenon of intolerance is still rolling like a ball that is always contested. This article aims to explore the social dynamics of millennial groups who become agents of implementing religious tolerance values. This paper uses a descriptive-analytic approach. The result is Millennials who are considered proficient in internet technology based on social media utilize it to access and disseminate to the public content with tolerance nuances. In addition to accessing accounts or websites based on tolerance values such as UNOY, YIPC, Peace Generation, and so on. Millennials can also create personal accounts or websites with cultural, racial, political, and religious diversity content. Instead of accessing or spreading hateful posts to each other.

1. Introduction

The world is developing globally, creating various dynamics of social change in each generation. Currently, the 21st century is known to the public as the millennial era or millennial generation. People who fall into this group are people born in the 1980s and 1990s. The dynamics of social change experienced in the millennial dynasty is the routine hegemony of technology, especially the internet and smartphones. This massive digitalization also affects the Indonesian language, such as *tercyduk*, *micin* generation, and so on [1]. This millennial generation should be able to implement the values of tolerance because almost every one of them has a social media account that can spread the teachings of tolerance to their followers.

Human beings are to maintain peace and prosperity for each other, and through tolerance, mutual respect will be created. Tolerance is not indulgence or indifference, but represents respect and appreciation for the world's abundant cultural diversity and is based on unconditional acceptance of universal human rights [2, p. 2]. Indonesia has diverse cultures, especially recognized religions, namely Islam, Protestant, Catholic, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucius, which is a common task to create mutual respect without hatred. Religion has a dual role and function that can be constructive and destructive. Constructively, it can support humans to live in unity, firmly, in harmony, and peace. This is because religion can bind more than blood ties, blood relations, or lineage. In contrast to the destructive nature of religion, it can cause quarrels that destroy unity, can even break blood relatives, and cause conflicts originating from religion with unpredictable consequences [3, p. 158]. Human beings by nature want to realize a peaceful life in multi-religious communal and beliefs in society. However, harmony and religious harmony will certainly not be created if it does not uphold and appreciate tolerance. The relationship between tolerance and harmony is causal, so understanding tolerance is an absolute requirement for the creation of inter-religious harmony [4, p. 186].

Research related to millennial objects and tolerance has been studied by researchers. This needs to be explored to find distinctions and fill empty spaces that have not been discussed before. The article entitled "The Character of Religious Tolerance in the Viewpoint of the Millennial Generation" shows that millennials who are in a campus environment have a high level of tolerance because they are used to people of different religions. The application of tolerance values can take the form of fulfilling religious invitations, congratulating holidays, and giving parcels to those outside their beliefs [5, p. 74]. Researchers found similarities with the writings of Ridho Siregar et al (2022) with the title "Interfaith Tolerance in the View of the Millennial Generation" but have little difference regarding Pecalang's activities in charge of guarding the course of interfaith events [6, pp. 1346–1347].

Edi Sugianto's paper (2019) entitled "Religious Tolerance Education for the Millennial Generation" explores Quranic literature that discusses the term religion, Islamic episteme, the concept of plurality, the universality of Islamic values, Islam as a religion of humanity, and peace as a priority. With the values of tolerance education in the Quran, it is hoped that it can be practiced for the millennial generation. The embodiment can be realized by Islamic religion teachers not only teaching Muslim students but also providing discussion forums with students of other religions, to create an attitude of respect. Another thing that can be done is that agents of da'wah should be able to explain universal values, not the doctrine of dogma that makes it shallow and closed [7, p. 111].

According to Subhan Fadli's (2019) article entitled "Building Tolerance for the Millennial Generation" presents factors that have an impact on the practice of tolerance behavior, namely extroverted personalities tend to be more tolerant than introverts. Also looking at the educational environment starts with family, formal education, and neighbors (community). The next factor is the importance of interaction with other different religions, this can result in the birth of tolerance values. The last factor that encourages tolerance is self-control trying to be flexible, friendly, and open [8, pp. 133–134].

The results of the search for previous research do not show the role of the millennial generation as agents of spreading religious tolerance, although some have mentioned but did not cover social media. Therefore, this research explores the issue of the millennial generation as agents of change toward the implementation of the value of religious tolerance in the millennial era focusing on social media. The issue is interesting because, with various incoming information, the millennial generation is considered capable of realizing tolerance. But the reality is that various intolerant events appear on social media by spreading various hoaxes about something that can corner one group, even to the point of taking physical actions such as throwing bombs, stabbing, and so on.

2. Methodology

This type of research is qualitative research with a descriptive model. The method used is library research whose research objects are mass media, scientific journals, books, articles, and statistical data. The primary sources of this paper are social media that record the dynamics of millennial generation behavior. Secondary sources are other texts that support the research theme. Researchers use a descriptive-analytical approach. According to the methods and sources used, this research will elaborate on the problem of how the millennial generation becomes an agent of spreading religious tolerance values through the social media era.

3. Results and discussions

3.1 Getting to Know the Millennial Generation

According to Manheim, quoted from the articles of Ni Putu Depi Yulia Peramesti and Dedi Kusmana (2018) a generation is a social construction of society or a community of people whose age orientation and historical experience are the same as that group. Then individuals and other individuals are seen as one mass, with the same birth year for 20 years with the same social and historical aspects [9, p. 76]. A similar definition is also expressed by Kupperschmidt, namely a group identity that has similarities in

terms of birth year, era/dynasty, and even historical phenomena as a critical stage in the development of civilization [10, p. 116].

Then combining it with the millennial generation will give rise to an understanding as mentioned by Yuswohady that Millennials are a group of generations born between the early 1980s and 2000. Furthermore, this generation is also known as Gen-Y, Net Generation, WE Generation, Boomerang Generation, Peter Pan Generation, and Gen-Y. They coexist along with the surging development of digitalization that has entered into all aspects of people's lives [13, p. 241].

Benjamin McArthur's *Millennial Fevers* explains the problems that have emerged in the millennium era. He explains that the millennium generation experienced developments in the early 19th century with many media reporting apocalypticism. In addition, various conspiracies were born, such as the UFO cult, new age, and so on [14, p. 369]. Then the millennium era is not a law of historical causality of the past or anticipation of the future, but the millennium is a direct gift from the efforts of the millennial generation [15, p. 109].

Conservative groups view the millennial generation as having daily life, even deviant behaviors. In line with this, an article from Tapscoff explains that some academics, journalists, and experts view the Net Generation with skepticism, negativity, and cynicism. Then Tapscoff outlines 10 issues related to the dark side of the Net Generation, namely [16, pp. 3–5]:

1. They are less educated than us when they are their age
2. They are filters, and internet addicts, lose their social skills, hey don't have the opportunity or time to exercise or other healthy activities
3. They have no shame. For example, women who post provocative pictures online to the public
4. Then the Net Generation's upbringing is spoiled by their parents, so they are worried and even afraid to choose a path/principle in life
5. Millennials are accused of being thieves because they violate property copyrights, download music, and share whatever they receive without sympathizing with the owner or author
6. They bully their friends online. This happened in the case of the beating of a teenager in April 2008 which was then posted on the YouTube platform. Then Glenn Black, a host at one of the television stations, explained that young people who live in virtual reality and a culture of violence and humiliation, all for the sake of fame/virality
7. They are cruel. The murder case that occurred in 1999 at Columbine high School near Denver, Colorado was a murder motivated on based on me play gameplay hatred, racism, sexuality, and other negative things
8. They do not have the ethical integrity of a worker and will always be a bad employee in front of company officials
9. The next issue of the millennial generation is that the current generation is seen as having the highest development of narcissism compared to the previous 25 years. Professor Jean Twenge has reviewed students who responded to personal narcissism between the early 1980s and 2006
10. They experience a reduction in caring

From the explanation above, it can be understood that the millennial generation is a generation formed based on people born around 1980-2000. The reality of technological development at this time, makes this generation have attitudes, attitudes, and behaviors that are considered by some people, especially conservatives, as a generation that has experienced the negation of human morals both personally and impersonally/socially.

3.2 What is Social Media

A discussion about the introduction of social media that parallels the birth of the millennial generation. The Oxford Dictionary defines social media as websites and software programs used for social networking. The beginning of the birth of social media was due to the growth of the internet in the 1970s. The first social media format was the Bulletin Board System (BBS), considered to be the founding father of virtual communities in history. In 1979, the existence of UserNet made various groups

use virtual communication from online bulletins, articles, and newsgroups. In 1995, the WWW (World Wide Web) was introduced, people wanted to create personal web pages used to share information and communicate over the Internet [17, pp. 11–12].

Social media is a communication platform that everyone can use just by connecting their devices to the internet network. The Internet cannot be separated from the chain of social media survival. Therefore, the Internet has benefits for survival on all sides of millennial life. The benefits of the internet as expressed by Quarterman and Mitchell quoted by Shiefta Dyah Alyusi in her book, the benefits are as follows [18, p. 28]:

1. The Internet is used as a communication platform between friends, family, and even strangers with unlimited distance.
2. The Internet as a dissemination and sharing of data information. Either using email media, newsgroups, and www (World Wide Web - a network of websites).
3. Media for searching information or data.
4. Communities that utilize the internet as a medium for searching for information, shopping, making transactions, ETC.

In addition to the positive things above, the internet with social media platforms has criminal aspects in it both physically and non-physically. This crime is committed by irresponsible individuals by creating anonymous accounts, then committing crimes such as fraud, selling drugs, pedophilia, child abduction, and many other crimes that have not been revealed [19, p. 9].

Social media is synonymous with what we know as selfies. It turns out that in the Oxford dictionary, the word selfie is given a definition as "a photo of yourself that you take, typically with a smartphone or webcam, and usually put on social media" (a photo of yourself that you take, typically with a smartphone or webcam, and usually saved or posted to one of the social media platforms or even to all of your social media accounts). A website called Alexa.com released the most popular social media on February 24, 2008 [20, p. 7]. That's are:

1. Yahoo!
2. YouTube
3. Windows Live
4. Google
5. (MSN)
6. Myspace
7. Facebook
8. Hi5
9. Wikipedia
10. Orkut

Facebook active users in September 2013 reached 1.19 billion active accounts, of which 874 million accessed Facebook via mobile devices. Interestingly, Indonesia is the most populous country that ranks second in the world in terms of social media usage with the Facebook platform [21, p. 15].

3.3 Definition of Tolerance

On November 16, 1995, the 50th anniversary of the founding of UNESCO, its member states proclaimed the principle of tolerance. The word tolerance comes from the Latin "tolerare" meaning to bear with something, prevent, face, or suffer, and not interfere with other beliefs, behaviors, or practices that are considered incorrect but must be carried out (Araujo et al., 2008, p. 3). According to KBBI, tolerance is a noun that has several meanings, namely: the nature or attitude of tolerance, the limits of measurement of additions and subtractions still allowed, and deviations that are still acceptable in work measurement. Then, the word tolerance has the meaning of tolerating, silence, and abandonment [11]. The online Oxford Dictionary defines the term tolerance as the integrity of a person in his or her willingness to accept or tolerate someone/something, especially opinions or behaviors that we may disagree with or are not similar to our own.

According to the Contemporary Arabic-Indonesian Dictionary, the word tolerance comes from the root of the word *سمح* meaning: to give, give permission, and allow. When the *mim* is replaced by a *dhammah* line, it means tolerant or generous. The word *سمح* with the *mim* removed means tolerance, then the word *سماح* is defined as permission, license, forgiveness, a state of spaciousness and generosity (Mursyid, 2016, p. 39). According to Umar Hasyim, as quoted from Muhammad Yasir's writing, Umar said tolerance is giving freedom to others to realize their beliefs or rules of life by determining their destiny, as long as their perceptions and determination of their destiny are not violated, and interventions that do not conflict with the basic needs of social order and peace [22, p. 171]. Then, religious tolerance is an attitude of patience and restraint not to interfere with and not to harass religions or belief systems and worship of adherents of other religions [23, p. 2].

Tolerant societies are more likely to engender mutual trust and cooperation, and tend towards peace; because, to the extent that we are willing to learn from others, we are more able to negotiate and compromise on our differences. In a tolerant society, there is a tendency for less cruelty, hypocrisy and lies, less hatred and fanaticism. Then the principle of tolerance contributes to the common good and a more humane society and is justified on pragmatic, consequential, and utilitarian grounds [2, p. 2]. According to Hans Kung, *"the future of humanity and religion today depends on the credibility of religious understanding to position it as a source of freedom, mutual understanding, and reconciliation, meaning a source of freedom, mutual understanding, and reconciliation"* [24, p. 260].

From this overview of tolerance, two points are apparent. First, in thinking about tolerance, the unavoidable starting point must be awareness of others' practices or beliefs; and second, the perception that those beliefs or practices are wrong. For if we perceive them to be right, surely we will not only allow them but also encourage them. The concept of tolerance is interesting because it implies that we judge the beliefs and practices of others as incorrect but we allow them; indeed, most dictionaries characterize 'tolerance' as the act of allowing, or the capacity to endure beliefs or practices that are different or contrary to one's own beliefs or practices [2, p. 3]. Tolerance is important amid multiculturalism, which is growing more and more every day [25, p. 48]. Especially contemporary societies that experience globalization, opening barriers to the global community or the world.

In the description of the various definitions, it is concluded that tolerance is a concept of multicultural, multi-religious life, and the complexity of social life upholds respect for those who are different, both their teachings, beliefs and the rules they make. Even if their beliefs or other issues are wrong, they must be respected as a gesture of respect and mutual understanding. This will result in us avoiding fanaticism, truth claims to blame others, hatred, and the lowest point is fighting to kill each other because of differences in concepts, teachings, religions, existences, etc.

3.4 Creating Tolerance in the Millennial Generation Era

In the discussion of this sub-chapter, researchers will analyze how the harmonization of tolerance in the millennial generation dynasty. Millennial morals and behavior experience abstract patterns, because they imitate from the internet, especially social media ranging from Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and others. It is said that the victory of technology today is a tool to achieve religious tolerance. However, until now, intolerance continues to roll like a ball that is always controversial. Of course, this issue becomes a big question of why this happens, even though the millennial generation with all kinds of incoming information, millennials feel they have the ability to tolerate. But the reality is that some intolerant facts have appeared on social networks.

According to the IDN Times Website, there are 6 intolerant cases in Indonesia, namely [26]:

1. The attack on the temple in Kediri on Saturday (13/1/2018) night, a man using a motorcycle broke into the Tjoe Hwie Kiong Temple, Jalan Yos Sudarso, Kediri, East Java. Reported from beritajatim.com, the place of worship for ethnic Chinese which is located on the banks of the Brantas River was pelted with stones at around 21.30 WIB. The perpetrator's throw hit the glass

window. The window glass was broken. Luckily, the police arrived soon after being contacted by the temple manager. the culprit was arrested.

2. The church's social action was canceled because it was considered a Christianization activity in the Pringgolayan area, Bantul, Yogyakarta. Several masses on behalf of themselves, the Islamic Jihad Front (FJI), and several other mass organizations, forcibly disbanded a social service event held by St. Paul's Catholic Church in Pringgolayan, Bantul, Yogyakarta, on Sunday (28/1). Initially, the congregation of St. Paul's Church was going to sell cheap groceries as part of the church's anniversary celebration. However, this activity had to be canceled because it was considered a Christian effort. The church said that the social service was deliberately held at the Jarana Hamlet house because they wanted to get closer to the local community. The case was resolved through mediation with the parties and it was decided to issue a statement canceling the incident. This incident of religious intolerance is not the first to occur in Bantul Regency, because in February 2017 there was also a group of residents who rejected the Catholic sub-district head.
3. The activity of the "Kebaktian" dissolution in Sabuga Bandung was conducted by Islamic organizations in 2016. A religious organization calling itself the Defenders of Ahlu Sunnah (PAS), held a demonstration against the holding of divine services at the Sabuga Building, Bandung, on Tuesday (16/11/2016). Quoted by Antara, Chairman of the Defenders of Ahlus Sunnah (PAS) Muhammad Roin asked the organizers of the Spiritual Revival (TRC) to move the religious event to a place of worship rather than a public space. After discussions, the TRC organizing committee agreed to grant Misa's request to postpone the second session of worship scheduled for that night.
4. Monks who were banned from conducting worship activities in Tangerang in 2018. The incident occurred on Wednesday (7/2/2018), starting from the residents' rejection of the plan for Buddhist religious activities by spreading fish at the location of the former sand lake in Kebon Baru Village, Babat Village. Previously, the community also asked Mulyanto Nurhalim, the village monk, to move. The reason was that when residents saw the monk holding services by inviting worshippers from outside, they were worried and believed that the monk was inviting others to convert to Buddhism. However, the locals misunderstood this, as the only person who showed up was eating the donuts. However, the case was resolved amicably after negotiations between the police and all parties in the local community. They were concerned that Mulyanto's monk's house was not a place of worship, as residents had previously suspected.
5. Molotov cocktail attack on a church in Samarinda that killed a child in 2016. The ISIS-supporting terrorist attack on the Oikumene Church in Sengkotek, Samarinda, East Kalimantan on Sunday, November 13, 2016, still leaves victims grieving. A man detonated an improvised explosive device during a graveyard service. A two-year-old child named Intan Olivia Marbun died from severe burns. At the same time, three other children suffered equally serious injuries. Even before the fateful event took place, the children had been playing happily in the churchyard. The suspect wearing the jihadi T-shirt turned out to be an ISIS supporter. He is now behind bars after an East Jakarta District Court jury sentenced him to life imprisonment on Monday, (09/25/2017).

The millennial era is one of the influences of massive globalization, forcing the development of religious pluralism. Long before the millennial era, religious doctrine became a comprehensive source of legitimacy from various aspects of social life. But the development of pluralism, democratic political systems, and secularization requires this religious doctrine to redefine from an internal religious perspective, the relationship between religious communities and liberal states, other religious communities, and secular society [27, p. 6]. It would be nice if, in the process of applying the values of tolerance, we start from ourselves (*ibda' bi nafsi*). Mustafa Akyol quoted Vincent Cornell, a Professor of Islamic Studies, as saying that social engineers start from the outside, by first creating political and social systems, then moving inside, towards the personal. But God starts from the inside, by first transforming the individual [28, p. 245].

Feri Sulianta's article reveals the facts of social media development. In 2012, there were 100 social networks, 100,000 tweets were posted every minute, almost 700,000 contents were sent on Facebook, 3,600 images were posted on the Instagram platform, 2,000,000 internet users searched Google, and 600,000,000 viewers of YouTube videos [29, p. 1]. The data shows that the hegemony of internet technology based on social networks is very much a necessity in this millennial era. Therefore, the millennial generation is expected to take advantage of social networks to spread tolerance and value-oriented content. Self-contemplation also needs to be considered, self-knowledge is the basis for the origin of all wisdom [30, p. 133].

The characteristics of millennial generation has several kinds of characteristics, namely millennials provide their beliefs through user-generated content (UGC) instead of one-way information, millennials are tied to cellphones/smartphones rather than television media, almost every millennial citizen has various social media accounts, lack interest in conventional reading, millennials are considered disloyal but have effectiveness in work, millennials are not interested in conventional / cash transactions, technology is more known to millennial dynasties than their parents, millennials utilize technology and information, and millennials are lazier and more consumptive [13, p. 241]. Then, there is the fact that millennials in South Africa, due to the impact of globalization and the effects of the influx of various international cultures into South Africa, millennial groups tend to be confident, optimistic, hopeful, independent, unyielding/persistent, goal-oriented, motivated by success, lifestyle-centric patterns, different but inclusive, international, civic and community-conscious, and business-minded [31, p. 622].

The power of gratitude in humans can produce a strong and resilient faith, but apart from sustaining faith. Gratitude behavior is also able to control one's ego and individualism when dealing with the problems of public life or society. This is because when immanent humans realize that the enjoyment obtained is not only for the benefit of individuals or groups but also for the common interests of all people who need help or assistance [32, pp. 233–234]. Rashid Ridha explains inclusivity based on Abduh, Ridha elaborates on the enlightenment of the diversity of mankind [33, p. 213]. Of course this becomes our foundation to always accept all forms of views of people who do not agree with us.

Then the researcher took several websites or social media accounts which in the view of the researcher as agents of spreading tolerance values. Of the many social media that instill tolerance and always post-religious tolerance, namely:

1. *Youth Interfaith Peacemaker Community (YIPC)*, was initiated by Andreas Jonathan and Ayi Yunus Rusyana when they held a Young Peacemaker Training event at the UGM (Universitas Gadjah Mada) Postgraduate Building in Yogyakarta on July 9-12, 2012. From this event, YIPC was born in Yogyakarta, but gradually developed and spread to various major cities in Indonesia, namely Medan, Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Malang, Solo, Salatiga, and Bornea and Ambon which are in the process of being pioneered. The YIPC forum is more about holding inter-religious dialogues attended by students and academics from various universities, but there are also those who participate in this event from among religious leaders and the public. The events include holding interfaith dialogue webinars and the most characteristic of YIPC is the Scripture Reasoning (SR) forum event, which is a dialogue related to certain themes based on the Jewish, Christian and Islamic scriptures. YIPC prioritizes 4 values, namely the value of Peace with God, Peace with Self, Peace with Others, and Peace with the Environment [34].
2. *United Network of Young (UNOY)* is a website that includes peace issues. One of the articles is Urgent Statement for Afghanistan. In the article, UNOY members feel concerned about the humanitarian crisis that is happening in Afghanistan, furthermore, there is currently an escalation and siege of two army forces from Afghanistan and Taliban forces. The article then provides a solution to the conflict in Afghanistan by resolving it non-violently and creating a conducive environment for the dialog process to be meaningful, inclusive, constructive, and peaceful. UNOY is based in the Hague, Netherlands, therefore the scope of UNOY compared to YIPC is wider

because they have members from various parts of the world, including: Mexico, ASEAN, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Chile Colombia, and so on [35]. However, both YIPC and UNOY work together to spread peace, harmony, and tolerance.

3. *Peace Generation*, also known as Peacegen, is a website that partners with YIPC. Peacegen started with Irfan Amalee and Eric Lincoln meeting in 2006 through discussions between them. Irfan, a practicing Muslim, and Eric, a practicing Christian, came up with the idea of Peacegen, because although they have different backgrounds, they are very friendly. Peacegen's focus in reviving religious tolerance in Indonesia lies in the development of peace training, peace learning media, and peace content campaigns and activations. Peace Generation also has 12 basic values of peace, namely accepting oneself, eliminating prejudice, ethnic diversity, religious differences, gender differences, social status differences, group differences, celebrating diversity, understanding conflict, rejecting violence, admitting mistakes, and forgiving [36].

The three samples above are concrete evidence of efforts to create tolerance, perhaps many more accounts or websites also spread posts worth diversity in unity. From the examples of the three websites above, millennials who are literate in social networking-based internet technology are expected to always practice and often access these websites. This will make the millennial generation through the website platform an agent of spreading tolerance values that uphold a sense of humanism rather than ego. So that in the future there will be no cases of intolerance, especially in Indonesia and generally in all parts of the world.

4. Conclusion

The millennial generation is the next generation of the nation in the future, with all the social dynamics that the millennial dynasty has gone through, it is appropriate that they practice the values of tolerance in society. Developing along with the advancement of internet-based technology, facilitates all forms of information, both hoaxes and facts. Therefore, millennials who are considered proficient in internet technology based on social media utilize it to access and disseminate to the public content with tolerance nuances. In addition to accessing accounts or websites based on tolerance values such as UNOY, YIPC, Peace Generation, and so on. Millennials can also create personal accounts or websites with cultural, racial, political, and religious diversity content. Instead of accessing or even spreading hateful posts to each other.

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