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Interreligious relation: Position of women in strengthening Christian and Muslim bonds

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Interreligious relation: Position of women in strengthening Christian and Muslim bonds

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Strengthening Muslim–Christian relations is very important for a nation such as Indonesia that has plurality in terms of tribes, ethnicity and religion. This study aims to analyse the role of Muslim women who live in a pluralistic socio-religious situation. This is a qualitative research that uses purposive sampling to determine the informants. The approach used by the Discovering Cultural Themes model is to understand the symptoms of the many themes, cultures, values and cultural symbols. Data analysis was conducted by using software for qualitative research, which is needed in managing data found from the field, in this case, nVivo Basic 12.00 for Windows. The results show that Muslim women translate justice, empathy and rationality in religion by building relationships with other religions. This attitude is part of Islamic teachings that contain moderate, accommodating and tolerant aspects. In addition, culture has encouraged women to blend in and form egalitarian equality in the social and cultural realm. The culture of generosity and mutual help has become a tradition both in religious and customary activities.

Contribution: This article provides an insight into the contribution of Muslim women in strengthening Muslim–Christian relations. This agenda is very important because Islam and Christianity have the largest adherents in Indonesia. This contribution is very important and crucial in the midst of radicalism issues in Indonesia lately.

Keywords: interreligious; role; women; Muslims; Christians.

Introduction

Globally, women and men have a very important part in maintaining the balance of life both in the realm of family, community and interreligious relations. Islam and Christianity as big religions in the world teach to protect women's rights in public (Udoh, Folarin & Isumonah 2020). Religion teaches about equality for both men and women, which manages the rights and roles of both men and women in society (Abdulla 2018), which must continue to be sound both formally and informally (Arisukwu et al. 2021). Women in certain situations are able to do any work for the community without asking for payment and have the same perception and behaviour both in peace and war situations (Abduljaber, Services & Arbor 2021; Chus 2018). Women with high religious motivation are also directly involved in interreligious peace, which has been destroyed by communal violence (Al Qurtuby 2014; Lakawa 2021).

Several findings from previous studies discover that many Muslim women are actively involved in women empowerment, social entrepreneurship and social welfare (Annisa 2012). The weakness of this study is that it does not discuss the role of women in community relations of different religions, whereas other research findings discover that women are important agents and actors in the peace process, both in their roles as mothers, educators, mediators, peace activists and decision makers (Atuhaire 2014). Furthermore, women are involved in all kinds of peace work (Olofsson 2018), including intertribal cultural peace (Pattiasina, Lattu & Nuban Timo 2018) and moderate religious and social services for all religions (Farida 2019). The role of Muslim women to strengthen the Muslim–Christian relations in different religious communities can be encouraged by utilising the awareness of working for the common good (Effendi 2016) and the culture of mutual help (Utomo & Minza 2018). Other studies discover that religious tolerance and gender equality are very important for the sustainability of human life (Al-Hamdi 2015), because women have different perspectives on conflict prevention and can correlate between religious, ethnic, political and cultural differences (Goyol 2019). Islam encourages its people to practice the teachings of ta'awun or mutual help in goodness with anyone, including other people of different religions (Mu'ti 2019). The role of women to help and prosper others is driven by selfish and altruistic motives (Marjanovic, Struthers & Greenglass 2012), both by religious and cultural values that have become a habit in a community.

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Why should women in Indonesia take part in Islamic-Christian relations? Because factually, the violence against religion and belief in Indonesia are still happening: In 2010, there were 81 cases, which were recorded from several regions in Indonesia (Misrawi 2010). In 2015, there were 85 cases; in 2016, there were 97 cases (Wahid et al. 2015); and in 2020, there were 422 violation of religious freedom (Lidwina 2021). Indonesia still has to work hard to address the issue of religious diversity (Ju Lan 2011), with some conflicts occurring as a result of negative stereotypes (Nakaya 2018), the Ambon, Poso and Sambas conflicts led to the marginalisation of indigenous people and the erosion of local traditional buildings, which became the cause of ethnic conflicts (Schulze 2017). Even though in 2020 the Interreligious Harmony Index is in the high category of 67.46 (Burhani et al. 2020), but awareness of various potential conflicts must be internalised in various activities including women.

The role of women is dominated by gender debates where identities and concepts are individual's self-definition as female or male, based on their biological gender as interpreted in culture (Wood & Eagly 2012, 2015). Two big current theories that discuss the roles of men and women are nature and nurture. In linguistic term, nature is understood as a character that is inherent in a person as a natural condition or human nature. Differences between women and men are natural so they cannot be eliminated but have to create a harmonious relationship (Butler 2004). Women in this theory are identified as patient, loving, gentle, motherly, caring and diligent. Thus, they are suitable to take on domestic roles. Meanwhile, men who are assumed to have strong, manly, rational and assertive traits are interpreted as men who are more worthy to take on the roles of leaders, chiefs of households and have a lot of freedom in choosing any role.

Meanwhile, the nurture theory suggests that the differences in masculine and feminine are not determined by biological differences but by social constructs and the influence of cultural factors. The existential feeling of self as a woman or a man usually reflects aspects of biological sex (Miller 2015). In the context of this theory, there is a relative meaning of masculine and feminine concepts. The social constructs differences in society result in the relativity of masculine and feminine attributes indicators between cultures. Certain traits attached to a gender in a community are not necessarily the same as others (Butler 2004). There are roles and tasks that can be interchanged, but there are those that are not usually interchangeable because they are naturally different in nature.

Empirically, the role of women in socio-religious activities, as well as in building socio-religious relations is very prominent in the 'Aisyiyah organisation as a Muhammadiyah women's association. It was founded on 27 Rajab 1335 H/19 May 1917 in Yogyakarta by Nyai Siti Walidah or Nyai Ahmad Dahlan. The first chairwoman of 'Aisyiyah was not Nyai Siti Walidah, but Siti Bariyah. Siti Bariyah did not only study Islam with Kiai Ahmad Dahlan but also studied at the Neutraal Meisjes School (Muthmainnah 2019). In 1928,

'Aisyiyah was listed as one of the pioneering women's organisations or which initiated and was actively involved in the first Indonesian Women's Congress (Kowani) and from 1917 to 1998 was able to show its identity as a Muslim women's organisation, including the development of academic discourses on women rights (Van Doorn Harder 2006).

The locus of this research is Tana Toraja, an exotic area in Indonesia, which is world famous. Based on BPS (Indonesia's central agency on statistics) data, currently it is inhabited by 234002 people, with details based on religion: Protestant 68.66%, Catholic 17.09%, Muslim 12.25%, Hindu 1.74%, Buddhist 0.22% and Aluk Todolo 0.01%. With this composition, Tana Toraja shows religious pluralism in terms of religion and belief. However, they are actually united by a homogeneous ethnic group and a very high culture of mutual cooperation and become social capital in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations in this area. Toraja comes from the words *To Riaja*; *To* means people (*Bugis*) and *Riaja* means above, so *Toraja* means people who live at the top or in the mountains as the antonym of *Luu'*, which means coastal people, who used to have dominance in the highlands (Waterson 2009). In Toraja culture, the personality of the people is strongly influenced by the beliefs of their ancestors named *Aluk Todolo* (Fox 2006).

Then, what are the basic values that move Muslim women who are members of the Aisyiyah organisation in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations? and how are religious and traditional celebrations used by Muslim women to strengthen Muslim-Christian relations? This is the main focus in this research. The theoretical and practical theme of this research is expected to encourage women to play an active role in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations, which are sometimes damaged by radicalism and fundamentalism issues. Women play a significant role in carrying out their position as social bonder in various fields of life (Ruiter & De Graaf 2006), and carried out by women's groups who are members of civil society as actors. Women from various religions have the potential to maintain harmony between religious communities, but this potential has not been fully utilised.

Research methods

This research is a qualitative descriptive research. Qualitative research is a research model based on the philosophy of postpositivism, which is used to examine the condition of natural objects. It is very difficult to detect the population, which become the informants of this study, because there is not enough data available on the Aisyiyah organisation. There is no specific standard for the number of samples for qualitative research. Furthermore, the data collection method uses observation, interviews and discussions, which require such a long time so it is not possible to take large samples. In addition, qualitative research has three main components to be observed. Firstly, the place where the interaction occurs in the ongoing social situation, in this case at Bittuang Tana Toraja; secondly, the actors who are playing a certain role. In

the context of this research, the actors of the research object are women who are members of the Aisyiyah organisation; thirdly, activities (Tannenbaum 1980), carried out by actors in ongoing social situations. In research activities that will be the research object are all activities related to women's activities in relation to Muslim–Christian relations.

The participants in this study are 21 Aisyiyah women in Tana Toraja. Determination of data sources is performed by purposive sampling, based on certain characteristics (inclusion criteria) that are closely related to the characteristics, which have been known previously, based on the research objectives. The sample is classified into three: Firstly, Aisyiyah's management who have a decree and membership card. Secondly, women who become regular members. Thirdly, women who are Aisyiyah sympathisers and actively participate in activities.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews and documentation was conducted from June to September 2019 in Tana Toraja. The observation used is participant observation with base snowball method. The details of the observation activities are (1) observing women's activities at Christmas and Eid; (2) observing women's activities at the *rambu solo'* traditional party; (3) observing women's activities at *rambu tuka'*; and (4) women's activities in other social activities. The researchers used observation guidelines to record these activities. In order to maintain the validity of the observations, the authors use field notes (Bogdan & Biklen 1997) or commonly called a field notebook. Field notes were used to record various events related to the activities of women who were informants in this study and all were performed manually.

The approach used by the Discovering Cultural Themes model is to collect various themes, cultural focuses, values and cultural symbols in each domain (Spradley 2016). Data analysis was carried out using software for a qualitative study, which was needed in managing data found from the field, in this case, nVivo Basic 10.00 for Windows. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software developed by Qualitative Solution and Research (QSR) international. NVivo is a tool for processing qualitative data through highlighting, taking notes and linking ideas (Jackson 2021). The data analysed was base triangulation data (Mills 2011) through three stages: data reduction, data display, conclusion and verification.

Findings and discussion

Religion and the role of women in Muslim–Christian relations

Muslim women in Tana Toraja adhere to religious values as a guide in interacting with other religious communities, including Christians and the Aluk Todolo. Implemented religious values is middle character (*wasathiyah*), which is translated as moderate Islam. Religion, apart from having a theological dimension, also has a spiritual tradition as a primary mechanism for expressing and reinforcing group

sentiment and solidarity (Durkheim & Swain 2008). An open religious tradition can also be referred to as indigenous and local culture celebrations. The role of women in implementing moderate religious values can be seen from religious activities that always involve other religions' followers.

From the observation of the researchers, women become effective family mediators of different religions to meet and unite. Women are quite dominant in various socio-religious activities. They cook, serve guests and break the ice in a strong brotherhood. In other places, this kind of relationship is probably considered extreme, because it touches the spirit of mutual cooperation and kinship in religious traditions, building places of worship, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The role of women in peace building is multidimensional, and the issues are sufficiently representative and can bring a gender perspective to the main content of a negotiation. Women can contribute a lot to the recovery of post-conflict social, cultural, economic and political conditions. This is the flexibility of women who can enter peaceful spaces that men may not be able to do.

Based on interviews and discussions with informants, researchers conducted coding and interpretation to obtain conclusions about values and religion applied by women in interacting with adherents of other religions. The religious values used by Muslim women to strengthen Muslim–Christian relations are presented in Table 1.

In Table 1, Muslim women use the values of justice, empathy and rationality in building relationships with people of other religions. This attitude is part of Islamic teachings that contain moderate, accommodating and tolerant aspects. This fact implies that tolerance with Christianity is a moderate attitude that must still be based on rationality as long as it is not related to the realm of fiqh. It means that tolerance is not correlated with the Pillars of Islam and other acts of worship.

Moderation in Islam is the implementation of the teachings of the holy book in the Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah: 256 'There is no compulsion in believing the religion of Islam'. which means giving other people the opportunity to practice their religion. Likewise, the accommodative and tolerant aspects are the implementation of the Qur'an Surah Al-Kafirun: 6 'your religion is for you, and my religion is for me'. Theologically, it means that Muslim women make religious

TABLE 1: The religious value of women in Muslim–Christian relations.

No.	Statement/theme	Interpretation/conclusion
1	Everyone has the right to practice their own beliefs (Informants 1, 9, 5, 13)	Justice and/or moderate (Surat al-Baqarah: 256)
2	We help each other and support religious events but do not participate in worship activities (Informants 7, 8, 9, 3)	Empathy and/or accommodative (Surat al-Maidah: 2)
3	We may attend non-Muslim invitations as long as it is not related to worship (Informants 11, 17, and 20)	Rational and/or tolerant (Surat Mumtahan: 51)
4	Your religion is for you and my religion is for me, we apply this by not participating in Christmas celebrations, but we do <i>silatullahmi</i> [visit each other] (Informants 7, 8, 9)	Empathy and/or accommodative (Surat al-Kafirun: 6)
5	Respect other people's religious teachings, without sacrificing my religious principles (Informants 8, 12, 20, 21)	Rational and/or tolerant (Surat al-An'am: 108)

values dominate strongly in the sociological realm concerning adherents of other religions.

At the micro level, the type of mechanism in the socio-religious area played by women has succeeded in preventing internal and interreligious harmony between religious communities and encouraging constructive cooperation. Such a mechanism forms a pattern of functional harmony for a particular geographic area. Socio-religious mechanisms must receive adequate attention in turning off the symptoms of social disintegration. That way, the Muslim minority group can be said to be safe from outside interference, because anyone who wants to disturb Muslims does not only deal with the Muslim community, but also deals with non-Muslims.

Through the role of women, the issue of food in a different theological context which Muslims can and cannot eat becomes clear and becomes a common understanding. Therefore, when Christian families invite them to religious or traditional events, Christian families prepare food that does not contain pork or food that is forbidden in Islam (Interview, female informant; 1, 3, 5, 7). According to one food ingredient informant, the containers used and the cooking were handed over to their Muslim neighbours or relatives so that the food they provide is guaranteed to be halal, and all done by women (Interview, female informant; 9, 12, 19, 21). Likewise at the time of slaughtering sacrificial animals on Eid al-Adha for Muslims, the rest of the meat which have been given based on Islamic law were cooked by women from different religions, Muslim and non-muslim and are eaten together on the *Silaturrehmi*/assemble in Mosque area.

Seen from the religious aspect, Muslim women in Tana Toraja who are a minority in quantity, have high religious enthusiasm, especially those related to relations between communities of different religions. Women naturally in doing internalisation on religious and cultural values related to strengthening Muslim–Christian relations. When they are together, the discussion never leads to theological differences in each religion, but rather to universal issues related to the future of the family. Family members remind each other to do their obligations and to not forget to ask for prayers so that their lives are safe and their family is given sustenance and health (Interviews, female informants; 2, 6, 9, 10). Another quite sensitive theme in inclusive education is joint prayer between Muslims and non-Muslims. In a pluralistic society, praying together is an activity that cannot be avoided both at family events and traditional activities in their family environment. The joint prayer carried out by people of different religions is not led by one person, but the praying is carried out based on their respective religions and beliefs (Interviews, female informants; 1, 6, 5, 11). The choice to choose this way of praying is to respect the differences in religion and beliefs between them and avoid debates related to joint prayer led by non-Muslims.

Cultural values of Muslim–Christian relations

Historically, the Torajanese had an encounter with Islam starting when they were in contact with the Kingdoms of Sidenreng, Bone and Luwu. Although at first the relationship was more dominated by economic interest, especially the coffee trade. Until the end of the 19th century, after more than 230 years of establishing power in South Sulawesi by defeating the Gowa-Tallo Kingdom, it seems that the Dutch have not shown any interest in occupying the Toraja region which is far in the middle of the Sulawesi region (Waterson 2012). The Dutch arrived in the Toraja area in 1905 and succeeded in conquering it completely in 1906. Christianity was introduced in Toraja, not long after the colonial government crushed the resistance of the Toraja people led by Pong Tiku. In 1908 the Dutch colonial government opened *Landschapschool* [self-governing schools] in Makale and Rantepao led by Christian teachers. Even though this government school is 'neutral', the teachers at Landschap taught Christianity to Landschap students (Kobong 2008).

This research found that the communal lifestyle of the Torajanese is reflected in the Tongkonan traditional house philosophy. Tongkonan cannot be owned by individuals, but is owned communally and from generation to generation by the family or clan of the Tana Toraja Tribe (Pakan et al. 2019). Tongkonan consists of the word 'tongkon', which means sitting and gets the suffix 'an' to become Tongkonan. Tongkonan means a seat that implies a place to sit together with members who are gathered to become a group of individuals who come from the same lineage, the house is a symbol of the unity of the cluster called 'Tongkonan' (Pakan et al. 2019). Culture in Toraja has developed into social capital which is very useful for maintaining inter-religious harmony (Pajarianto, Pribadi & Sari 2022).

To this day, the Torajanese consistently maintain the customs inherited from their ancestors. Torajanese recognise two main ceremonies related to the life cycle, namely *Rambu Tuka'* (*Alluk Rampe Matollo*) and *Rambu Solo'* (*Alluk Rampe Matampu*), each has its own characteristics (Adams 2004). The *Rambu Tuka'* ceremony is held to welcome joyful events such as marriage, harvesting (*Alluk Pare*), or entering a new house (*Mangrara Banua*). Meanwhile, *Rambu Solo'* is a reversal ceremony for the soul that died before being buried. In this traditional event, the role of women is very important in facilitating all family members of different religions to attend the event. The instrumental role of women as cooks, makeup artists, guest pickers, and emotional roles is the glue between large families (Interview, female informant; 12, 15, 17, 20). The transcripts summary and analysis from interviews related to cultural values and mechanisms that make Muslim women strengthen Muslim–Christian relations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that Muslim women are accommodating and empathetic towards various activities carried out by both

TABLE 2: The culture value of women in Muslim–Christian relations.

No	Statement/theme	Interpretation/conclusion
1	<i>Rambu Tuka'</i> [harvesting ceremony] and <i>Rambu Solo'</i> [death ceremony] as a meeting place for families of different faiths (Informants 2, 5, 7, 9)	Accommodating and/or empathy
2	The educational value in <i>Rambu Tuka'</i> and <i>Rambu Solo'</i> is mutual cooperation by helping with material and non-material (Informants 7, 18, 9, 21)	Mutual cooperation and/or empathy
3	All families of different religions are given the same opportunity to participate in the <i>Rambu Tuka'</i> and <i>Rambu Solo'</i> ceremonies (Informants 1, 2 and 11)	Egalitarian and/or democratic
4	Women's activities in <i>Rambu Tuka'</i> : <i>Ma'Pangan</i> [welcoming by serving betel, areca nut], <i>Ma'pairuk</i> [women serving dishes to all guests], <i>Ma'tumbuk</i> [the activity of pounding rice on mortar] (Informants 16, 18, 20)	Women's participation

Muslims and Christians. With high spirit of mutual cooperation they mingle and form egalitarian equality in the social and cultural realm. The culture of generosity and mutual help has become a tradition both in religious and customary activities. This activity involves all nuclear families and the wider community of different religions. For the Torajanese, *tongkonan* not only represents a physical manifestation but also represents a group of people (*pa'rapuan*). This is reflected in the term itself, which comes from the word *tongkon* [to sit] together. Thus, *tongkonan* means the centre where people gather for family groups, which come from their ancestors and living descendants (Idrus 2017). *Tongkonan* represents the types and characteristics of the main groups in Toraja society, as a place to discuss and carry out traditional ceremonies and problems of group members in general (Said 2004). This cultural activity is usually carried out for days and all costs incurred are borne by donations and the participation of all families.

Culturally and sociologically, Muslim women in Tana Toraja also collaborate with people of other religions based on cultural values. Muslims– and Christians interact without questioning their religious identity. They establish relationships with relatives or other people of different religions. They show active relationships in everyday life; friendly relations, mutual assistance in social activities, agriculture and even involvement in both traditional and religious meetings outside of the sacrament. There are even some residents who live in the same house with different religions, some whose father is Hindu (*Alukta*), mother is Christian and so on. Toraja culture accommodates all forms of these differences (Interviews, female informants; 13, 15, 18, 21).

Women's activities in building interfaith relations are essential, apart from being shown in the realm of religion and culture. The form is simple but has complex implications for maintaining brotherhood between Muslims and Christians. Brotherhood in the *Tongkonan* extended family, the celebration of *rambu tuka'* [harvest feast], the *rambu solo* ceremony (death ceremony), and taking advantage of religious holidays such as Christmas and Eid to meet outside the sacrament to stay in touch and give each other simple food. This proves that women have a very central role in playing emotional instruments and instrumental in Muslim–Christian relations.

The emotional pattern is expressed in the form of empathy for various activities carried out by other women even though they are adherents of different religions. The activities done by the women are welcoming the guests of the cultural and traditional events, serving food, and even to entertain the family of the dead.

At another locus in Indonesia, women have succeeded in creating a meeting room for women ranging from housewives in activism roles in the smallest environmental units to those involving interfaiths' female religious leaders (Wahyu et al. 2019). To minimise intolerance and the practice of pseudo-tolerance, a meeting room that is intimate and full of a sense of brotherhood is a form of strength that can establish complete peace. The study of *Pela gandong* in Maluku, women play an important role in the practice of cultural peace through social action in the symbolic liminality of *kain Gandong*. Without the role of women who hold the *kain Gandong*, liminality cannot play an effective role in creating a feeling of community and social solidarity, which is indispensable in the rituals of the Muslim–Christian community, such as the inauguration ritual of the King and the *Panas Pela* ritual (Pattiasina et al. 2018). Meanwhile in Central Java, women build the capacity of their communities in providing religious-social service and strengthen a moderate and tolerant understanding of Islam, as well as build internal and interreligious harmonisation by synergising agreements with government agencies and other religious organisations (Farida 2019).

In Buginese who inhabit South Sulawesi, the basic element in gender formation is the division of gender roles, which is formed because of the construction of culture and customs. In general, gender roles are a set of behavioural patterns that become social expectations to be displayed differently from both men and women according to their gender (Ramli & Basri 2021). The women who became informants in this research were not trapped in the prison of the theory of nature who were identified as patient and compassionate figures whose work area was only in the domestic area of household affairs, but women had broken male domination by playing an active role in strengthening Muslim–Christian relations (theory nurture). The theory of nurture does not deny the existence of certain natural characteristics such as pregnancy and childbirth, but in the aspect of social roles, cultural constructs determine the role of women. But the women in this research are very compromising. Towards a balance (equilibrium) that emphasises the concept of partnership and harmony in the relationship between women and men, both at religious events and customs.

From a leadership point of view, Islam views humans from the aspect of the caliph (*khalifah*) not from gender (Munir 1999). Allah *subhana wa ta'ala*, who is believed to be God for Muslims has given the task of caliphate to humans, both men and women, to manage, maintain and develop the earth. Women play an important role in building Muslim–Christian relations by utilising all the potentials that come from within

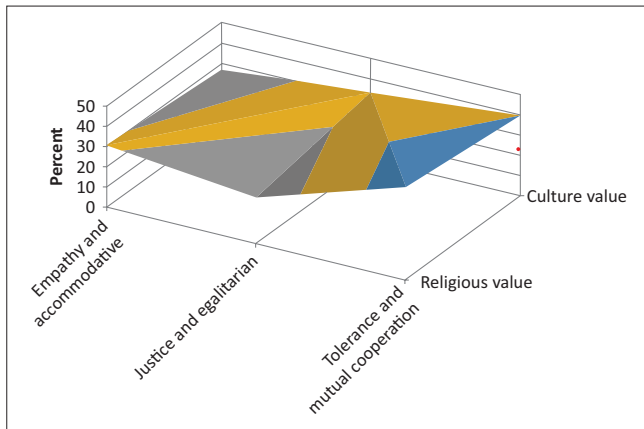


FIGURE 1: Venn diagram of religious and cultural values in Muslim–Christian relations.

women and the support of noble values of religion and culture. One aspect that is owned by women and becomes a reference both nationally and internationally is the large modality of both religion and culture, so that the strengthening of relations between adherents of different religions can be carried out on an ongoing basis. Therefore, the involvement of women, from management, negotiation to conflict resolution must be encouraged continuously.

This study finds essential facts related to the interaction of culture and religion and the role of women in Muslim–Christian relations. Of course, it is a characteristic of a particular community that cannot be generalised but can be replicated in areas with the same characteristics and socio-religious environment as the locus of this research. It can be seen based on the nVivo analysis shown in the Venn Diagram in Figure 1.

Based on the Venn diagram in Figure 1 as much as 23.08% of Muslim women expressed a sense of justice in strengthening Muslim–Christian relations, followed by empathy expressed by 30.77% of informants in Muslim–Christian relations. Meanwhile, 46.15% of Muslim women firmly believed in strengthening Muslim–Christian ties. The percentage distribution of the data indicates an interaction between religious values and cultural values in strengthening the relationship between Muslims and Christians. This means that culturally, the Tana Toraja people have a hereditary tradition to live side by side with adherents of other religions, especially Muslim women who are strengthened by their religious values and teach them to live in harmony with followers of other religions. Muslim women believe in combining these two cultures to establish harmonious relationships with Christians.

It is an interesting blend of religion and culture that reinforce each other, especially for empathy and accommodation. However, this does not mean that tolerance touches the realm of religiosity when it comes to fundamental teachings in religion (*aqidah*), a strong reason for Muslim women to remain based on mutually beneficial relationships

(cooperation). Freedom to carry out religious law is right (egalitarian) because each religious teaching has determined it. At this point, the sense of justice (justice) must be felt by all religious adherents in carrying out the relationship between the followers of the two religions. The interaction model of culture and religion will strengthen religious moderation in various activities and practically enhance Muslim–Christian relations.

Conclusion

Muslim women have an essential role in strengthening Muslim–Christian relations. This role is a manifestation of the noble values of religion, which instruct its adherents to compete in helping each other in goodness. It is also sourced from the local wisdom of the Toraja people, which has been preserved from generation to generation by their ancestors. The Muslim–Christian relationship in this research shows a positive direction with collaboration in various religious, social and customary social activities. It can be a model for areas with the same characteristics as the locus of this study. This contribution will further strengthen religious moderation in various fields to further strengthen Muslim–Christian relations as the two largest religious entities in Indonesia. The limitation of this study is that the locus and samples were taken from a particular and small area, so generalisations cannot be made. Nonetheless, it is possible to replicate it in regions with the same socio-cultural situation.

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Competing interests

The author declares that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Author's contributions

H.P. is the sole author of this article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards of research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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BUKTI KORESPONDENSI PROSS REVIEW ARTIKEL

Interreligious relation: Position of women in strengthening Christian and Muslim bonds

Riwayat Submit: 24 Agustus 2021

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CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM BOND
Journal: HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies

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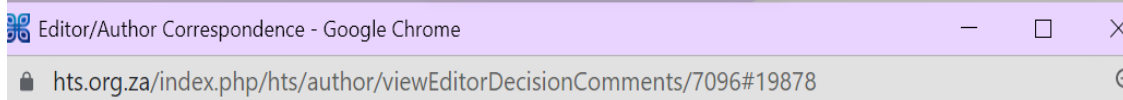
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We thank you for the submission of your manuscript. The peer review process of your manuscript has now been completed and we have reached a decision regarding your submission.

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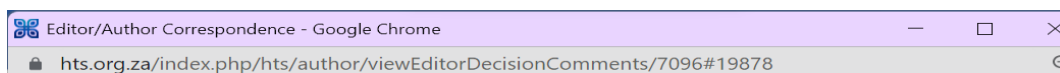
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Department of Practical Theology, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria

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 A wider scope of women's role of inter-religious relations needed here, for the journal is for international audience. More data and frame of analysis needed in this article.
 More elaborations needed in terms of ideas, activities, and products to show the inter-religious relations. How the world could learn from this relationship.
 Which theory/ies do the author/s follow or reject?

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2 MANUSCRIPT TO REVIEW

4 Interreligious relation: Women's position in bridging Christian and Muslim bond

6 [information redacted to maintain the integrity of the review process]

8 Abstract

10 The role of women from various religions is very potential to maintain harmony between religious
11 communities. Therefore, strengthening the study of Muslim-Christian relations is very important
12 for a nation with plurality in terms of ethnicity and religion. This study aims to analyze the role of
13 Muslim women in rural areas who live in a pluralistic socio-religious situation. This research was
14 conducted qualitatively with informants who were determined by using the purposive sampling
15 technique. The results showed that Muslim women who were the unit of analysis in this study
16 carried out traditional, religious, and social activities driven by messages taken from local cultural
17 and religious values. The activities of Muslim women in the religious and cultural spheres have
18 strengthened Muslim-Christian relations, which are bound by solid kinship even though they are
19 of different religions.

20 **Contribution:** This article provides insight into the contribution of Muslim women in
21 strengthening Muslim-Christian relations. This agenda is essential because Islam and Christianity
22 have the most prominent adherents in Indonesia. This contribution is significant and crucial in the
23 midst of the issue of radicalism in Indonesia lately.

25 **Keywords:** Women, Relationships, Muslims, Christians

27 Introduction

29 In every structure of life, women have a vital role in maintaining the balance of life both
30 in the realm of family, community, and inter-religious relations. Women can do any work for the

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31 community without asking for wages (Chus, 2018). Even in crises, women can act as volunteers
32 and decision-makers and reshape identities in crisis (Cadesky et al., 2019).

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Please give your opinion or other sources to proof that
women can act as volunteer

33
34 In Indonesia, the role of women is inseparable from the relationship between religious
35 diversity and belief. Several findings from research on the act of Muslim women members of the
36 Aisyiyah organization reveal that they are actively involved in women's empowerment, social
37 entrepreneurship, and social welfare (Annisa, 2012). The weakness of this study does not discuss
38 the role of women in community relations of different religions. Whereas in other research
39 findings, it was revealed that women are essential agents and actors in the peace process both in
40 their roles as mothers, educators, meditators, peace activists, and decision-makers (Atuhaire,
41 2014). Even women are involved in all types of peace work (Olofsson, 2018). Muslim women's
42 role in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations in communities of different religions can be
43 encouraged by utilizing the awareness of working for the common good (Effendi, 2016) and the
44 culture of helping each other (Utomo & Minza, 2018).

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45
46 This study becomes very urgent by looking at the sociological anatomy of Indonesian
47 society. Indonesia stretches between an archipelago from Sabang to Merauke, which has
48 implications for the social, economic, ethnic, cultural, and even faith situations, which are diverse
49 and different from one another (Zainuddin, 2010). Currently, there is a shift from what the
50 founding fathers aspired to in 1945, from a nation that upholds tolerance towards the use of violent
51 means to solve problems (Muryanti, 2014). In fact, there is still an increase in violence against
52 religion and belief in Indonesia. In 2010 there were 81 cases, which were recorded from several
53 regions in Indonesia (Misrawi, 2010). In 2015 there were 85 cases, and in 2016 there were 97 cases
54 (Wahid et al., 2015). In the aspect of religion, Indonesia must work hard to overcome diversity (Ju
55 Lan, 2011). Some conflicts occur as a result of negative stereotypes (Nakaya, 2018). The Ambon,
56 Poso, and Sambas conflicts lead to the marginalization of indigenous peoples and the erosion of
57 local traditional buildings, the cause of "ethnic" conflict (Schulze, 2017).

58
59 Another study found that religious tolerance and gender equality are essential for the
60 sustainability of human life (Al-Hamdi, 2015) because women have different perspectives in
61 conflict prevention and can bridge religious, ethnic, political, and cultural differences (Goyol,

62 2019). Islam encourages its people to practice the teachings of ta'awun or help in goodness with
63 anyone, including other people of different religions (Mu'ti, 2019). The role of women to support
64 and prosper others is driven by selfish and altruistic motives (Marjanovic et al., 2012), both by
65 religious and cultural values that have become a habit in a community.

66
67 Historically and empirically, the role of women in socio-religious activities is very
68 prominent in the 'Aisyiyah organization as a Muhammadiyah women's association. Founded on 27
69 Rajab 1335 H/19 May 1917 in Yogyakarta by Nyai Siti Walidah or Nyai Ahmad Dahlan. The first
70 chairman of 'Aisyiyah was not Nyai Siti Walidah, but Siti Bariyah. Siti Bariyah not only studied
71 Islam with Kiai Ahmad Dahlan but also studied at the Neutraal Meisjes School public school
72 (Muthmainnah, 2019). In 1928, 'Aisyiyah was listed as one of the pioneering women's
73 organizations or who initiated and was actively involved in the first Indonesian Women's Congress
74 (Kowani), and from 1917 to 1998, was able to show her identity as a Muslim women's
75 organization, including the development of academic discourses on human rights. women (Van
76 Doorn Harder, Pieternella, 2006).

77
78 The locus of this research is Tana Toraja, an exotic area in Indonesia. Based on BPS data,
79 Tana Toraja is currently inhabited by 234,002 people, with details based on religion: Protestant
80 68.66%, Catholic 17.09%, Muslim 12.25%, Hindu 1.74%, Buddhist 0.22%, and Aluk Todolo
81 0.01%. Toraja comes from the words To Riaja, To which means people (Bugis) and Riaja which
82 means above, so Toraja means people who live at the top or in the mountains as opposed to the
83 word from Luu' which means coastal people, who used to dominate the highlands (Waterson,
84 2009). In Toraja culture, the people's personality is strongly influenced by the beliefs of their
85 ancestors named Aluk Todolo (Fox, 2006). The research location was chosen for several academic
86 reasons; first, sociologically, the Muslims in Tana Toraja have unique characteristics.

87
88 In addition to the strength of the Aluk Todolo culture in the Toraja people is proof of
89 excellent inter-religious harmony. Second, religious differences in the Toraja people are fused in
90 the brotherhood is built in the nuclear family and extended family bound by Tongkonan values.
91 Tongkonan is the traditional house of the Toraja people, a place to live that unites large families
92 of different religions.

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93
94 In this study context, women are one of the pillars of strengthening Muslim-Christian
95 relations through religious volunteerism. Then, what are the fundamental values that move Muslim
96 women who are members of the Aisyiyah organization to strengthen Muslim and Christian ties?
97 How are religious celebrations and traditional celebrations used by Muslim women to strengthen
98 Muslim-Christian relations? These two topics are the main focus of this research.

99
100 This research's theoretical and practical theme is expected to encourage women to play an
101 active role in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations, which are sometimes damaged by issues
102 of radicalism and fundamentalism. Women have a strategic position to carry out their roles in
103 various fields of life (Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006) and are carried out by women's groups who are
104 members of civil society as actors (Rahmat, 2014). Women from various religions can maintain
105 harmony between religious communities, but this potential has not been fully utilized.

106 107 **Research Methods**

108
109 This research applied a qualitative descriptive approach. Qualitative research is one of the
110 research models based on the philosophy of postpositivism, used to examine the condition of
111 natural objects (Fine, 1995). The population in this study were Aisyiyah women in Tana Toraja,
112 amounting to 21 people. Determination of data sources is carried out by purposive sampling, based
113 on specific characteristics that are closely related to previously known characteristics, based on
114 the research objectives. The researcher determined nine women (42%) who had a pluralistic
115 background in their extended family as data sources, then continued with enrichment from other
116 informants.

117
118 The data was collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation
119 conducted from June-September 2019 in Tana Toraja. The observation used is participant
120 observation. In addition to observing, the researchers were directly involved in the activities
121 carried out by Aisyiyah women, especially those related to their interactions with their
122 environment. To maintain the validity of the observations, the authors use field notes (Bogdan &
123 Biklen, 1997). It used to record various events related to the activities of the seven Aisyiyah

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Commented [A8]: Please give details in table what activities that you do in your observation

124 families. The data were analyzed through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion
125 and verification.

126

127 Results of the research

128

129 Religious Value Base Muslim-Christian Relations

130

131 Muslim women in Tana Toraja hold fast to religious values to interact with other religious
132 people, including Christians. The implemented religious values have a central character
133 (wasithiyah), which is translated as moderate Islam. Besides having a theological dimension,
134 religion also has religious traditions as a primary mechanism for expressing and reinforcing group
135 sentiment and solidarity (Durkheim & Swain, 2008). Open religious traditions, which can be
136 referred to as Indigenous and local cultural celebrations. The role of women in implementing
137 moderate religious values can be seen from religious activities that always involve followers of
138 other religions.

139

140 From the researchers' observations, during the celebration of Christmas for Christians or
141 Eid for Muslims, each other, especially women, were present at the organizers' invitation. The
142 presence of Muslim or Christian women at religious celebrations is not at the time of sacraments
143 or worship activities. So with this model, Muslim women are not awkward to attend Christian
144 activities, and vice versa. In other places, this fluid form of relationship may be seen as extreme
145 because it touches the spirit of mutual cooperation and kinship in religious traditions, building
146 houses of worship, both Muslim and non-Muslim. That way, externally, Muslim minority groups
147 can be said to be safe from outside interference. Anyone who wants to disturb Muslims is not only
148 dealing with Muslim groups but also dealing with non-Muslims (Mrs. FM, Tana Toraja, June, 1st
149 2019).

150

151 The kinship ties between Muslims and Christians in Tana Toraja have also created
152 awareness about their Muslim families' foods. Therefore, when Christian families invite them to
153 be religious or traditional events, Christian families prepare food that does not contain pork, or
154 food is forbidden in Islam (Mrs. MP, Tana Toraja, 05 June 2019). According to Mrs. MP, food

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And mention too, why you choose that kind of method in analyzing data

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155 ingredients, containers used, and their process are handed over to their Muslim neighbors or
156 relatives so that the food they provide is guaranteed to be halal (Mrs. MP, Tana Toraja, 05 June
157 2019). Likewise, when slaughtering sacrificial animals on Eid al-Adha for Muslims, the remaining
158 meat that has been distributed according to Islamic law is then cooked by women of different
159 religions. Both Muslims and non-Muslim enjoyed the feast together in a friendly atmosphere held
160 in the mosque's courtyard. (Mrs. PT, Tana Toraja, 15 June 2019).

161

162 The essence of religious celebrations for Muslim and non-Muslim women is Sikamali'
163 (silahurrahim). The gathering of prominent families during religious celebrations will be a joy
164 that will further strengthen the value of brotherhood (Mrs. HJ, Tana Toraja, 20 June 2019).
165 Gathering with parents and extended family is not only done at Christmas or traditional activities.
166 However, every time if you have the opportunity, the family visits each other for friendship. The
167 openness between families has given a mutual understanding that differences and exclusivity exist
168 in theological and religious matters that cannot be united. Nevertheless, the social dimension of
169 religion unites them in harmony and togetherness. In this context, it can be seen that Muslim
170 women do not infiltrate into the sacredness of Christmas celebrations but take advantage of the
171 secular-religious values that have a social dimension for their followers and those around them.

172

173 **Cultural Value Base of Muslim-Christian Relations**

174

175 This study found the existence of a communal lifestyle of the Toraja people, which is
176 reflected in the philosophy of the Tongkonan traditional house. Tongkonan cannot be owned by
177 individuals but is owned communally and for generations by the family or clan of the Tana Toraja
178 Tribe (Pakan et al., 2019). Tongkonan consists of the word "tongkon" which means sitting, gets
179 the suffix "an" to become Tongkonan which means a seat that implies a place to sit together with
180 members gathered to become a group of individuals who come from one lineage. The house is a
181 symbol of the unity of the clump called " Tongkonan" (Feed et al., 2019).

182

183 Historically, Toraja people had an encounter with Islam starting when they were in contact
184 with the Kingdoms of Sidenreng, Bone, and Luwu. Although, at first, the relationship was
185 dominated by economic interests, especially the coffee trade. Until the end of the 19th century,

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186 after more than 230 (two hundred and thirty) years of establishing power in South Sulawesi by
187 defeating the Gowa-Tallo Kingdom, it seems that the Dutch have not shown any interest in
188 occupying the Toraja region. due to the location is far in the middle of the Sulawesi region
189 (Waterson, 2012).). The Dutch arrived in the Toraja area in 1905 and succeeded in conquering it
190 entirely in 1906. Christianity was introduced in Toraja not long after the colonial government
191 crushed the resistance of the Toraja people led by Pong Tiku. In 1908 the Dutch colonial
192 government opened Landschapschools (self-governing schools) in Makale and Rantepao led by
193 Christian teachers. Even though this government school has a “neutral” status, the teachers at
194 Landschap teach Christianity to Landschap students (Kobong, 2008).

195

196 Until now, the Toraja people consistently maintain and maintain the customs inherited from
197 their ancestors. The Toraja people recognize two main ceremonies involving the life cycle, namely
198 Rambu Tuka' (Alluk Rampe Matollo) and Rambu Solo' (Alluk Rampe Matampu), each of which
199 has its own characteristics (Adams, 2004). The Rambu Tuka' ceremony is held to welcome joyful
200 events such as marriage, harvesting (Alluk Pare), or entering a new house (Mangrara Banua).
201 While Rambu Solo 'is a reversal ceremony of the soul that died before being buried. In this
202 traditional event, the role of women is crucial to facilitate all family members and invitees from
203 different religions to attend the event. The instrumental role of women as cooks, makeup artists,
204 guest pickers, and emotional roles is the glue between large families (Mrs. RY, Tana Toraja, July
205 15, 2019). The rambu solo ceremony is not just a custom; it is also a symbol of synergy between
206 the dead and the living. The rambu solo ceremony has noble values such as family values, values
207 of togetherness, or mutual cooperation (Mrs. PT, Tana Toraja, 20 July 2019).

208

209 In addition, in the Tana Toraja community, the culture of generosity and mutual help has
210 become a tradition both in religious and traditional activities. This activity involves all nuclear
211 families and the broader community of different religions. For the Toraja people, tongkonan is a
212 physical manifestation and represents a group of people (pa'rapuan). It is reflected in the term
213 itself, which comes from the word tongkon (sit) together (Mrs. PT, Tana Toraja, 05 August 2019).
214 Thus, tongkonan means the center where people gather for family groups from their ancestors and
215 living descendants (Idrus, 2017). Tongkonan represents the types and characteristics of the main
216 groups in Toraja society as a place to discuss and carry out traditional ceremonies and problems

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217 of group members in general (Said, 2004). The implicit idea of the tongkonan is to build a unified
218 community, although conflicts between tongkonan members occur, especially conflicts related to
219 land resources (Idrus, 2017).

220

221 **Discussion**

222

223 When viewed from the religious aspect, Muslim women in Tana Toraja, a minority in
224 quantity, have high religious enthusiasm, especially those related to relations between
225 communities of different religions. Women naturally internalize religious and cultural values
226 associated with strengthening Muslim-Christian bonds. When gathered together, the talks never
227 lead to theological differences in each religion but rather to universal issues related to the family's
228 future. Family members remind each other to carry out their obligations and don't forget to ask for
229 prayers so that their lives are safe and that their families are given sustenance and health (Mrs. PT,
230 Mrs. NH, Mrs. AF, Mrs. SQ, Tana Toraja, 7 August 2019). Likewise, when it is time to eat, all
231 family members immediately storm the dining table without hesitation about the halal status of the
232 food served because family members already know what is allowed and not to be eaten by both
233 Muslims and non-Muslims.

234

235 Another theme that is quite sensitive in inclusive education is a joint prayer between
236 Muslims and non-Muslims. In a pluralistic society, prayer together is an activity that cannot be
237 avoided both at family events and traditional activities in their family environment. One person
238 did not lead the joint prayer carried out by people of different religions, but a prayer based on their
239 respective religions and beliefs (Mrs. RY, Mrs. NH, Mrs. AF, Mrs. SQ, Tana Toraja, 7 August
240 2019). The choice to choose this way of praying is to respect the differences in religion and beliefs
241 between them and avoid debates related to communal prayer led by non-Muslims.

242

243 Culturally and sociologically, Muslim women in Tana Toraja also collaborate with people
244 of other religions based on cultural values. Muslim-Christian interacts without questioning
245 religious identity. They establish relationships with relatives or other people of different religions.
246 They show functional relationships in everyday life; friendly relations, mutual assistance in social
247 activities, agriculture, and even involvement in both traditional and religious meetings outside of

248 the sacrament. Some residents live in the same house with different religions, some whose father
249 is Hindu (Alukta), the mother is Christian, and so on. Toraja culture accommodates all forms of
250 these differences (Mrs. PT, Mrs. NH, Mrs. AF, Mrs. SQ, Tana Toraja, 6 September 2019).

251
252 The culture of mutual help and mutual cooperation in Tana Toraja did not appear by itself
253 but has taken root as a culture. The fundamental value of Toraja culture is from Aluk (custom),
254 which is recorded in pepasan to matua (ancestral messages). Among them, in an expression that is
255 well known to the Toraja people, "la'bi keangga tu rara na ia aluk" which means "the bonds of
256 brotherhood/kinship are more valuable than religion" (Umar, 2019). The philosophy of the pepasan
257 to matua (ancestral message) is one of the values that the Toraja people maintain regardless of
258 their religion. One of them is the Karapasan value which means a strenuous effort to keep and
259 maintain peace, harmony with fellow citizens to create a harmonious life, and even sacrifice
260 property for the sake of creating harmony as in the expression unnali melo (buying goodness) or
261 la'biran tallan tu barang apa kela sisarak mira tu rara book (willing to sacrifice his property, rather
262 than sacrificing brotherhood).

263
264 The value of longko' and siri' must be obtained within the framework of Aluk Sola Pemali
265 (beliefs and taboos). This value also implies that all plans, activities, and problems in life together
266 must be resolved through deliberation by allowing all members to express opinions and aspirations
267 in determining the direction, goals, and meaning of life together. In addition, there is the value of
268 Longko', Siri' (tolerance, shame) in associating with family and social environment. Doing
269 something outside of aluk and mali is a sin that can cause shame, both personally and in the
270 environment, especially in a large family environment. Siri' is self-respect and shame, longko' is
271 tolerance which means to be polite and respectful not to embarrass people. Longko' is an attitude
272 of life with positive elements, especially regarding politeness and good behavior (Mrs. PT Mrs.
273 NH, Tana Toraja, 6 September 2019).

274
275 Muslim women who are members of the Aisyiyah organization in Tana Toraja prioritize
276 moderate religion and take advantage of religious celebrations to build togetherness with
277 Christians. In facing the development of universal humanity, Muslim women develop religious

278 insights that are universal to their fellow human beings regardless of differences and separation of
279 primordial and conventional distances.

280

281 **Conclusion**

282

283 Muslim women have an essential role in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations. This
284 role embodies the noble values of religion that instruct its adherents to compete in helping each
285 other in goodness, also sourced from the local wisdom of the Toraja people, which has been
286 preserved from generation to generation from their ancestors. Muslim-Christian relations show a
287 positive direction with collaboration and cohesion (Zamakhsari, 2019). It can be a model for areas
288 that have the same characteristics as the locus of this study. This contribution will further
289 strengthen religious moderation in various fields and enhance Muslim-Christian relations as
290 Indonesia's two largest religious entities. The limitation of this study is that the locus and samples
291 were taken from a particular and small area, so that generalizations cannot be made. Still, it is
292 possible to replicate it in the regions that have the same socio-cultural situation.

293

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298

299 **Competing interests**

300 The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have
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302

303 **Authors' contributions**

304 [information redacted to maintain the integrity of the review process] were all involved in the
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306

307 **Ethical considerations**

308 This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal
309 subjects.

310

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315

316 **Disclaimer**

317 The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily
318 reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

319

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414



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2 MANUSCRIPT TO REVIEW

4 Interreligious relation: Women's position in bridging Christian and Muslim bond

6 [information redacted to maintain the integrity of the review process]

8 Abstract

10 The role of women from various religions is very potential to maintain harmony between
11 religious communities. Therefore, strengthening the study of Muslim-Christian relations is very
12 important for a nation with plurality in terms of ethnicity and religion. This study aims to analyze
13 the role of Muslim women in rural areas who live in a pluralistic socio-religious situation. This
14 research was conducted qualitatively with informants who were determined by using the
15 purposive sampling technique. The results showed that Muslim women who were the unit of
16 analysis in this study carried out traditional, religious, and social activities driven by messages
17 taken from local cultural and religious values. The activities of Muslim women in the religious
18 and cultural spheres have strengthened Muslim-Christian relations, which are bound by solid
19 kinship even though they are of different religions.

20 **Contribution:** This article provides insight into the contribution of Muslim women in
21 strengthening Muslim-Christian relations. This agenda is essential because Islam and
22 Christianity have the most prominent adherents in Indonesia. This contribution is significant and
23 crucial in the midst of the issue of radicalism in Indonesia lately.

25 **Keywords:** Women, Relationships, Muslims, Christians

27 Introduction

29 In every structure of life, women have a vital role in maintaining the balance of life both
30 in the realm of family, community, and inter-religious relations. Women can do any work for the

Commented [A1]: There is no framework of analysis in scientific footprints. Almost descriptive.

Commented [A2]: A wider scope of women's role of inter-religious relations needed here, for the journal is for international audience.

31 community without asking for wages (Chus, 2018). Even in crises, women can act as volunteers
32 and decision-makers and reshape identities in crisis (Cadesky et al., 2019).

33

34 In Indonesia, the role of women is inseparable from the relationship between religious
35 diversity and belief. Several findings from research on the act of Muslim women members of the
36 Aisyiyah organization reveal that they are actively involved in women's empowerment, social
37 entrepreneurship, and social welfare (Annisa, 2012). The weakness of this study does not discuss
38 the role of women in community relations of different religions. Whereas in other research
39 findings, it was revealed that women are essential agents and actors in the peace process both in
40 their roles as mothers, educators, meditators, peace activists, and decision-makers (Atuhaire,
41 2014). Even women are involved in all types of peace work (Olofsson, 2018). Muslim women's
42 role in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations in communities of different religions can be
43 encouraged by utilizing the awareness of working for the common good (Effendi, 2016) and the
44 culture of helping each other (Utomo & Minza, 2018).

45

46 This study becomes very urgent by looking at the sociological anatomy of Indonesian
47 society. Indonesia stretches between an archipelago from Sabang to Merauke, which has
48 implications for the social, economic, ethnic, cultural, and even faith situations, which are
49 diverse and different from one another (Zainuddin, 2010). Currently, there is a shift from what
50 the founding fathers aspired to in 1945, from a nation that upholds tolerance towards the use of
51 violent means to solve problems (Muryanti, 2014). In fact, there is still an increase in violence
52 against religion and belief in Indonesia. In 2010 there were 81 cases, which were recorded from
53 several regions in Indonesia (Misrawi, 2010). In 2015 there were 85 cases, and in 2016 there
54 were 97 cases (Wahid et al., 2015). In the aspect of religion, Indonesia must work hard to
55 overcome diversity (Ju Lan, 2011). Some conflicts occur as a result of negative stereotypes
56 (Nakaya, 2018). The Ambon, Poso, and Sambas conflicts lead to the marginalization of
57 indigenous peoples and the erosion of local traditional buildings, the cause of "ethnic" conflict
58 (Schulze, 2017).

59

60 Another study found that religious tolerance and gender equality are essential for the
61 sustainability of human life (Al-Hamdi, 2015) because women have different perspectives in

62 conflict prevention and can bridge religious, ethnic, political, and cultural differences (Goyol,
63 2019). Islam encourages its people to practice the teachings of ta'awun or help in goodness with
64 anyone, including other people of different religions (Mu'ti, 2019). The role of women to support
65 and prosper others is driven by selfish and altruistic motives (Marjanovic et al., 2012), both by
66 religious and cultural values that have become a habit in a community.

67
68 Historically and empirically, the role of women in socio-religious activities is very
69 prominent in the 'Aisyiyah organization as a Muhammadiyah women's association. Founded on
70 27 Rajab 1335 H/19 May 1917 in Yogyakarta by Nyai Siti Walidah or Nyai Ahmad Dahlan. The
71 first chairman of 'Aisyiyah was not Nyai Siti Walidah, but Siti Bariyah. Siti Bariyah not only
72 studied Islam with Kiai Ahmad Dahlan but also studied at the Neutraal Meisjes School public
73 school (Muthmainnah, 2019). In 1928, 'Aisyiyah was listed as one of the pioneering women's
74 organizations or who initiated and was actively involved in the first Indonesian Women's
75 Congress (Kowani), and from 1917 to 1998, was able to show her identity as a Muslim women's
76 organization, including the development of academic discourses on human rights. women (Van
77 Doorn Harder, Pieternella, 2006).

78
79 The locus of this research is Tana Toraja, an exotic area in Indonesia. Based on BPS data,
80 Tana Toraja is currently inhabited by 234,002 people, with details based on religion: Protestant
81 68.66%, Catholic 17.09%, Muslim 12.25%, Hindu 1.74%, Buddhist 0.22%, and Aluk Todolo
82 0.01%. Toraja comes from the words To Riaja, To which means people (Bugis) and Riaja which
83 means above, so Toraja means people who live at the top or in the mountains as opposed to the
84 word from Luu' which means coastal people, who used to dominate the highlands (Waterson,
85 2009). In Toraja culture, the people's personality is strongly influenced by the beliefs of their
86 ancestors named Aluk Todolo (Fox, 2006). The research location was chosen for several
87 academic reasons; first, sociologically, the Muslims in Tana Toraja have unique characteristics.

88
89 In addition to the strength of the Aluk Todolo culture in the Toraja people is proof of
90 excellent inter-religious harmony. Second, religious differences in the Toraja people are fused in
91 the brotherhood is built in the nuclear family and extended family bound by Tongkonan values.

92 Tongkonan is the traditional house of the Toraja people, a place to live that unites large families
93 of different religions.

94

95 In this study context, women are one of the pillars of strengthening Muslim-Christian
96 relations through religious volunteerism. Then, what are the fundamental values that move
97 Muslim women who are members of the Aisyiyah organization to strengthen Muslim and
98 Christian ties? How are religious celebrations and traditional celebrations used by Muslim
99 women to strengthen Muslim-Christian relations? These two topics are the main focus of this
100 research.

101

102 This research's theoretical and practical theme is expected to encourage women to play an
103 active role in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations, which are sometimes damaged by issues
104 of radicalism and fundamentalism. Women have a strategic position to carry out their roles in
105 various fields of life (Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006) and are carried out by women's groups who are
106 members of civil society as actors (Rahmat, 2014). Women from various religions can maintain
107 harmony between religious communities, but this potential has not been fully utilized.

108

109 **Research Methods**

110

111 This research applied a qualitative descriptive approach. Qualitative research is one of the
112 research models based on the philosophy of postpositivism, used to examine the condition of
113 natural objects (Fine, 1995). The population in this study were Aisyiyah women in Tana Toraja,
114 amounting to 21 people. Determination of data sources is carried out by purposive sampling,
115 based on specific characteristics that are closely related to previously known characteristics,
116 based on the research objectives. The researcher determined nine women (42%) who had a
117 pluralistic background in their extended family as data sources, then continued with enrichment
118 from other informants.

119

120 The data was collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation
121 conducted from June-September 2019 in Tana Toraja. The observation used is participant
122 observation. In addition to observing, the researchers were directly involved in the activities

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123 carried out by Aisiyiah women, especially those related to their interactions with their
124 environment. To maintain the validity of the observations, the authors use field notes (Bogdan &
125 [Biklen](#), 1997). It used to record various events related to the activities of the seven Aisiyiah
126 families. The data were analyzed through three stages: data reduction, data display, and
127 conclusion and verification.

128

129 **Results of the [research](#)**

130

131 **Religious Value Base Muslim-Christian Relations**

132

133 Muslim women in Tana Toraja hold fast to religious values to interact with other
134 religious people, including Christians. The implemented religious values have a central character
135 (wasithiyah), which is translated as moderate Islam. Besides having a theological dimension,
136 religion also has religious traditions as a primary mechanism for expressing and reinforcing
137 group sentiment and solidarity (Durkheim & Swain, 2008). Open religious traditions, which can
138 be referred to as Indigenous and local cultural celebrations. The role of women in implementing
139 moderate religious values can be seen from religious activities that always involve followers of
140 other religions.

141

142 From the researchers' observations, during the celebration of Christmas for Christians or
143 Eid for Muslims, each other, especially women, were present at the organizers' invitation. The
144 presence of Muslim or Christian women at religious celebrations is not at the time of sacraments
145 or worship activities. So with this model, Muslim women are not awkward to attend Christian
146 activities, and vice versa. In other places, this fluid form of relationship may be seen as extreme
147 because it touches the spirit of mutual cooperation and kinship in religious traditions, building
148 houses of worship, both Muslim and non-Muslim. That way, externally, Muslim minority groups
149 can be said to be safe from outside interference. Anyone who wants to disturb Muslims is not
150 only dealing with Muslim groups but also dealing with non-Muslims (Mrs. FM, Tana Toraja,
151 [June](#), 1st 2019).

152

Commented [A4]: What is the scientific discipline being the analytical tool in this research?

Commented [A5]: More data and frame of analysis needed in this article.

Commented [A6]: The sources could be explained by: initial or respondent number, age, gender, and position.

153 The kinship ties between Muslims and Christians in Tana Toraja have also created
154 awareness about their Muslim families' foods. Therefore, when Christian families invite them to
155 be religious or traditional events, Christian families prepare food that does not contain pork, or
156 food is forbidden in Islam (Mrs. MP, Tana Toraja, 05 June 2019). According to Mrs. MP, food
157 ingredients, containers used, and their process are handed over to their Muslim neighbors or
158 relatives so that the food they provide is guaranteed to be halal (Mrs. MP, Tana Toraja, 05 June
159 2019). Likewise, when slaughtering sacrificial animals on Eid al-Adha for Muslims, the
160 remaining meat that has been distributed according to Islamic law is then cooked by women of
161 different religions. Both Muslims and non-Muslim enjoyed the feast together in a friendly
162 atmosphere held in the mosque's courtyard. (Mrs. PT, Tana Toraja, 15 June 2019).

163

164 The essence of religious celebrations for Muslim and non-Muslim women is Sikamali'
165 (silahatollahim). The gathering of prominent families during religious celebrations will be a joy
166 that will further strengthen the value of brotherhood (Mrs. HJ, Tana Toraja, 20 June 2019).
167 Gathering with parents and extended family is not only done at Christmas or traditional
168 activities. However, every time if you have the opportunity, the family visits each other for
169 friendship. The openness between families has given a mutual understanding that differences and
170 exclusivity exist in theological and religious matters that cannot be united. Nevertheless, the
171 social dimension of religion unites them in harmony and togetherness. In this context, it can be
172 seen that Muslim women do not infiltrate into the sacredness of Christmas celebrations but take
173 advantage of the secular-religious values that have a social dimension for their followers and
174 those around them.

175

176 **Cultural Value Base of Muslim-Christian Relations**

177

178 This study found the existence of a communal lifestyle of the Toraja people, which is
179 reflected in the philosophy of the Tongkonan traditional house. Tongkonan cannot be owned by
180 individuals but is owned communally and for generations by the family or clan of the Tana
181 Toraja Tribe (Pakan et al., 2019). Tongkonan consists of the word "tongkon" which means
182 sitting, gets the suffix "an" to become Tongkonan which means a seat that implies a place to sit

183 together with members gathered to become a group of individuals who come from one lineage.
184 The house is a symbol of the unity of the clump called " Tongkonan" (Feed et al., 2019).

185
186 Historically, Toraja people had an encounter with Islam starting when they were in
187 contact with the Kingdoms of Sidenreng, Bone, and Luwu. Although, at first, the relationship
188 was dominated by economic interests, especially the coffee trade. Until the end of the 19th
189 century, after more than 230 (two hundred and thirty) years of establishing power in South
190 Sulawesi by defeating the Gowa-Tallo Kingdom, it seems that the Dutch have not shown any
191 interest in occupying the Toraja region. due to the location is far in the middle of the Sulawesi
192 region (Waterson, 2012).). The Dutch arrived in the Toraja area in 1905 and succeeded in
193 conquering it entirely in 1906. Christianity was introduced in Toraja not long after the colonial
194 government crushed the resistance of the Toraja people led by Pong Tiku. In 1908 the Dutch
195 colonial government opened Landschapschools (self-governing schools) in Makale and Rantepao
196 led by Christian teachers. Even though this government school has a "neutral" status, the
197 teachers at Landschap teach Christianity to Landschap students (Kobong, 2008).

198
199 Until now, the Toraja people consistently maintain and maintain the customs inherited
200 from their ancestors. The Toraja people recognize two main ceremonies involving the life cycle,
201 namely Rambu Tuka' (Alluk Rampe Matollo) and Rambu Solo' (Alluk Rampe Matampu), each
202 of which has its own characteristics (Adams, 2004). The Rambu Tuka' ceremony is held to
203 welcome joyful events such as marriage, harvesting (Alluk Pare), or entering a new house
204 (Mangrara Banua). While Rambu Solo 'is a reversal ceremony of the soul that died before being
205 buried. In this traditional event, the role of women is crucial to facilitate all family members and
206 invitees from different religions to attend the event. The instrumental role of women as cooks,
207 makeup artists, guest pickers, and emotional roles is the glue between large families (Mrs. RY,
208 Tana Toraja, July 15, 2019). The rambu solo ceremony is not just a custom; it is also a symbol of
209 synergy between the dead and the living. The rambu solo ceremony has noble values such as
210 family values, values of togetherness, or mutual cooperation (Mrs. PT, Tana Toraja, 20 July
211 2019).

212

213 In addition, in the Tana Toraja community, the culture of generosity and mutual help has
214 become a tradition both in religious and traditional activities. This activity involves all nuclear
215 families and the broader community of different religions. For the Toraja people, tongkonan is a
216 physical manifestation and represents a group of people (pa'rapuan). It is reflected in the term
217 itself, which comes from the word tongkon (sit) together (Mrs. PT, Tana Toraja, 05 August
218 2019). Thus, tongkonan means the center where people gather for family groups from their
219 ancestors and living descendants (Idrus, 2017). Tongkonan represents the types and
220 characteristics of the main groups in Toraja society as a place to discuss and carry out traditional
221 ceremonies and problems of group members in general (Said, 2004). The implicit idea of the
222 tongkonan is to build a unified community, although conflicts between tongkonan members
223 occur, especially conflicts related to land resources (Idrus, 2017).

224

225 Discussion

226

227 When viewed from the religious aspect, Muslim women in Tana Toraja, a minority in
228 quantity, have high religious enthusiasm, especially those related to relations between
229 communities of different religions. Women naturally internalize religious and cultural values
230 associated with strengthening Muslim-Christian bonds. When gathered together, the talks never
231 lead to theological differences in each religion but rather to universal issues related to the
232 family's future. Family members remind each other to carry out their obligations and don't forget
233 to ask for prayers so that their lives are safe and that their families are given sustenance and
234 health (Mrs. PT, Mrs. NH, Mrs. AF, Mrs. SQ, Tana Toraja, 7 August 2019). Likewise, when it is
235 time to eat, all family members immediately storm the dining table without hesitation about the
236 halal status of the food served because family members already know what is allowed and not to
237 be eaten by both Muslims and non-Muslims.

238

239 Another theme that is quite sensitive in inclusive education is a joint prayer between
240 Muslims and non-Muslims. In a pluralistic society, prayer together is an activity that cannot be
241 avoided both at family events and traditional activities in their family environment. One person
242 did not lead the joint prayer carried out by people of different religions, but a prayer based on
243 their respective religions and beliefs (Mrs. RY, Mrs. NH, Mrs. AF, Mrs. SQ, Tana Toraja, 7

244 August 2019). The choice to choose this way of praying is to respect the differences in religion
245 and beliefs between them and avoid debates related to communal prayer led by non-Muslims.

246
247 Culturally and sociologically, Muslim women in Tana Toraja also collaborate with
248 people of other religions based on cultural values. Muslim-Christian interacts without
249 questioning religious identity. They establish relationships with relatives or other people of
250 different religions. They show functional relationships in everyday life; friendly relations, mutual
251 assistance in social activities, agriculture, and even involvement in both traditional and religious
252 meetings outside of the sacrament. Some residents live in the same house with different
253 religions, some whose father is Hindu (Alukta), the mother is Christian, and so on. Toraja culture
254 accommodates all forms of these differences (Mrs. PT, Mrs. NH, Mrs. AF, Mrs. SQ, Tana
255 Toraja, 6 September 2019).

256
257 The culture of mutual help and mutual cooperation in Tana Toraja did not appear by itself
258 but has taken root as a culture. The fundamental value of Toraja culture is from Aluk (custom),
259 which is recorded in pepasan to matua (ancestral messages). Among them, in an expression that
260 is well known to the Toraja people, "la'bi keangga tu rara na ia aluk" which means "the bonds of
261 brotherhood/kinship are more valuable than religion" (Umar, 2019). The philosophy of the
262 pepasan to matua (ancestral message) is one of the values that the Toraja people maintain
263 regardless of their religion. One of them is the Karapasan value which means a strenuous effort
264 to keep and maintain peace, harmony with fellow citizens to create a harmonious life, and even
265 sacrifice property for the sake of creating harmony as in the expression unnali melo (buying
266 goodness) or la'biran tallan tu barang apa kela sisarak mira tu rara book (willing to sacrifice his
267 property, rather than sacrificing brotherhood).

268
269 The value of longko' and siri' must be obtained within the framework of Aluk Sola
270 Pemali (beliefs and taboos). This value also implies that all plans, activities, and problems in life
271 together must be resolved through deliberation by allowing all members to express opinions and
272 aspirations in determining the direction, goals, and meaning of life together. In addition, there is
273 the value of Longko', Siri' (tolerance, shame) in associating with family and social environment.
274 Doing something outside of aluk and mali is a sin that can cause shame, both personally and in

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275 the environment, especially in a large family environment. Siri' is self-respect and shame,
276 longko' is tolerance which means to be polite and respectful not to embarrass people. Longko' is
277 an attitude of life with positive elements, especially regarding politeness and good behavior
278 (Mrs. PT Mrs. NH, Tana Toraja, 6 September 2019).

279
280 Muslim women who are members of the Aisyiyah organization in Tana Toraja prioritize
281 moderate religion and take advantage of religious celebrations to build togetherness with
282 Christians. In facing the development of universal humanity, Muslim women develop religious
283 insights that are universal to their fellow human beings regardless of differences and separation
284 of primordial and conventional distances.

Commented [A8]: More elaborations needed in terms of ideas, activities, and products to show the inter-religious relations. How the world could learn from this relationship.

Commented [A9]: Which theory/ies do the author/s follow or reject?

286 Conclusion

287
288 Muslim women have an essential role in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations. This
289 role embodies the noble values of religion that instruct its adherents to compete in helping each
290 other in goodness, also sourced from the local wisdom of the Toraja people, which has been
291 preserved from generation to generation from their ancestors. Muslim-Christian relations show a
292 positive direction with collaboration and cohesion (Zamakhsari, 2019). It can be a model for
293 areas that have the same characteristics as the locus of this study. This contribution will further
294 strengthen religious moderation in various fields and enhance Muslim-Christian relations as
295 Indonesia's two largest religious entities. The limitation of this study is that the locus and
296 samples were taken from a particular and small area, so that generalizations cannot be made.
297 Still, it is possible to replicate it in the regions that have the same socio-cultural situation.

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298

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303

304 Competing interests

305 The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have
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307

308 **Authors' contributions**

309 [information redacted to maintain the integrity of the review process] were all involved in the
310 preparation, research design, data collection, analysis and article writing

311

312 **Ethical considerations**

313 This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or
314 animal subjects.

315

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320

321 **Disclaimer**

322 The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily
323 reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

324

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- 420

REVIEWER COMMENT C

Number	Part	Reviewers' comment	Improvement
25	Abstrack	My suggestion for keywords : inter-religious, role, women, muslims, christians	Suggestion is accepted and have been revised
31	Introduction	How far women can act as volunteers? Please give your opinion or other sources to proof that women can act as volunteer	The sentence and source have been revised and directed into the role of women in religions relation, not volunteer ing
41		Give one or two example of it	Examples have been added
68		Please check spelling and standardize it in this article	Sudah distandarisasi
78		Separate these ideas in two sentences	Have been separated into two paragraphs
111	Research Methods	For the justification of purposive sampling, my suggestion, please create a table, just in simple word the justification of purposive sampling in the study	Have been revised/explained: Data resource determined by purposive sampling, based on the special characteristics (inclusion characteristics) which have strong bound with the known previous characteristics, based on the object of the research, the sample is classified into 3 (three); first is The Aisiyiyah's Managements who have letter of decree and membership cards. Second, the women who have been regular members. Third, the women who are sympathizers and actively participate in activities
119		Please give details in table what activities that you do in your observation	Have been added: The details of the observations are: (i) Observing the women's activities on christmas and eid al fitri (ii) Observing the activities on Rambu Solo' Ceremony (iii) Observing the women's activities on rambu tuka ceremony And women's activities on other social events
124		Please mention too whether you use manual technique in analizing data or you use tool like atlas ti or nvivo	Added, data analysis using nVivo Basic 12.00 x32 for Windows
151	Findings and Discussions	From this paragraph, what you see from this? Please give some of your voice here	Some explanations have benn added, from the literature aspect, and researchers' Point of view.

REVIEWER COMMENT F

Number	Part	Reviewers' comment	Improvements
16	Abstract	There is no framework of analysis in scientific footprints. Almost descriptive.	Have been added: The data analysis was done manually by using Discovering cultural themes model in order to understand the special symptoms from the previous analysis.
30	Introduction	A wider scope of women's role of inter-religious relations needed here, for the journal is for international audience	Some literatures have been added from the Reputable international journal
114	Methods	The references could be updated	The references have been updated
125		What is the scientific discipline being the analytical tool in this research?	Added, data analysis using nVivo Basic 12.00 x32 for Windows
129	Findings and Discussions	More data and frame of analysis needed in this article.	Analysis have been done on the discussion
151		The sources could be explained by: initial or respondent number, age, gender, and position.	The quote/ informants' Number have been revised
266		All non-English words could be in italics.	Have been edited
281		More elaborations needed in terms of ideas, activities, and products to show the inter-religious relations. How the world could learn from this relationship	Some parts related to the inter-religious relations have been added on the findings and discussion
284		Which theory/ies do the author/s follow or reject?	Some rejected and strengthen theories have been added, such as nature-nurture-equilibrium theory
292		Conclusion	No references in the conclusion.

Revisions Outstanding

The screenshot shows a Gmail interface with a browser window at the top displaying several tabs and the address bar. The email is from aosis@hts.org.za to 'me, Imampribadi, Puspasari'. The subject is 'HTS External Review Decision Reminder 7096 - Revisions Outstanding'. The body of the email contains the following text:

Ref. No.: 7096
Manuscript title: Interreligious relation: **Women's position in bridging**
Christian and Muslim bond
Journal: HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies

Dear Prof. Pajarianto

You are currently revising the above manuscript. To help us monitor manuscript status, I would be grateful if you could let me know as soon as possible approximately when you will be submitting the revisions to us. Can I please remind you that we must receive revised manuscripts within no later than one month of the date you were notified of the decision.

We invited you to submit a revised version of your manuscript on 07-Feb-22 with a revision date of 05-Mar-22. Thank you in advance for your help, and I look forward to hearing from you.

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Kind regards
Dr. Botha
Department of Practical Theology, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria
Dr Annelie Botha

Accepted: 13 Maret 2022

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The journal has a double-blinded peer review process and your manuscript was assessed by two expert independent reviewers. Read our peer review process https://aosis.co.za/polices/peer_review

Thank you for your revised manuscript. We have reached a decision regarding your submission. I am pleased to inform you that your manuscript has now been accepted for publication.

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Accepted, sent to editing: 14 Maret 2022

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We are pleased to confirm your manuscript's acceptance for publication on 13-Mar-22.

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The following queries have arisen during the editing of your manuscript and are identified on the proofs. Unless advised otherwise, please submit all corrections using the online Proofreading correction feature.

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- AQ6 Kindly verify the edited sentence, ‘Meanwhile, men who are assumed to have strong, mighty, manly, rational, assertive . . .’
- AQ7 Kindly verify the edited sentence, ‘Meanwhile, the nurture theory interprets that the differences in masculine and feminine . . .’
- AQ8 Please define BPS.
- AQ9 Kindly verify the edited sentence, ‘With this composition, Tana Toraja shows religious pluralism . . .’
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- AQ11 Note that “Feed et al. 2019; Grace 2014; Jackson 2021; Revelation et al. 2019” are cited in the text, but not provided in the reference list. Please provide complete reference details.
- AQ12 Kindly verify the edited sentence, ‘The population in this study involves 21 Aisyiyah . . .’
- AQ13 Please check the sentence, ‘Data analysis was carried out using software for qualitative, which was . . .’ for clarity.
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- AQ18 Kindly verify the edited sentence, ‘Tongkonan consists of the word ‘tongkon’ which means sitting, gets the suffix ‘an’ to become . . .’
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- AQ25 Kindly check whether some word is missing in the sentence, ‘t another locus in Indonesia, women have succeeded in creating a meeting room . . .’
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- AQ27 Note that Graph 1 has been changed to Figure 1 both here and in the text. Please confirm.
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- AQ40 Please provide editors name and publisher city name for Wood & Eagly 2012.

Interreligious relation: Women's role in bridging Christian–Muslim bond

[AQ1]

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Strengthening Muslim–Christian relations is very important for a nation such as Indonesia that has plurality in terms of tribes, ethnicity and religion. This study aims to analyse the role of Muslim women who live in a pluralistic socio-religious situation. This is a qualitative research that uses purposive sampling to determine the informants. The approach used by the Discovering Cultural Themes model is to understand the symptoms of the many themes, cultures, values and cultural symbols. **Data analysis uses software for qualitative**, which is needed in managing data found from the field, in this case, nVivo Basic 12.00 for Windows. The results show that Muslim women translate justice, empathy and rationality in religion by building relationships with other religions. This attitude is part of Islamic teachings that contain moderate, accommodating and tolerant aspects. **In addition, the culture has encouraged women to mingle and form an egalitarian society.** The culture of generosity and mutual help has become a tradition both in religious and customary activities.

[AQ2]

[AQ3]

Contribution: This article provides an insight into the contribution of Muslim women in strengthening Muslim–Christian relations. This agenda is very important because Islam and Christianity have the largest adherents in Indonesia. This contribution is very important and crucial in the midst of radicalism issue in Indonesia lately.

Keywords: interreligious; role; women; Muslims; Christians.

Introduction

[AQ4]

Globally, women and men have a very important part in maintaining the balance of life both in the realm of family, community and interreligious relations. Islam and Christianity as big religions in the world teach to protect women's rights in public (Udoh, Folarin & Isumonah 2020). Religion does not stand alone, but has attention and teaching **about pillar to human rights** in general and to the women's role in particular (Abdulla 2018), which must continue to be sound both formally and informally (Arisukwu et al. 2021). Women in certain situations are able to do any work for the community without asking for payment and have the same perception and behaviour both in peace and war situations (Abduljaber, Services & Arbor 2021; Chus 2018). Women with high religious motivation are also directly involved in interreligious peace, which has been destroyed by communal violence (Al Qurtuby 2014; Lakawa 2021).

[AQ5]

Several findings from previous studies discover that many Muslim women are actively involved in women empowerment, social entrepreneurship and social welfare (Annisa 2012). The weakness of this study is that it does not discuss the role of women in community relations of different religions, whereas other research findings discover that women are important agents and actors in the peace process, both in their roles as mothers, educators, mediators, peace activists and decision makers (Atuhaire 2014). Furthermore, women are involved in all kinds of peace work (Olofsson 2018), including intertribal cultural peace (Pattiasina, Lattu & Nuban Timo 2018) and moderate religious and social services for all religions (Farida 2019). The role of Muslim women to strengthen the Muslim–Christian relations in different religious communities can be encouraged by utilising the awareness of working for the common good (Effendi 2016) and the culture of mutual help (Utomo & Minza 2018). Other studies discover that religious tolerance and gender equality are very important for the sustainability of human life (Al-Hamdi 2015), because women have different perspectives on conflict prevention and can correlate between religious, ethnic, political and cultural differences (Goyol 2019). Islam encourages its people to practice the teachings of ta'awun or mutual help in goodness with anyone, including other people of different religions (Mu'ti 2019). The role of women to help and prosper others is driven by selfish and altruistic motives (Marjanovic, Struthers & Greenglass 2012), both by religious and cultural values that have become a habit in a community.

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Why should women in Indonesia take part in Islamic-Christian relations? Because factually, the violence against religion and belief in Indonesia are still happening: In 2010, there were 81 cases, which were recorded from several regions in Indonesia (Misrawi 2010). In 2015, there were 85 cases; in 2016, there were 97 cases (Wahid et al. 2015); and in 2020, there were 422 violation of religious freedom (Lidwina 2021). Indonesia still has to work hard to address the issue of religious diversity (Ju Lan 2011), with some conflicts occurring as a result of negative stereotypes (Nakaya 2018), the Ambon, Poso and Sambas conflicts led to the marginalisation of indigenous people and the erosion of local traditional buildings, which became the cause of ethnic conflicts (Schulze 2017). Even though in 2020 the Interreligious Harmony Index is in the high category of 67.46 (Burhani et al. 2020), but awareness of various potential conflicts must be internalised in various activities including women.

The role of women is dominated by gender debates where identities and concepts are individual's self-definition as female or male, based on their biological gender as interpreted in culture (Wood & Eagly 2012, 2015). Two big current theories that discuss the roles of men and women are nature and nurture. In linguistic term, nature is understood as a character that is inherent in a person as a natural condition or human nature. Differences between women and men are natural so they cannot be eliminated but have to create a harmonious relationship (Butler 2004). Women in this theory are identified as patient, loving, gentle, motherly, caring and diligent. Thus, they are suitable to take on domestic roles. [AQ6] **Meanwhile, men who are assumed to have strong, mighty, manly, rational, assertive** traits are interpreted as men who are more worthy to take on the roles of leaders, chiefs of households and have a lot of freedom in choosing any role.

Meanwhile, the nurture theory interprets that the differences in masculine and feminine are not determined by biological differences but by social constructs and the influence of cultural factors, [AQ7] **even though self-existential feeling** as female or male usually reflects the biological sex aspect (Miller 2015). In the context of this theory, there is a relative meaning of masculine and feminine concepts. The social constructs differences in society result in the relativity of masculine and feminine attributes indicators between cultures. Certain traits attached to a gender in a community are not necessarily the same as others (Butler 2004). There are roles and tasks that can be interchanged, but there are those that are not usually interchangeable because they are naturally different in nature.

Empirically, the role of women in socio-religious activities, as well as in building socio-religious relations is very prominent in the 'Aisyiyah organisation as a Muhammadiyah women's association. It was founded on 27 Rajab 1335 H/19 May 1917 in Yogyakarta by Nyai Siti Walidah or Nyai Ahmad Dahlan. The first chairwoman of 'Aisyiyah was not Nyai Siti Walidah, but Siti Bariyah. Siti Bariyah did not only study Islam with Kiai Ahmad Dahlan but also studied at the Neutraal Meisjes School (Muthmainnah 2019). In 1928,

'Aisyiyah was listed as one of the pioneering women's organisations or which initiated and was actively involved in the first Indonesian Women's Congress (Kowani) and from 1917 to 1998 was able to show its identity as a Muslim women's organisation, including the development of academic discourses on women rights (Van Doorn Harder 2006).

The locus of this research is Tana Toraja, an exotic area in Indonesia, which is world famous. Based on BPS data, currently it is inhabited by 234002 people, with details based on religion: Protestant 68.66%, Catholic 17.09%, Muslim 12.25%, Hindu 1.74%, Buddhist 0.22% and Aluk Todolo 0.01%. [AQ8] **With this composition, Tana Toraja shows religious pluralism** in terms of religion and belief. However, they are actually united by a homogeneous ethnic group and a very high culture of mutual cooperation and become social capital in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations in this area. Toraja comes from the words *To Riaja*, *To* means people (Bugis) and *Riaja* means above, so Toraja means people who live at the top or in the mountains as the antonym of *Luu'*, which means coastal people, who used to have dominance in the highlands (Waterson 2009). In Toraja culture, the personality of the people is strongly influenced by the beliefs of their ancestors named *Aluk Todolo* (Fox 2006). [AQ9]

Then, what are the basic values that move Muslim women who are members of the Aisyiyah organisation in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations? and how are religious and traditional celebrations used by Muslim women to strengthen Muslim-Christian relations? This is the main focus in this research. The theoretical and practical theme of this research is expected to encourage women to play an active role in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations, which are sometimes damaged by radicalism and fundamentalism issues. [AQ10] **Women have a strategic role to carry out their roles in various** fields of life (Ruiter & De Graaf 2006), and carried out by women's groups who are members of civil society as actors (Grace 2014). Women from various religions have the potential to maintain harmony between religious communities, but this potential has not been fully utilised. [AQ11]

Research methods

This research is a qualitative descriptive research. Qualitative research is a research model based on the philosophy of postpositivism, which is used to examine the condition of natural objects. It is very difficult to detect the population, which become the informants of this study, because there is not enough data available on the Aisyiyah organisation. There is no specific standard for the number of samples for qualitative research. Furthermore, the data collection method uses observation, interviews and discussions, which require such a long time so it is not possible to take large samples. In addition, qualitative research has three main components to be observed. Firstly, the place where the interaction occurs in the ongoing social situation, in this case at Bittuang Tana Toraja; secondly, the actors who are playing a certain role. In the context of this research, the actors of the research object

are women who are members of the Aisyiyah organisation; thirdly, activities (Tannenbaum 1980), carried out by actors in ongoing social situations. In research activities that will be the research object are all activities related to women's activities in relation to Muslim–Christian relations.

[AQ12] The population in this study involves 21 Aisyiyah women in Tana Toraja. Determination of data sources is performed by purposive sampling, based on certain characteristics (inclusion criteria) that are closely related to the characteristics, which have been known previously, based on the research objectives. The sample is classified into three: Firstly, Aisyiyah's management who have a decree and membership card. Secondly, women who become regular members. Thirdly, women who are Aisyiyah sympathisers and actively participate in activities.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews and documentation was conducted from June to September 2019 in Tana Toraja. The observation used is participant observation with base snowball method. The details of the observation activities are (1) observing women's activities at Christmas and Eid; (2) observing women's activities at the *rambu solo'* traditional party; (3) observing women's activities at *rambu tuka'*; and (4) women's activities in other social activities. The researchers used observation guidelines to record these activities. In order to maintain the validity of the observations, the authors use field notes (Bogdan & Biklen 1997) or commonly called a field notebook. Field notes were used to record various events related to the activities of women who were informants in this study and all were performed manually.

The approach used by the Discovering Cultural Themes model is to collect various themes, cultural focuses, values and cultural symbols in each domain (Spradley 2016). Data analysis was carried out using software for qualitative, which was needed in managing data found from the field, in this case, nVivo Basic 10.00 for Windows. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software developed by Qualitative Solution and Research (QSR) international. NVivo is a tool for processing qualitative data through highlighting, taking notes and linking ideas (Jackson 2021). The data analysed was base triangulation data (Mills 2011) through three stages: data reduction, data display, conclusion and verification.

Findings and discussion

Religion and the role of women in Muslim–Christian relations

Muslim women in Tana Toraja adhere to religious values as a guide in interacting with other religious communities, including Christians and the Aluk Todolo. Implemented religious values is middle character (*wasathiyah*), which is translated as moderate Islam. Religion, apart from having a theological dimension, also has a spiritual tradition as a primary mechanism for expressing and reinforcing group sentiment and solidarity (Durkheim & Swain 2008). An open

religious tradition can also be referred to as indigenous and local culture celebrations. The role of women in implementing moderate religious values can be seen from religious activities that always involve other religions' followers.

From the observation of the researchers, women become effective family mediators of different religions to meet and unite. Women are quite dominant in various socio-religious activities. They cook, serve guests and break the ice in a strong brotherhood. In other places, this kind of relationship is probably considered extreme, because it touches the spirit of mutual cooperation and kinship in religious traditions, building places of worship, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The role of women in peace building is multidimensional, and the issues are sufficiently representative and can bring a gender perspective to the main content of a negotiation. Women can contribute a lot to the recovery of post-conflict social, cultural, economic and political conditions. This is the flexibility of women who can enter peaceful spaces that men may not be able to do.

Based on interviews and discussions with informants, researchers conducted coding and interpretation to obtain conclusions about values and religion applied by women in interacting with adherents of other religions. The religious values used by Muslim women to strengthen Muslim–Christian relations are presented in Table 1.

In Table 1, Muslim women use the values of justice, empathy and rationality in building relationships with people of other religions. This attitude is part of Islamic teachings that contain moderate, accommodating and tolerant aspects. This fact implies that tolerance with Christianity is a moderate attitude that must still be based on rationality as long as it is not related to the realm of fiqh. It means that tolerance is not correlated with the Pillars of Islam and other acts of worship.

Moderation in Islam is the implementation of the teachings of the holy book in the Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah: 256 'There is no compulsion in believing the religion of Islam'. which means giving other people the opportunity to practice their religion. Likewise, the accommodative and tolerant aspects are the implementation of the Qur'an Surah Al-Kafirun: 6 'your religion is for you, and my religion is for me'. Theologically, it means that Muslim women make religious

TABLE 1: The religious value of women in Muslim–Christian relations.

No	Statement/theme	Interpretation/conclusion
1	Everyone has the right to practice their own beliefs (Informants 1, 9, 5, 13)	Justice/Moderate (Surat al-Baqarah: 256)
2	We help each other and support religious events but do not participate in worship activities (Informants 7, 8, 9, 3)	Empathy/Accommodative (Surat al-Maidah: 2)
3	We may attend non-Muslim invitations as long as it is not related to worship (Informants 11, 17, and 20)	Rational/Tolerant (Surat Mumtahan: 51)
4	Your religion is for you and my religion is for me, we apply this by not participating in Christmas celebrations, but we do <i>silaturahmi</i> /visiting each other (Informants 7, 8, 9)	Empathy/Accommodative (Surat al-Kafirun: 6)
5	Respect other people's religious teachings, without sacrificing my religious principles (Informants 8, 12, 20, 21)	Rational/Tolerant (Surat al-An'am: 108)

Source: Primary.

[AQ14]

values dominate strongly in the sociological realm concerning adherents of other religions.

At the micro level, the type of mechanism in the socio-religious area played by women has succeeded in preventing internal and interreligious harmony between religious communities and encouraging constructive cooperation. Such a mechanism forms a pattern of functional harmony for a particular geographic area. Socio-religious mechanisms must receive adequate attention in turning off the symptoms of social disintegration. Externally, the Muslim minority group can be said to be safe from outside interference, because anyone who wants to disturb Muslims does not only deal with **ansich** Muslim groups, but also deals with non-Muslims.

Through the role of women, the issue of food in a different theological context which Muslims can and cannot eat becomes clear and becomes a common understanding. Therefore, when Christian families invite them to religious or traditional events, Christian families prepare food that does not contain pork or food that is forbidden in Islam (Interview, female informant; 1, 3, 5, 7). According to one food ingredient informant, the containers used and the cooking were handed over to their Muslim neighbours or relatives so that the food they provide is guaranteed to be halal, and all done by women (Interview, female informant; 9, 12, 19, 21). Likewise at the time of slaughtering sacrificial animals on Eid al-Adha for Muslims, the rest of the meat which have been given based on Islamic law were cooked by women from different religions, Muslim and non-muslim and are eaten together on the *Silaturrehmi*/assemble in Mosque area.

Seen from the religious aspect, Muslim women in Tana Toraja who are a minority in quantity, have high religious enthusiasm, especially those related to relations between communities of different religions. Women naturally in doing internalisation on religious and cultural values related to strengthening Muslim–Christian relations. When they are together, the discussion never leads to theological differences in each religion, but rather to universal issues related to the future of the family. Family members remind each other to do their obligations and to not forget to ask for prayers so that their life is safe and their family is given sustenance and health (Interviews, female informants; 2, 6, 9, 10). Another quite sensitive theme in inclusive education is joint prayer between Muslims and non-Muslims. In a pluralistic society, praying together is an activity that cannot be avoided both at family events and traditional activities in their family environment. The joint prayer carried out by people of different religions is not led by one person, but the praying is carried out based on their respective religions and beliefs (Interviews, female informants; 1, 6, 5, 11). The choice to choose this way of praying is to respect the differences in religion and beliefs between them and avoid debates related to joint prayer led by non-Muslims.

Cultural values of Muslim–Christian relations

Historically, the Torajanese had an encounter with Islam starting when they were in contact with the Kingdoms of Sidenreng, Bone and Luwu. Although at first the relationship was more dominated by economic interest, especially the coffee trade. Until the end of the 19th century, after more than 230 years of establishing power in South Sulawesi by defeating the Gowa-Tallo Kingdom, it seems that the Dutch have not shown any interest in occupying the Toraja region which is far in the middle of the Sulawesi region (Waterson 2012). The Dutch arrived in the Toraja area in 1905 and succeeded in conquering it completely in 1906. Christianity was introduced in Toraja, not long after the colonial government crushed the resistance of the Toraja people led by Pong Tiku. In 1908 the Dutch colonial government opened *Landschapschool* (self-governing schools) in Makale and Rantepao led by Christian teachers. Even though this government school is 'neutral', the teachers at Landschap taught Christianity to Landschap students (Kobong 2008).

This research found that the communal lifestyle of the Torajanese is reflected in the Tongkonan traditional house philosophy. Tongkonan cannot be owned by individuals, but is owned communally and from generation to generation by the family or clan of the Tana Toraja Tribe (Feed et al. 2019). Tongkonan consists of the word 'tongkon', which means sitting and gets the suffix 'an' to become Tongkonan. Tongkonan means a seat that implies a place to sit together with members who are gathered to become a group of individuals who come from the same lineage, the house is a symbol of the unity of the clump called 'Tongkonan' (Feed et al. 2019). Culture in Toraja has developed into social capital which is very useful for maintaining inter-religious harmony (Pajarianto, Pribadi & Sari 2022).

To this day, the Torajanese consistently maintain the customs inherited from their ancestors. Torajanese recognise two main ceremonies related to the life cycle, namely *Rambu Tuka'* (*Alluk Rampe Matollo*) and *Rambu Solo'* (*Alluk Rampe Matampu*), each has its own characteristics (Adams 2004). The *Rambu Tuka'* ceremony is held to welcome joyful events such as marriage, harvesting (*Alluk Pare*), or entering a new house (*Mangrara Banua*). Meanwhile, *Rambu Solo'* is a reversal ceremony for the soul that died before being buried. In this traditional event, the role of women is very important in facilitating all family members of different religions to attend the event. The role of women instrumentally as a cook, make-up artist, guests welcoming, and emotional role becomes the glue between a large family (Interview, female informant; 12, 15, 17, 20). The transcripts summary and analysis from interviews related to cultural values and mechanisms that make Muslim women strengthen Muslim–Christian relations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that Muslim women are accommodating and empathetic towards various activities carried out by both

TABLE 2: The culture value of women in Muslim–Christian relations.

No	Statement/theme	Interpretation/conclusion
1	<i>Rambu Tuka'</i> [harvesting ceremony] and <i>Rambu Solo'</i> [death ceremony] as a meeting place for families of different faiths (Informants: 2, 5, 7, 9)	Accommodating/empathy
2	The educational value in <i>Rambu Tuka'</i> and <i>Rambu Solo'</i> is mutual cooperation by helping with material and non-material (Informants 7, 18, 9, 21)	Mutual cooperation/empathy
3	All families of different religions are given the same opportunity to participate in the <i>Rambu Tuka'</i> and <i>Rambu Solo'</i> ceremonies (Informants: 1, 2 and 11)	Egalitarian/democratic
4	Women's activities in <i>Rambu Tuka'</i> : <i>Ma'Pangan</i> [welcoming by serving betel, areca nut], <i>Ma'pairuk</i> [women serving dishes to all guests], <i>Ma'tumbuk</i> [the activity of pounding rice on mortar] (Informants: 16, 18, 20).	Women's participation

Source:

Muslims and Christians. With high spirit of mutual cooperation they mingle and form egalitarian equality in the social and cultural realm. The culture of generosity and mutual help has become a tradition both in religious and customary activities. This activity involves all nuclear families and the wider community of different religions. For the Torajanese, *tongkonan* not only represents a physical manifestation but also represents a group of people (*pa'rapuan*). This is reflected in the term itself, which comes from the word *tongkon* [to sit] together. Thus, *tongkonan* means the centre where people gather for family groups, which come from their ancestors and living descendants (Idrus 2017). *Tongkonan* represents the types and characteristics of the main groups in Toraja society, as a place to discuss and carry out traditional ceremonies and problems of group members in general (Said 2004). This cultural activity is usually carried out for days and all costs are borne by the participating families.

Culturally and sociologically, Muslim women in Tana Toraja also collaborate with people of other religions based on cultural values. Muslims– and Christians interact without questioning their religious identity. They establish relationships with relatives or other people of different religions. They show active relationships in everyday life; friendly relations, mutual assistance in social activities, agriculture and even involvement in both traditional and religious meetings outside of the sacrament. There are even some residents who live in the same house with different religions, some whose father is Hindu (*Alukta*), mother is Christian and so on. Toraja culture accommodates all forms of these differences (Interviews, female informants; 13, 15, 18, 21).

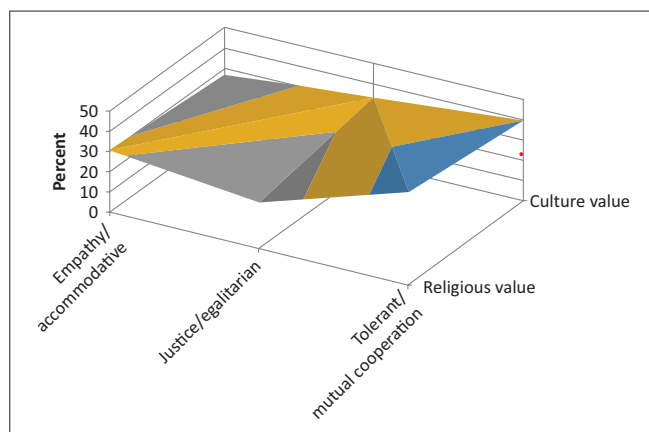
Women's activities in building interfaith relations, apart from being shown in the realm of religion and culture. The form is simple but has complex implications for maintaining brotherhood between Muslims and Christians. Brotherhood in the *Tongkonan* extended family, the celebration of *rambu tuka'* [harvest feast], the *rambu solo* ceremony (death ceremony), and taking advantage of religious holidays such as Christmas and Eid to meet outside the sacrament to stay in touch and give each other simple food. This proves that women have a very central role in playing emotional instruments and instrumental in Muslim–Christian relations.

The emotional pattern is expressed in the form of empathy for various activities carried out by other women even though they are from different religions, whilst instrumental form is performed by welcoming guests in religious and traditional events, serving food and even by the entertaining the family of the dead.

at another locus in Indonesia, women have succeeded in creating a meeting room for women ranging from housewives in activism roles in the smallest environmental units to those involving interfaiths' female religious leaders (Revelation et al. 2019). To minimise intolerance and the practice of pseudo-tolerance, a meeting room that is intimate and full of a sense of brotherhood is a form of strength that can establish complete peace. The study of *Pela gandong* in Maluku, women play an important role in the practice of cultural peace through social action in the symbolic liminality of *kain Gandong*. Without the role of women who hold the *kain Gandong*, liminality cannot play an effective role in creating a feeling of community and social solidarity, which is indispensable in the rituals of the Muslim–Christian community, such as the inauguration ritual of the King and the *Panas Pela* ritual (Pattiasina et al. 2018). Meanwhile in Central Java, women build the capacity of their communities in providing religious-social service and strengthen a moderate and tolerant understanding of Islam, as well as build internal and interreligious harmonisation by synergising agreements with government agencies and other religious organisations (Farida 2019).

In Buginese who inhabit South Sulawesi, the basic element in gender formation is the division of gender roles, which is formed because of the construction of culture and customs. In general, gender roles are a set of behavioural patterns that become social expectations to be displayed differently from both men and women according to their gender (Ramli & Basri 2021). The women who became informants in this research were not trapped in the prison of the theory of nature who were identified as patient and compassionate figures whose work area was only in the domestic area of household affairs, but women had broken male domination by playing an active role in strengthening Muslim–Christian relations (theory nurture). The theory of nurture does not deny the existence of certain natural characteristics such as pregnancy and childbirth, but in the aspect of social roles, cultural constructs determine the role of women. But the women in this research are very compromising. Towards a balance (equilibrium) that emphasises the concept of partnership and harmony in the relationship between women and men, both at religious events and customs.

From a leadership point of view, Islam views humans from the aspect of the caliph (*khalifah*) not from gender (Munir 1999). Allah *swt*, who is believed to be God for Muslims has given the task of caliphate to humans, both men and women, to manage, maintain and develop the earth. Women play an important role in building Muslim–Christian relations by utilising all the potentials that come from within women and



[AQ21] Source:

[AQ27] **FIGURE 1:** Venn diagram of religious and cultural values in Muslim–Christian relations.

the support of noble values of religion and culture. One aspect that is owned by women and becomes a reference both nationally and internationally is the large modality of both religion and culture, so that the strengthening of relations between adherents of different religions can be carried out on an ongoing basis. Therefore, the involvement of women, from management, negotiation to conflict resolution must be encouraged continuously.

This study finds essential facts related to the interaction of culture and religion and the role of women in Muslim–Christian relations. Of course, it is a characteristic of a particular community that cannot be generalised but can be replicated in areas with the same characteristics and socio-religious environment as the locus of this research. It can be seen based on the nVivo analysis shown in the Venn Diagram in Figure 1.

Based on the Venn diagram in Figure 1 as much as 23.08% of Muslim women expressed a sense of justice in strengthening Muslim–Christian relations, followed by empathy expressed by 30.77% of informants in Muslim–Christian relations. [AQ28] Meanwhile, 46.15% of Muslim women firmly believed in strengthening Muslim–Christian ties. The percentage distribution of the data indicates an interaction between religious values and cultural values in strengthening the relationship between Muslims and Christians. This means that culturally, the Tana Toraja people have a hereditary tradition to live side by side with adherents of other religions, especially Muslim women who are strengthened by their religious values and teach them to live in harmony with followers of other religions. Muslim women believe in combining these two cultures to establish harmonious relationships with Christians.

It is an interesting blend of religion and culture that reinforce each other, especially for empathy and accommodation. [AQ29] However, this does not mean that tolerance touches the realm of worship, in the sense that there is no tolerance for Christians when it comes to fundamental teachings in religion (aqidah), a strong reason for Muslim women to remain based on mutually beneficial relationships (cooperation). Freedom to

carry out religious law is right (egalitarian) because each religious teaching has determined it. At this point, the sense of justice (justice) must be felt by all religious adherents in carrying out the relationship between the followers of the two religions. The interaction model of culture and religion will strengthen religious moderation in various activities and practically enhance Muslim–Christian relations.

Conclusion

Muslim women have an essential role in strengthening Muslim–Christian relations. This role is a manifestation of the noble values of religion, which instruct its adherents to compete in helping each other in goodness. It is also sourced from the local wisdom of the Toraja people, which has been preserved from generation to generation by their ancestors. The Muslim–Christian relationship in this research shows a positive direction with collaboration in various religious, social and customary social activities. It can be a model for areas with the same characteristics as the locus of this study. This contribution will further strengthen religious moderation in various fields to further strengthen Muslim–Christian relations as the two largest religious entities in Indonesia. The limitation of this study is that the locus and samples were taken from a particular and small area, so generalisations cannot be made. Nonetheless, it is possible to replicate it in regions with the same socio-cultural situation.

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The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Author's contributions

H.P., I.P. and P.S. were all involved in the preparation, research design, data collection, analysis and article writing.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards of research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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Data availability

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Disclaimer

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INTERRELIGIOUS RELATION: POSITION OF WOMEN IN STRENGTHENING CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM BOND

Abstract

Strengthening Muslim-Christian relations is very important for a nation that has plurality in terms of tribes, ethnicity, and religion, such as Indonesia. This study aims to analyze the role of Muslim women who live in a pluralistic socio-religious situation. This is qualitative research, using purposive sampling to determine the informants. Research approach with the Discovering Cultural Themes model to understand the symptoms of the many themes, cultures, values, and cultural symbols. **Data analysis was taken out by using software for qualitative**, which is needed in managing data found from the field, in this case, NVivo Basic 12.00 for Windows. The results show that Muslim women translate justice, empathy, and rationality in religion by building relationships with other religions. This attitude is part of Islamic teachings that contain moderate, accommodating, and tolerant aspects. **In addition, culture has encouraged women to blend in and form egalitarian equality in the social and cultural realm**. The culture of generosity and mutual help has become a tradition both in religious and customary activities.

Contribution: This study provides insight into the contribution of Muslim women in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations. This contribution is crucial in the midst of radicalism issues in Indonesia lately. This study is significant because Islam and Christianity have the most prominent adherents in Indonesia.

Keywords: inter-religious, role, women, Muslims, Christians

INTRODUCTION

Globally, women and men have a very important part in maintaining the balance of life both in the realm of family, community and interreligious relations. Islam and Christianity as big religions in the world teach to protect women's rights in public (Udoh et al., 2020). **Religion teaches about equality both to men and women, which manage the both right and role in society** (Abdulla, 2018), which must continue to be sounded both formally and informally (Arisukwu et al., 2021). Women in certain situations are able to do any work for the community without asking for payment, and have the same perception and behavior both in peace and war situations (Abduljaber et al., 2021; Chus, 2018). Women with high religious motivation are also directly involved in inter-religious peace which has been destroyed by communal violence (Al Qurtuby, 2014; Lakawa, 2021).

Several findings from previous studies, discover that many Muslim women are actively involved in women empowerment, social entrepreneurship, and social welfare (Annisa, 2012). The weakness of this study does not discuss the role of women in community relations of different religions. Whereas other research findings discover that women are important agents and actors in the peace process, both in their roles as mothers, educators, mediators, peace activists and decision makers (Atuhaire, 2018), even women are involved in all kinds of peace work (Olofsson, 2018), including in inter-tribal cultural peace (Pattiasina et al., 2018), and moderate religious-social services for all religions (Farida, 2019). The role of Muslim women to strengthen the Muslim-Christian relations in different religions community can be encouraged by utilizing the awareness of working for the common good (Effendi, 2016), and the culture of mutual help (Utomo & Minza, 2018). Other studies discover Religious tolerance and gender equality are very important for the sustainability of human life (Al-Hamdi, 2015), because women have different perspectives on conflict prevention, and can correlate between religious, ethnic, political and cultural differences (Goyol, 2019). Islam encourages its people to practice the teachings of ta'awun or mutual help in goodness with anyone,

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including other people of different religions (Mu'ti, 2019). The role of women to help and prosper others is driven by selfish and altruistic motives (Marjanovic et al., 2012), both by religious and cultural values that have become a habit in a community.

Why should women in Indonesia take part in Islamic-Christian relations? Because factually, The violence against religion and belief in Indonesia are still happening. In 2010 there were 81 cases, which were recorded from several regions in Indonesia (Misrawi, 2010). In 2015 there were 85 cases, and in 2016 there were 97 cases (Wahid et al., 2015), and in 2020, There were 422 violation of religious freedom (Lidwina, 2021). Indonesia still has to work hard to address the issue of religious diversity (Ju Lan, 2011), with some conflicts occurring as a result of negative stereotypes (Nakaya, 2018), the Ambon, Poso, and Sambas conflicts led to the marginalization of indigenous people, and the erosion of local traditional buildings, which became the cause of ethnic conflicts (Schulze, 2017). Even though in 2020 the Inter-religious Harmony index is in the high category of 67.46 (Haris Burhani, Aziz Awaludin, Didid Haryadi, 2020), but awareness of various potential conflicts must be internalized in various activities including women.

The role of women is dominated by gender debates which identities and concepts are individual's self-definition as female or male, based on their biological gender as interpreted in culture (Wood & Eagly, 2012, 2015). Two big currents theories that discusses the roles of men and women, which are nature and nurture. In linguistic term, nature is understood as a character that is inherent in a person as a natural condition or human nature. Differences between women and men are natural so they cannot be eliminated, but have to create a harmonious relationship (Butler, 2004). Women in this theory are identified as patient, loving, gentle, motherly, caring and diligent, Thus, they are suitable to take on domestic roles. Meanwhile, men who are assumed to have strong, mighty, manly, rational, assertive traits are interpreted that men being more worthy of taking on the roles of leaders, heads of households, and having a lot of freedom in choosing any position.

Meanwhile, the nurture theory interprets the differences in masculine and feminine traits not determined by biological differences but by social constructs and the influence of cultural factors. The existential feeling of self as a woman or a man usually reflects aspects of biological sex (Miller, 2015). In the context of this theory, there is a relative meaning between masculine and feminine concepts. Differences in social constructs in society result in relative benchmarks for masculine and feminine attributes between cultures. Certain traits attached to gender in a community are not necessarily the same as others (Butler, 2004). Some roles and tasks can be interchanged, but some are not usually interchangeable because they are naturally different.

Empirically, the role of women in socio-religious activities, as well as in building socio-religious relations is very prominent in the 'Aisyiyah organization as a Muhammadiyah women's association. Founded on 27 Rajab 1335 H/19 May 1917 in Yogyakarta by Nyai Siti Walidah or Nyai Ahmad Dahlan. The first chairwoman of 'Aisyiyah was not Nyai Siti Walidah, but Siti Bariyah. Siti Bariyah did not only study Islam with Kiai Ahmad Dahlan, but also studied at the Neutraal Meisjes School (Muthmainnah, 2019). In 1928, 'Aisyiyah was listed as one of the pioneering women's organizations or which initiated and was actively involved in the first Indonesian Women's Congress (Kowani), and from 1917 to 1998, was able to show its identity as a Muslim women's organization, including the development of academic discourses on women rights (Van Doorn Harder, Pieterella, 2006).

The locus of this research is Tana Toraja, an exotic area in Indonesia known worldwide. BPS (Indonesia's central agency on statistics) data displayed that, currently inhabited by 234,002 people, details based on religion: Protestant 68.66%, Catholic 17.09%, Muslim 12.25%, Hindu 1.74%, Buddhist 0.22%, and *Aluk Todolo* (the ancient's belief) 0.01%. Tana Toraja becomes a plural area of

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religion and belief with this composition. However, they are united by a homogeneous ethnic group and a very high culture of cooperation and become social capital in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations in this area. Toraja comes from the words *To Riaja*, *To* which means people (in Buginese language), and *Riaja*, which means above, so Toraja means people who live at the top or in the mountains as opposed to the word from *Luu'*, which means coastal people, who used to dominate the highlands (Waterson, 2009). In Toraja culture, people's personality is strongly influenced by the beliefs of their ancestors named *Aluk Todolo* (Fox, 2006).

Then, what are the basic values that move Muslim women who are members of the Aisyiyah organization in strengthening Muslim and Christian relations? and how are religious and traditional celebrations used by Muslim women to strengthen Muslim-Christian relations? This is the main focus in this research. The theoretical and practical theme of this research is expected to encourage women to play an active role in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations which are sometimes damaged by radicalism and fundamentalism issues. Women have their own ways and significant role to carry out their position as social bonders in various fields of life (Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006), and carried out by women's groups who are members of civil society as actors. Women from various religions have the potential to maintain harmony between religious communities, but this potential has not been fully utilized.

Research Methods

This research is a qualitative descriptive. Qualitative research is a research model based on the philosophy of post positivism, used to examine the condition of natural objects. It is very difficult to detect the population which become the informants of this study, because there is not enough data available on the Aisyiyah organization. There is no specific standard for the number of samples for qualitative research. Apart from that, the data collection method uses observation, interviews, and discussions which require such a long time so it is not possible to take large samples. In addition, qualitative research has 3 (three) main components to be observed. *First*, the place where the interaction occurs in the ongoing social situation, in this case at Bittuang Tana Toraja. *Second*, the actors who are playing a certain role. In the context of this research, the actors of the research object are women who are members of the Aisyiyah organization. *Third*, activities (Tannenbaum, 1980), carried out by actors in ongoing social situations. In research activities that will be the research object are all activities related to women's activities in relation to Muslim-Christian relations

The population in this study were Aisyiyah women in Tana Toraja, amounting to 21 (twenty-one) people. Determination of data sources is done by purposive sampling, based on certain characteristics (inclusion criteria) that are closely related to the characteristics which have been known previously, based on the research objectives. The sample is classified into 3 (three), which are: The first is Aisyiyah's management who have a Decree and Membership Card. Second, women who become regular members. Third, women who are Aisyiyah sympathizers and actively participate in activities.

Data was collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation conducted from June-September 2019 in Tana Toraja. The observation used is participant observation with base snowball method. The details of the observation activities are; (i) observing women's activities at Christmas and Eid; (ii) observing women's activities at the *rambu solo'* traditional party; (iii) observing women's activities at *rambu tuka'*; and (iv) women's activities in other social activities. The Researchers used observation guidelines to record these activities. In order to maintain the validity of the observations, the authors use field notes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997) or commonly called a field notebook. Field notes were used to record various events related to the activities of women who were informants in this study, and all were done manually.

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The approach used by the Discovering Cultural Themes model is to collect various themes, cultural focuses, values, and cultural symbols in each domain (Spradley, 2016). Data analysis was carried out using software for qualitative study, which was needed in managing data found from the field, in this case, nVivo Basic 10.00 for Windows. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software developed by Qualitative Solution and Research (QSR) international. NVivo is a tool for processing qualitative data through highlighting, taking notes, and linking ideas (Jackson, 2021). The data analyzed was base triangulation data (Renz et al., 2018), through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion and verification.

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Findings and discussion

Religion and the Role of Women in Muslim-Christian Relations

Muslim women Tana Toraja adhere to religious values as a guide in interacting with other religious communities, including Christians and the Aluk Todolo. Implemented religious values is middle character (*wasathiyah*) which is translated as moderate Islam. Religion apart from having a theological dimension, it also has a spiritual tradition as a primary mechanism for expressing and reinforcing group sentiment and solidarity (Durkheim & Swain, 2008). An open religious tradition, which can also be referred to as Indigenous and local culture celebrations. The role of women in implementing moderate religious values can be seen from religious activities that always involve other religions' followers.

From the observation of the researchers, women become effective family mediators of different religions to meet and unite. Women are quite dominant in various socio-religious activities. They cook, serve guests, and break the ice in a strong brotherhood. In other places, this kind of relationship is probably consider extreme, because it touches the spirit of mutual cooperation and kinship in religious traditions, building places of worship, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The role of women in peace building is multidimensional, and the issues are sufficiently representative and can bring a gender perspective to the main content of a negotiation. Women can contribute a lot to the recovery of post-conflict social, cultural, economic and political conditions. This is the flexibility of women who can enter peaceful spaces that men may not be able to do.

Based on interviews and discussions with informants, researchers conducted coding and interpretation to obtain conclusions about values and religion applied by women in interacting with adherents of other religions. The religious values used by Muslim women to strengthen Muslim-Christian relations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The religious value of women in Muslim-Christian relations

No	Statement/Theme	Interpretation/Conclusion
1	Everyone has the right to practice their own beliefs (Informants 1, 9, 5, 13)	Justice/Moderate (Surat al-Baqarah: 256)
2	We help each other and support religious events but do not participate in worship activities (Informants 7,8,9,3)	Empathy/Accommodative (Surat al-Maidah: 2)
3	We may attend non-Muslim invitations as long as it is not related to worship (Informants 11, 17, and 20)	Rational/Tolerant (Surat Mumtahan: 51)
4	Your religion is for you and my religion is for me, we apply this by not participating in Christmas celebrations, but we do <i>silaturrahmi</i> (visiting each other) (Informants 7, 8, 9)	Empathy/Accommodative (Surat al-Kafirun: 6)
5	Respect other people's religious teachings, without sacrificing my religious principles (Informants 8, 12, 20, 21)	Rational/Tolerant (Surat al-An'am: 108)

Data Source: Primary

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In Table 1. Muslim women use the values of justice, empathy, and rationality in building relationships with people of other religions. This attitude is part of Islamic teachings that contain

moderate, accommodating, and tolerant aspects. This fact implies that tolerance with Christianity is a moderate attitude that must still be based on rationality as long as it is not related to the realm of fiqh. It means that tolerance is not correlated with the Pillars of Islam and other acts of worship.

Moderation in Islam is the implementation of the teachings of the holy book in the Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah: 256 "There is no compulsion in believing the religion of Islam." which means giving other people the opportunity to practice their religion. Likewise, the accommodative and tolerant aspects are the implementation of the Qur'an Surah Al-Kafirun: 6 "your religion is for you, and my religion is for me". Theologically, it means that Muslim women make religious values dominate strongly in the sociological realm concerning adherents of other religions.

At the micro level, the type of mechanism in the socio-religious area played by women has succeeded in preventing internal and inter-religious harmony between religious communities and encouraging constructive cooperation. Such a mechanism forms a pattern of functional harmony for a particular geographic area. Socio-religious mechanisms must receive adequate attention in turning off the symptoms of social disintegration. That way, the Muslim minority group can be said to be safe from outside interference, because anyone who wants to disturb Muslims does not only deal with the Muslim community, but also deals with non-Muslims.

Through the role of women, the issue of food in a different theological context which Muslims can and cannot eat becomes clear, and becomes a common understanding. Therefore, when Christian families invite them to religious or traditional events, Christian families prepare food that does not contain pork or food that is forbidden in Islam (Interview, female informant; 1, 3, 5, 7). According to one food ingredient informant, the containers used and the cooking were handed over to their Muslim neighbors or relatives so that the food they provide is guaranteed to be halal, and all done by women (Interview, female informant; 9, 12, 19, 21). Likewise at the time of slaughtering sacrificial animals on Eid al-Adha for Muslims, The rest of the meat which have been given based on Islamic law were cooked by women from different religions, Muslim and non-muslim, and are eaten together on the *Silaturrehmi*/assemble in Mosque area.

Seen from the religious aspect, Muslim women in Tana Toraja who are a minority in quantity, have high religious enthusiasm, especially those related to relations between communities of different religions. Women naturally in doing internalization on religious and cultural values related to strengthening Muslim-Christian relations. When they are together, the discussion never leads to theological differences in each religion, but rather to universal issues related to the future of the family. Family members remind each other to carry out their obligations and do not forget to ask for prayers so that their lives are safe and that their families are given sustenance and health (Interviews, female informants; 2, 6, 9, 10). Another quite sensitive theme in inclusive education is joint prayer between Muslims and non-Muslims. In a pluralistic society, praying together is an activity that cannot be avoided both at family events and traditional activities in their family environment. The joint prayer carried out by people of different religions is not led by one person, but the praying is carried out based on their respective religions and beliefs (Interviews, female informants; 1, 6, 5, 11). The choice to choose this way of praying is to respect the differences in religion and beliefs between them and avoid debates related to joint prayer led by non-Muslims.

Cultural Values of Muslim-Christian Relations

Historically, the Torajanese had an encounter with Islam starting when they were in contact with the Kingdoms of Sidenreng, Bone, and Luwu. Although, at first the relationship was more dominated by economy interest, especially the coffee trade. Until the end of the 19th century, after more than 230 (two hundred and thirty) years of establishing power in South Sulawesi by defeating

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the Gowa-Tallo Kingdom, it seems that the Dutch have not shown any interest in occupying the Toraja region which is far in the middle of the Sulawesi region (Waterson, 2012). The Dutch arrived in the Toraja area in 1905 and succeeded in conquering it completely in 1906. Christianity was introduced in Toraja, not long after the colonial government crushed the resistance of the Toraja people led by Pong Tiku. In 1908 the Dutch colonial government opened *Landschapschool* (self-governing schools) in Makale and Rantepao led by Christian teachers. Even though this government school is “neutral”, the teachers at Landschap taught Christianity to Landschap students (Kobong, 2008).

This research found that the communal lifestyle of the Torajanese is reflected in the Tongkonan traditional house philosophy. Tongkonan cannot be owned by individuals, but is owned communally and from generation to generation by the family or clan of the Tana Toraja Tribe (Feed et al., 2019). Tongkonan consists of the word "tongkon" which means sitting, gets the suffix "an" to become Tongkonan which means a seat which implies a place to sit together with members who are gathered to become a group of individuals who come from one lineage, the house is a symbol of the unity of the clump called "Tongkonan" (Feed et al., 2019). Culture in Toraja has developed into social capital which is very useful for maintaining inter-religious harmony (Pajarianto et al., 2022).

To this day, The Torajanese consistently maintain the customs inherited from their ancestors. Torajanese recognize two main ceremonies related to the life cycle, namely *Rambu Tuka'* (*Alluk Rampe Matollo*) and *Rambu Solo'* (*Alluk Rampe Matampu*), each has its own characteristics (Adams, 2004). The *Rambu Tuka'* ceremony is held to welcome joyful events such as marriage, harvesting (*Alluk Pare*), or entering a new house (*Mangrara Banua*). Meanwhile, *Rambu Solo'* is a reversal ceremony for the soul that died before being buried. In this traditional event, the role of women is very important in facilitating all family members of different religions to attend the event. The instrumental role of women as cooks, makeup artists, guest pickers, and emotional roles is the glue between large families (Interview, female informant; 12, 15, 17, 20). The transcripts summary and analysis from interviews related to cultural values and mechanisms that make Muslim women strengthen Muslim-Christian relations are presented in table 2.

Table 2. The Culture value of women in Muslim-Christian relations

No	Statement/Theme	Interpretation/Conclusion
1	<i>Rambu Tuka'</i> (harvesting ceremony) and <i>Rambu Solo'</i> (death ceremony) as a meeting place for families of different faiths (Informants: 2,5,7,9)	Accommodating and Empathy
2	The educational value in <i>Rambu Tuka'</i> and <i>Rambu Solo'</i> is mutual cooperation by helping with material and non-material (Informants 7,18,9,21)	Mutual Cooperation/Empathy
3	All families of different religions are given the same opportunity to participate in the <i>Rambu Tuka'</i> and <i>Rambu Solo'</i> ceremonies (Informants: 1, 2, and 11)	Egalitarian/Democratic
4	Women's activities in <i>Rambu Tuka'</i> : <i>Ma'Pangan</i> (welcoming by serving betel, areca nut), <i>Ma'pairuk</i> (women serving dishes to all guests), <i>Ma'tumbuk</i> (the activity of pounding rice on mortar) (Informants: 16, 18, 20).	Women's Participation

Data Source: researcher primary data

Table 2. shows that Muslim women are accommodating and empathetic towards various activities carried out by both Muslims and Christians. With high spirit of mutual cooperation they mingle and form egalitarian equality in the social and cultural realm. The culture of generosity and

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mutual help has become a tradition both in religious and customary activities. This activity involves all nuclear families and the wider community of different religions. For The Torajanese, *tongkonan* is not just a physical manifestation, but also represents a group of people (*pa'rapuan*). This is reflected in the term itself which comes from the word *tongkon* (to sit) together. Thus, *tongkonan* means the center where people gather for family groups, which come from their ancestors and living descendants (Idrus, 2017). *Tongkonan* represents the types and characteristics of the main groups in Toraja society, as a place to discuss and carry out traditional ceremonies and problems of group members in general (Said, 2004). **This cultural activity is usually carried out for days and all costs incurred are borne by donations and the participation of all families.**

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Culturally and sociologically, Muslim women in Tana Toraja also collaborate with people of other religions based on cultural values. Muslim-Christian interact without questioning religious identity. They establish relationships with relatives or other people of different religions. They show active relationships in everyday life; friendly relations, mutual assistance in social activities, agriculture, and even involvement in both traditional and religious meetings outside of the sacrament. There are even some residents who live in the same house with different religions, some whose father is Hindu (*Alukta*), mother is Christian and so on. Toraja culture accommodates all forms of these differences (Interviews, female informants; 13, 15, 18, 21).

Women's activities in building interfaith relations are essential, apart from being shown in the realm of religion and culture. The form is simple but has complex implications for maintaining brotherhood between Muslims and Christians. Brotherhood in the *Tongkonan* extended family, the celebration of *rambu tuka'* (harvest feast), the *rambu solo* ceremony (death ceremony), and taking advantage of religious holidays such as Christmas and Eid to meet outside the sacrament to stay in touch and give each other simple food. This proves that women have a very central role in playing emotional instruments and instrumental in Muslim-Christian relations.

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The emotional pattern is expressed in the form of empathy for various activities carried out by other women even though they are from different religions, **the form of the activities done by the women are welcoming the guests of the cultural event** and traditional events, food serving, and even to the entertaining of the family of the death.

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At another locus in Indonesia, women have succeeded in creating a meeting room for women ranging from housewives in activism roles in the smallest environmental units to those involving interfaiths' female religious leaders (Revelation et al., 2019). To minimize intolerance and the practice of pseudo-tolerance, a meeting room that is intimate and full of a sense of brotherhood is a form of strength that can establish complete peace. The study of *Pela gandong* in Maluku, women play an important role in the practice of cultural peace through social action in the symbolic liminality of *Kain Gandong*. Without the role of women who hold the *kain Gandong*, liminality cannot play an effective role in creating a feeling of community and social solidarity which is indispensable in the rituals of the Muslim-Christian community, such as the Inauguration ritual of the King and the *Panas Pela* ritual (Pattiasina et al., 2018). Meanwhile in Central Java, women build the capacity of their communities in providing religious-social service and strengthen a moderate and tolerant understanding of Islam, as well as building internal and inter-religious harmonization by synergizing agreements with government agencies and other religious organizations (Farida, 2019).

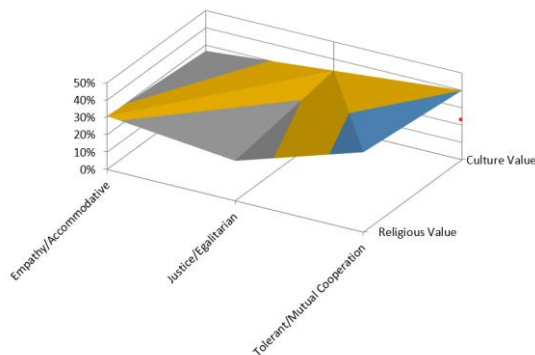
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In Buginese who inhabit South Sulawesi, the basic element in gender formation is the division of gender roles which is formed due to the construction of culture and customs. In general, gender roles are a set of behavioral patterns that become social expectations to be displayed differently from both men and women according to their gender (Ramli & Basri, 2021). The women who became informants in this research were not trapped in the prison of the theory of nature who were identified

as patient and compassionate figures whose work area was only in the domestic area of household affairs, but women had broken male domination in playing an active role in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations (theory nurture). The theory of nurture does not deny the existence of certain natural characteristics such as pregnancy and childbirth, but in the aspect of social roles, cultural constructs determine the role of women. But the women in this research are very compromising. Towards a balance (equilibrium) which emphasizes the concept of partnership and harmony in the relationship between women and men, both at religious events and customs.

In leadership point of view, Islam views humans from the aspect of the caliph (*khalifah*) not from gender (Munir, 1999). *Allah subhana wa ta'ala*, who is believed to be God for Muslims, has given the task of caliphate to humans, both men and women, to manage, maintain, and develop the earth. Women play an important role in building Muslim-Christian relations by utilizing all the potentials that come from within women as well as the support of noble values of religion and culture. One aspect that is owned by women and becomes a reference both nationally and internationally is the large modality of both religion and culture, so that the strengthening of relations between adherents of different religions can be carried out on an ongoing basis. Therefore, the involvement of women, from management, negotiation, to conflict resolution must be encouraged continuously.

This study finds essential facts related to the interaction of culture and religion and the role of women in Muslim-Christian relations. Of course, it is a characteristic of a particular community that cannot be generalized but can be replicated in areas with the same characteristics and socio-religious environment as the locus of this research. It can be seen based on the nVivo analysis shown in the Venn Diagram in picture 1.



Source: primary data analysis output from n-Vivo

Picture 1. Venn Diagram of Religious and Cultural Values in Muslim-Christian Relations

Based on the Venn Diagram in picture 1, as much 23.08% of Muslim women expressed a sense of justice in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations, followed by empathy expressed by 30.77% of informants in Muslim-Christian relations. Meanwhile, 46.15% is the firmest belief for Muslim women in strengthening Muslim-Christian ties. The percentage distribution of the data indicates an interaction between religious values and cultural values in strengthening the relationship between Muslims and Christians. This means that culturally, the Tana Toraja people have a hereditary tradition to live side by side with adherents of other religions, especially Muslim women who are strengthened by their religious values and teach them to live in harmony with followers of other religions. Muslim

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women believe in combining these two cultures to establish harmonious relationships with Christians.

It is an interesting blend of religion and culture that reinforce each other, especially for empathy and accommodation. However, this does not mean that tolerance touches the realm of religiosity, when it comes to fundamental teachings in religion (aqidah), a strong reason for Muslim women to remain based on mutually beneficial relationships (cooperation). Freedom to carry out religious law is right (egalitarian) because each religious teaching has determined it. At this point, the sense of justice (justice) must be felt by all religious adherents in carrying out the relationship between the followers of the two religions. The interaction model of culture and religion will strengthen religious moderation in various activities and to enhance practically Muslim-Christian relations.

Conclusion

Muslim women have an essential role in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations. This role is a manifestation of the noble values of religion which instruct its adherents to compete in helping each other in goodness. It is also sourced from the local wisdom of the Toraja people, which has been preserved from generation to generation by their ancestors. The Muslim-Christian relationship in this research shows a positive direction with collaboration in various religious, social, and customary social activities. It can be a model for areas with the same characteristics as the locus of this study. This contribution will further strengthen religious moderation in various fields to further strengthen Muslim-Christian relations as the two largest religious entities in Indonesia. The limitation of this study is that the locus and samples were taken from a particular and small area, so generalizations cannot be made. Nonetheless, it is possible to replicate it in regions with the same socio-cultural situation.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

HP were all involved in the preparation, research design, data collection, analysis and article writing

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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Interreligious relation: Position of women in strengthening Christian and Muslim bonds

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Strengthening Muslim–Christian relations is very important for a nation such as Indonesia that has plurality in terms of tribes, ethnicity and religion. This study aims to analyse the role of Muslim women who live in a pluralistic socio-religious situation. This is a qualitative research that uses purposive sampling to determine the informants. The approach used by the Discovering Cultural Themes model is to understand the symptoms of the many themes, cultures, values and cultural symbols. Data analysis was conducted by using software for qualitative research, which is needed in managing data found from the field, in this case, nVivo Basic 12.00 for Windows. The results show that Muslim women translate justice, empathy and rationality in religion by building relationships with other religions. This attitude is part of Islamic teachings that contain moderate, accommodating and tolerant aspects. In addition, culture has encouraged women to blend in and form egalitarian equality in the social and cultural realm. The culture of generosity and mutual help has become a tradition both in religious and customary activities.

Contribution: This article provides an insight into the contribution of Muslim women in strengthening Muslim–Christian relations. This agenda is very important because Islam and Christianity have the largest adherents in Indonesia. This contribution is very important and crucial in the midst of radicalism issue in Indonesia lately.

Keywords: interreligious; role; women; Muslims; Christians.

Introduction

Globally, women and men have a very important part in maintaining the balance of life both in the realm of family, community and interreligious relations. Islam and Christianity as big religions in the world teach to protect women's rights in public (Udoh, Folarin & Isumonah 2020). Religion teaches about equality for both men and women, which manages the rights and roles of both men and women in society (Abdulla 2018), which must continue to be sound both formally and informally (Arisukwu et al. 2021). Women in certain situations are able to do any work for the community without asking for payment and have the same perception and behaviour both in peace and war situations (Abduljaber, Services & Arbor 2021; Chus 2018). Women with high religious motivation are also directly involved in interreligious peace, which has been destroyed by communal violence (Al Qurtuby 2014; Lakawa 2021).

Several findings from previous studies discover that many Muslim women are actively involved in women empowerment, social entrepreneurship and social welfare (Annisa 2012). The weakness of this study is that it does not discuss the role of women in community relations of different religions, whereas other research findings discover that women are important agents and actors in the peace process, both in their roles as mothers, educators, mediators, peace activists and decision makers (Atuhaire 2014). Furthermore, women are involved in all kinds of peace work (Olofsson 2018), including intertribal cultural peace (Pattiasina, Lattu & Nuban Timo 2018) and moderate religious and social services for all religions (Farida 2019). The role of Muslim women to strengthen the Muslim–Christian relations in different religious communities can be encouraged by utilising the awareness of working for the common good (Effendi 2016) and the culture of mutual help (Utomo & Minza 2018). Other studies discover that religious tolerance and gender equality are very important for the sustainability of human life (Al-Hamdi 2015), because women have different perspectives on conflict prevention and can correlate between religious, ethnic, political and cultural differences (Goyol 2019). Islam encourages its people to practice the teachings of ta'awun or mutual help in goodness with anyone, including other people of different religions (Mu'ti 2019). The role of women to help and prosper others is driven by selfish and altruistic motives (Marjanovic, Struthers & Greenglass 2012), both by religious and cultural values that have become a habit in a community.

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Why should women in Indonesia take part in Islamic-Christian relations? Because factually, the violence against religion and belief in Indonesia are still happening: In 2010, there were 81 cases, which were recorded from several regions in Indonesia (Misrawi 2010). In 2015, there were 85 cases; in 2016, there were 97 cases (Wahid et al. 2015); and in 2020, there were 422 violation of religious freedom (Lidwina 2021). Indonesia still has to work hard to address the issue of religious diversity (Ju Lan 2011), with some conflicts occurring as a result of negative stereotypes (Nakaya 2018), the Ambon, Poso and Sambas conflicts led to the marginalisation of indigenous people and the erosion of local traditional buildings, which became the cause of ethnic conflicts (Schulze 2017). Even though in 2020 the Interreligious Harmony Index is in the high category of 67.46 (Burhani et al. 2020), but awareness of various potential conflicts must be internalised in various activities including women.

The role of women is dominated by gender debates where identities and concepts are individual's self-definition as female or male, based on their biological gender as interpreted in culture (Wood & Eagly 2012, 2015). Two big current theories that discuss the roles of men and women are nature and nurture. In linguistic term, nature is understood as a character that is inherent in a person as a natural condition or human nature. Differences between women and men are natural so they cannot be eliminated but have to create a harmonious relationship (Butler 2004). Women in this theory are identified as patient, loving, gentle, motherly, caring and diligent. Thus, they are suitable to take on domestic roles. Meanwhile, men who are assumed to have strong, manly, rational and assertive traits are interpreted as men who are more worthy to take on the roles of leaders, chiefs of households and have a lot of freedom in choosing any role.

Meanwhile, the nurture theory suggests that the differences in masculine and feminine are not determined by biological differences but by social constructs and the influence of cultural factors. The existential feeling of self as a woman or a man usually reflects aspects of biological sex (Miller 2015). In the context of this theory, there is a relative meaning of masculine and feminine concepts. The social constructs differences in society result in the relativity of masculine and feminine attributes indicators between cultures. Certain traits attached to a gender in a community are not necessarily the same as others (Butler 2004). There are roles and tasks that can be interchanged, but there are those that are not usually interchangeable because they are naturally different in nature.

Empirically, the role of women in socio-religious activities, as well as in building socio-religious relations is very prominent in the 'Aisyiyah organisation as a Muhammadiyah women's association. It was founded on 27 Rajab 1335 H/19 May 1917 in Yogyakarta by Nyai Siti Walidah or Nyai Ahmad Dahlan. The first chairwoman of 'Aisyiyah was not Nyai Siti Walidah, but Siti Bariyah. Siti Bariyah did not only study Islam with Kiai Ahmad Dahlan but also studied at the Neutraal Meisjes School (Muthmainnah 2019). In 1928,

'Aisyiyah was listed as one of the pioneering women's organisations or which initiated and was actively involved in the first Indonesian Women's Congress (Kowani) and from 1917 to 1998 was able to show its identity as a Muslim women's organisation, including the development of academic discourses on women rights (Van Doorn Harder 2006).

The locus of this research is Tana Toraja, an exotic area in Indonesia, which is world famous. Based on BPS (Indonesia's central agency on statistics) data, currently it is inhabited by 234002 people, with details based on religion: Protestant 68.66%, Catholic 17.09%, Muslim 12.25%, Hindu 1.74%, Buddhist 0.22% and Aluk Todolo 0.01%. With this composition, Tana Toraja shows religious pluralism in terms of religion and belief. However, they are actually united by a homogeneous ethnic group and a very high culture of mutual cooperation and become social capital in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations in this area. Toraja comes from the words *To Riaja*; *To* means people (*Bugis*) and *Riaja* means above, so *Toraja* means people who live at the top or in the mountains as the antonym of *Luu'*, which means coastal people, who used to have dominance in the highlands (Waterson 2009). In Toraja culture, the personality of the people is strongly influenced by the beliefs of their ancestors named *Aluk Todolo* (Fox 2006).

Then, what are the basic values that move Muslim women who are members of the Aisyiyah organisation in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations? and how are religious and traditional celebrations used by Muslim women to strengthen Muslim-Christian relations? This is the main focus in this research. The theoretical and practical theme of this research is expected to encourage women to play an active role in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations, which are sometimes damaged by radicalism and fundamentalism issues. Women play a significant role in carrying out their position as social bonders in various fields of life (Ruiter & De Graaf 2006), and carried out by women's groups who are members of civil society as actors. Women from various religions have the potential to maintain harmony between religious communities, but this potential has not been fully utilised.

Research methods

This research is a qualitative descriptive research. Qualitative research is a research model based on the philosophy of postpositivism, which is used to examine the condition of natural objects. It is very difficult to detect the population, which become the informants of this study, because there is not enough data available on the Aisyiyah organisation. There is no specific standard for the number of samples for qualitative research. Furthermore, the data collection method uses observation, interviews and discussions, which require such a long time so it is not possible to take large samples. In addition, qualitative research has three main components to be observed. Firstly, the place where the interaction occurs in the ongoing social situation, in this case at Bittuang Tana Toraja; secondly, the actors who are playing a certain role. In

the context of this research, the actors of the research object are women who are members of the Aisyiyah organisation; thirdly, activities (Tannenbaum 1980), carried out by actors in ongoing social situations. In research activities that will be the research object are all activities related to women's activities in relation to Muslim–Christian relations.

The participants in this study are 21 Aisyiyah women in Tana Toraja. Determination of data sources is performed by purposive sampling, based on certain characteristics (inclusion criteria) that are closely related to the characteristics, which have been known previously, based on the research objectives. The sample is classified into three: Firstly, Aisyiyah's management who have a decree and membership card. Secondly, women who become regular members. Thirdly, women who are Aisyiyah sympathisers and actively participate in activities.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews and documentation was conducted from June to September 2019 in Tana Toraja. The observation used is participant observation with base snowball method. The details of the observation activities are (1) observing women's activities at Christmas and Eid; (2) observing women's activities at the *rambu solo'* traditional party; (3) observing women's activities at *rambu tuka'*; and (4) women's activities in other social activities. The researchers used observation guidelines to record these activities. In order to maintain the validity of the observations, the authors use field notes (Bogdan & Biklen 1997) or commonly called a field notebook. Field notes were used to record various events related to the activities of women who were informants in this study and all were performed manually.

The approach used by the Discovering Cultural Themes model is to collect various themes, cultural focuses, values and cultural symbols in each domain (Spradley 2016). Data analysis was carried out using software for a qualitative study, which was needed in managing data found from the field, in this case, nVivo Basic 10.00 for Windows. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software developed by Qualitative Solution and Research (QSR) international. NVivo is a tool for processing qualitative data through highlighting, taking notes and linking ideas (Jackson 2021). The data analysed was base triangulation data (Mills 2011) through three stages: data reduction, data display, conclusion and verification.

Findings and discussion

Religion and the role of women in Muslim–Christian relations

Muslim women in Tana Toraja adhere to religious values as a guide in interacting with other religious communities, including Christians and the Aluk Todolo. Implemented religious values is middle character (*wasathiyah*), which is translated as moderate Islam. Religion, apart from having a theological dimension, also has a spiritual tradition as a primary mechanism for expressing and reinforcing group

sentiment and solidarity (Durkheim & Swain 2008). An open religious tradition can also be referred to as indigenous and local culture celebrations. The role of women in implementing moderate religious values can be seen from religious activities that always involve other religions' followers.

From the observation of the researchers, women become effective family mediators of different religions to meet and unite. Women are quite dominant in various socio-religious activities. They cook, serve guests and break the ice in a strong brotherhood. In other places, this kind of relationship is probably considered extreme, because it touches the spirit of mutual cooperation and kinship in religious traditions, building places of worship, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The role of women in peace building is multidimensional, and the issues are sufficiently representative and can bring a gender perspective to the main content of a negotiation. Women can contribute a lot to the recovery of post-conflict social, cultural, economic and political conditions. This is the flexibility of women who can enter peaceful spaces that men may not be able to do.

Based on interviews and discussions with informants, researchers conducted coding and interpretation to obtain conclusions about values and religion applied by women in interacting with adherents of other religions. The religious values used by Muslim women to strengthen Muslim–Christian relations are presented in Table 1.

In Table 1, Muslim women use the values of justice, empathy and rationality in building relationships with people of other religions. This attitude is part of Islamic teachings that contain moderate, accommodating and tolerant aspects. This fact implies that tolerance with Christianity is a moderate attitude that must still be based on rationality as long as it is not related to the realm of fiqh. It means that tolerance is not correlated with the Pillars of Islam and other acts of worship.

Moderation in Islam is the implementation of the teachings of the holy book in the Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah: 256 'There is no compulsion in believing the religion of Islam'. which means giving other people the opportunity to practice their religion. Likewise, the accommodative and tolerant aspects are the implementation of the Qur'an Surah Al-Kafirun: 6 'your religion is for you, and my religion is for me'. Theologically, it means that Muslim women make religious

TABLE 1: The religious value of women in Muslim–Christian relations.

No.	Statement/theme	Interpretation/conclusion
1	Everyone has the right to practice their own beliefs (Informants 1, 9, 5, 13)	Justice and/or moderate (Surat al-Baqarah: 256)
2	We help each other and support religious events but do not participate in worship activities (Informants 7, 8, 9, 3)	Empathy and/or accommodative (Surat al-Maidah: 2)
3	We may attend non-Muslim invitations as long as it is not related to worship (Informants 11, 17, and 20)	Rational and/or tolerant (Surat Mumtahan: 51)
4	Your religion is for you and my religion is for me, we apply this by not participating in Christmas celebrations, but we do <i>silatunrahmi</i> [visit each other] (Informants 7, 8, 9)	Empathy and/or accommodative (Surat al-Kafirun: 6)
5	Respect other people's religious teachings, without sacrificing my religious principles (Informants 8, 12, 20, 21)	Rational and/or tolerant (Surat al-An'am: 108)

values dominate strongly in the sociological realm concerning adherents of other religions.

At the micro level, the type of mechanism in the socio-religious area played by women has succeeded in preventing internal and interreligious harmony between religious communities and encouraging constructive cooperation. Such a mechanism forms a pattern of functional harmony for a particular geographic area. Socio-religious mechanisms must receive adequate attention in turning off the symptoms of social disintegration. That way, the Muslim minority group can be said to be safe from outside interference, because anyone who wants to disturb Muslims does not only deal with the Muslim community, but also deals with non-Muslims.

Through the role of women, the issue of food in a different theological context which Muslims can and cannot eat becomes clear and becomes a common understanding. Therefore, when Christian families invite them to religious or traditional events, Christian families prepare food that does not contain pork or food that is forbidden in Islam (Interview, female informant; 1, 3, 5, 7). According to one food ingredient informant, the containers used and the cooking were handed over to their Muslim neighbours or relatives so that the food they provide is guaranteed to be halal, and all done by women (Interview, female informant; 9, 12, 19, 21). Likewise at the time of slaughtering sacrificial animals on Eid al-Adha for Muslims, the rest of the meat which have been given based on Islamic law were cooked by women from different religions, Muslim and non-muslim and are eaten together on the *Silaturrehmi*/assemble in Mosque area.

Seen from the religious aspect, Muslim women in Tana Toraja who are a minority in quantity, have high religious enthusiasm, especially those related to relations between communities of different religions. Women naturally in doing internalisation on religious and cultural values related to strengthening Muslim–Christian relations. When they are together, the discussion never leads to theological differences in each religion, but rather to universal issues related to the future of the family. Family members remind each other to do their obligations and to not forget to ask for prayers so that their lives are safe and their family is given sustenance and health (Interviews, female informants; 2, 6, 9, 10). Another quite sensitive theme in inclusive education is joint prayer between Muslims and non-Muslims. In a pluralistic society, praying together is an activity that cannot be avoided both at family events and traditional activities in their family environment. The joint prayer carried out by people of different religions is not led by one person, but the praying is carried out based on their respective religions and beliefs (Interviews, female informants; 1, 6, 5, 11). The choice to choose this way of praying is to respect the differences in religion and beliefs between them and avoid debates related to joint prayer led by non-Muslims.

Cultural values of Muslim–Christian relations

Historically, the Torajanese had an encounter with Islam starting when they were in contact with the Kingdoms of Sidenreng, Bone and Luwu. Although at first the relationship was more dominated by economic interest, especially the coffee trade. Until the end of the 19th century, after more than 230 years of establishing power in South Sulawesi by defeating the Gowa-Tallo Kingdom, it seems that the Dutch have not shown any interest in occupying the Toraja region which is far in the middle of the Sulawesi region (Waterson 2012). The Dutch arrived in the Toraja area in 1905 and succeeded in conquering it completely in 1906. Christianity was introduced in Toraja, not long after the colonial government crushed the resistance of the Toraja people led by Pong Tiku. In 1908 the Dutch colonial government opened *Landschapschool* [self-governing schools] in Makale and Rantepao led by Christian teachers. Even though this government school is 'neutral', the teachers at Landschap taught Christianity to Landschap students (Kobong 2008).

This research found that the communal lifestyle of the Torajanese is reflected in the Tongkonan traditional house philosophy. Tongkonan cannot be owned by individuals, but is owned communally and from generation to generation by the family or clan of the Tana Toraja Tribe (Feed et al. 2019). Tongkonan consists of the word 'tongkon', which means sitting and gets the suffix 'an' to become Tongkonan. Tongkonan means a seat that implies a place to sit together with members who are gathered to become a group of individuals who come from the same lineage, the house is a symbol of the unity of the cluster called 'Tongkonan' (Feed et al. 2019). Culture in Toraja has developed into social capital which is very useful for maintaining inter-religious harmony (Pajarianto, Pribadi & Sari 2022).

To this day, the Torajanese consistently maintain the customs inherited from their ancestors. Torajanese recognise two main ceremonies related to the life cycle, namely *Rambu Tuka'* (*Alluk Rampe Matollo*) and *Rambu Solo'* (*Alluk Rampe Matampu*), each has its own characteristics (Adams 2004). The *Rambu Tuka'* ceremony is held to welcome joyful events such as marriage, harvesting (*Alluk Pare*), or entering a new house (*Mangrara Banua*). Meanwhile, *Rambu Solo'* is a reversal ceremony for the soul that died before being buried. In this traditional event, the role of women is very important in facilitating all family members of different religions to attend the event. The instrumental role of women as cooks, makeup artists, guest pickers, and emotional roles is the glue between large families (Interview, female informant; 12, 15, 17, 20). The transcripts summary and analysis from interviews related to cultural values and mechanisms that make Muslim women strengthen Muslim–Christian relations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that Muslim women are accommodating and empathetic towards various activities carried out by both

TABLE 2: The culture value of women in Muslim–Christian relations.

No	Statement/theme	Interpretation/conclusion
1	<i>Rambu Tuka'</i> [harvesting ceremony] and <i>Rambu Solo'</i> [death ceremony] as a meeting place for families of different faiths (Informants 2, 5, 7, 9)	Accommodating and/or empathy
2	The educational value in <i>Rambu Tuka'</i> and <i>Rambu Solo'</i> is mutual cooperation by helping with material and non-material (Informants 7, 18, 9, 21)	Mutual cooperation and/or empathy
3	All families of different religions are given the same opportunity to participate in the <i>Rambu Tuka'</i> and <i>Rambu Solo'</i> ceremonies (Informants 1, 2 and 11)	Egalitarian and/or democratic
4	Women's activities in <i>Rambu Tuka'</i> : <i>Ma'Pangan</i> [welcoming by serving betel, areca nut], <i>Ma'pairuk</i> [women serving dishes to all guests], <i>Ma'tumbuk</i> [the activity of pounding rice on mortar] (Informants 16, 18, 20)	Women's participation

Muslims and Christians. With high spirit of mutual cooperation they mingle and form egalitarian equality in the social and cultural realm. The culture of generosity and mutual help has become a tradition both in religious and customary activities. This activity involves all nuclear families and the wider community of different religions. For the Torajanese, *tongkonan* not only represents a physical manifestation but also represents a group of people (*pa'rapuan*). This is reflected in the term itself, which comes from the word *tongkon* [to sit] together. Thus, *tongkonan* means the centre where people gather for family groups, which come from their ancestors and living descendants (Idrus 2017). *Tongkonan* represents the types and characteristics of the main groups in Toraja society, as a place to discuss and carry out traditional ceremonies and problems of group members in general (Said 2004). This cultural activity is usually carried out for days and all costs incurred are borne by donations and the participation of all families.

Culturally and sociologically, Muslim women in Tana Toraja also collaborate with people of other religions based on cultural values. Muslims– and Christians interact without questioning their religious identity. They establish relationships with relatives or other people of different religions. They show active relationships in everyday life; friendly relations, mutual assistance in social activities, agriculture and even involvement in both traditional and religious meetings outside of the sacrament. There are even some residents who live in the same house with different religions, some whose father is Hindu (*Alukta*), mother is Christian and so on. Toraja culture accommodates all forms of these differences (Interviews, female informants; 13, 15, 18, 21).

Women's activities in building interfaith relations are essential, apart from being shown in the realm of religion and culture. The form is simple but has complex implications for maintaining brotherhood between Muslims and Christians. Brotherhood in the *Tongkonan* extended family, the celebration of *rambu tuka'* [harvest feast], the *rambu solo* ceremony (death ceremony), and taking advantage of religious holidays such as Christmas and Eid to meet outside the sacrament to stay in touch and give each other simple food. This proves that women have a very central role in playing emotional instruments and instrumental in Muslim–Christian relations.

The emotional pattern is expressed in the form of empathy for various activities carried out by other women even though they are adherents of different religions. The activities done by the women are welcoming the guests of the cultural and traditional events, serving food, and even to entertain of the family of the dead.

At another locus in Indonesia, women have succeeded in creating a meeting room for women ranging from housewives in activism roles in the smallest environmental units to those involving interfaiths' female religious leaders (Revelation et al. 2019). To minimise intolerance and the practice of pseudo-tolerance, a meeting room that is intimate and full of a sense of brotherhood is a form of strength that can establish complete peace. The study of *Pela gandong* in Maluku, women play an important role in the practice of cultural peace through social action in the symbolic liminality of *kain Gandong*. Without the role of women who hold the *kain Gandong*, liminality cannot play an effective role in creating a feeling of community and social solidarity, which is indispensable in the rituals of the Muslim–Christian community, such as the inauguration ritual of the King and the *Panas Pela* ritual (Pattiasina et al. 2018). Meanwhile in Central Java, women build the capacity of their communities in providing religious-social service and strengthen a moderate and tolerant understanding of Islam, as well as build internal and interreligious harmonisation by synergising agreements with government agencies and other religious organisations (Farida 2019).

In Buginese who inhabit South Sulawesi, the basic element in gender formation is the division of gender roles, which is formed because of the construction of culture and customs. In general, gender roles are a set of behavioural patterns that become social expectations to be displayed differently from both men and women according to their gender (Ramli & Basri 2021). The women who became informants in this research were not trapped in the prison of the theory of nature who were identified as patient and compassionate figures whose work area was only in the domestic area of household affairs, but women had broken male domination by playing an active role in strengthening Muslim–Christian relations (theory nurture). The theory of nurture does not deny the existence of certain natural characteristics such as pregnancy and childbirth, but in the aspect of social roles, cultural constructs determine the role of women. But the women in this research are very compromising. Towards a balance (equilibrium) that emphasises the concept of partnership and harmony in the relationship between women and men, both at religious events and customs.

From a leadership point of view, Islam views humans from the aspect of the caliph (*khalifah*) not from gender (Munir 1999). Allah *subhana wa ta'ala*, who is believed to be God for Muslims has given the task of caliphate to humans, both men and women, to manage, maintain and develop the earth. Women play an important role in building Muslim–Christian relations by utilising all the potentials that come from within

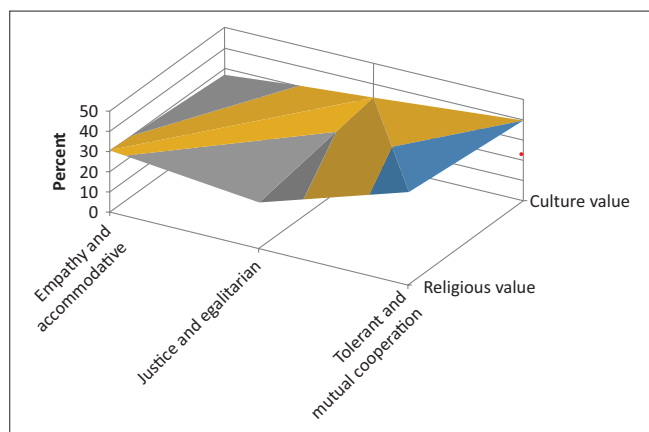


FIGURE 1: Venn diagram of religious and cultural values in Muslim–Christian relations.

women and the support of noble values of religion and culture. One aspect that is owned by women and becomes a reference both nationally and internationally is the large modality of both religion and culture, so that the strengthening of relations between adherents of different religions can be carried out on an ongoing basis. Therefore, the involvement of women, from management, negotiation to conflict resolution must be encouraged continuously.

This study finds essential facts related to the interaction of culture and religion and the role of women in Muslim–Christian relations. Of course, it is a characteristic of a particular community that cannot be generalised but can be replicated in areas with the same characteristics and socio-religious environment as the locus of this research. It can be seen based on the nVivo analysis shown in the Venn Diagram in Figure 1.

Based on the Venn diagram in Figure 1 as much as 23.08% of Muslim women expressed a sense of justice in strengthening Muslim–Christian relations, followed by empathy expressed by 30.77% of informants in Muslim–Christian relations. Meanwhile, 46.15% of Muslim women firmly believed in strengthening Muslim–Christian ties. The percentage distribution of the data indicates an interaction between religious values and cultural values in strengthening the relationship between Muslims and Christians. This means that culturally, the Tana Toraja people have a hereditary tradition to live side by side with adherents of other religions, especially Muslim women who are strengthened by their religious values and teach them to live in harmony with followers of other religions. Muslim women believe in combining these two cultures to establish harmonious relationships with Christians.

It is an interesting blend of religion and culture that reinforce each other, especially for empathy and accommodation. However, this does not mean that tolerance touches the realm of religiosity when it comes to fundamental teachings in religion (*aqidah*), a strong reason for Muslim women to remain based on mutually beneficial relationships

(cooperation). Freedom to carry out religious law is right (egalitarian) because each religious teaching has determined it. At this point, the sense of justice (justice) must be felt by all religious adherents in carrying out the relationship between the followers of the two religions. The interaction model of culture and religion will strengthen religious moderation in various activities and practically enhance Muslim–Christian relations.

Conclusion

Muslim women have an essential role in strengthening Muslim–Christian relations. This role is a manifestation of the noble values of religion, which instruct its adherents to compete in helping each other in goodness. It is also sourced from the local wisdom of the Toraja people, which has been preserved from generation to generation by their ancestors. The Muslim–Christian relationship in this research shows a positive direction with collaboration in various religious, social and customary social activities. It can be a model for areas with the same characteristics as the locus of this study. This contribution will further strengthen religious moderation in various fields to further strengthen Muslim–Christian relations as the two largest religious entities in Indonesia. The limitation of this study is that the locus and samples were taken from a particular and small area, so generalisations cannot be made. Nonetheless, it is possible to replicate it in regions with the same socio-cultural situation.

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Competing interests

The author declares that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Author's contributions

H.P. is the sole author of this article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards of research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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Data availability

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Interreligious relation: Position of women in strengthening Christian and Muslim bonds

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Strengthening Muslim–Christian relations is very important for a nation such as Indonesia that has plurality in terms of tribes, ethnicity and religion. This study aims to analyse the role of Muslim women who live in a pluralistic socio-religious situation. This is a qualitative research that uses purposive sampling to determine the informants. The approach used by the Discovering Cultural Themes model is to understand the symptoms of the many themes, cultures, values and cultural symbols. Data analysis was conducted by using software for qualitative research, which is needed in managing data found from the field, in this case, nVivo Basic 12.00 for Windows. The results show that Muslim women translate justice, empathy and rationality in religion by building relationships with other religions. This attitude is part of Islamic teachings that contain moderate, accommodating and tolerant aspects. In addition, culture has encouraged women to blend in and form egalitarian equality in the social and cultural realm. The culture of generosity and mutual help has become a tradition both in religious and customary activities.

Contribution: This article provides an insight into the contribution of Muslim women in strengthening Muslim–Christian relations. This agenda is very important because Islam and Christianity have the largest adherents in Indonesia. This contribution is very important and crucial in the midst of radicalism issues in Indonesia lately.

Keywords: interreligious; role; women; Muslims; Christians.

Introduction

Globally, women and men have a very important part in maintaining the balance of life both in the realm of family, community and interreligious relations. Islam and Christianity as big religions in the world teach to protect women's rights in public (Udoh, Folarin & Isumonah 2020). Religion teaches about equality for both men and women, which manages the rights and roles of both men and women in society (Abdulla 2018), which must continue to be sound both formally and informally (Arisukwu et al. 2021). Women in certain situations are able to do any work for the community without asking for payment and have the same perception and behaviour both in peace and war situations (Abduljaber, Services & Arbor 2021; Chus 2018). Women with high religious motivation are also directly involved in interreligious peace, which has been destroyed by communal violence (Al Qurtuby 2014; Lakawa 2021).

Several findings from previous studies discover that many Muslim women are actively involved in women empowerment, social entrepreneurship and social welfare (Annisa 2012). The weakness of this study is that it does not discuss the role of women in community relations of different religions, whereas other research findings discover that women are important agents and actors in the peace process, both in their roles as mothers, educators, mediators, peace activists and decision makers (Atuhaire 2014). Furthermore, women are involved in all kinds of peace work (Olofsson 2018), including intertribal cultural peace (Pattiasina, Lattu & Nuban Timo 2018) and moderate religious and social services for all religions (Farida 2019). The role of Muslim women to strengthen the Muslim–Christian relations in different religious communities can be encouraged by utilising the awareness of working for the common good (Effendi 2016) and the culture of mutual help (Utomo & Minza 2018). Other studies discover that religious tolerance and gender equality are very important for the sustainability of human life (Al-Hamdi 2015), because women have different perspectives on conflict prevention and can correlate between religious, ethnic, political and cultural differences (Goyol 2019). Islam encourages its people to practice the teachings of ta'awun or mutual help in goodness with anyone, including other people of different religions (Mu'ti 2019). The role of women to help and prosper others is driven by selfish and altruistic motives (Marjanovic, Struthers & Greenglass 2012), both by religious and cultural values that have become a habit in a community.

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Why should women in Indonesia take part in Islamic-Christian relations? Because factually, the violence against religion and belief in Indonesia are still happening: In 2010, there were 81 cases, which were recorded from several regions in Indonesia (Misrawi 2010). In 2015, there were 85 cases; in 2016, there were 97 cases (Wahid et al. 2015); and in 2020, there were 422 violation of religious freedom (Lidwina 2021). Indonesia still has to work hard to address the issue of religious diversity (Ju Lan 2011), with some conflicts occurring as a result of negative stereotypes (Nakaya 2018), the Ambon, Poso and Sambas conflicts led to the marginalisation of indigenous people and the erosion of local traditional buildings, which became the cause of ethnic conflicts (Schulze 2017). Even though in 2020 the Interreligious Harmony Index is in the high category of 67.46 (Burhani et al. 2020), but awareness of various potential conflicts must be internalised in various activities including women.

The role of women is dominated by gender debates where identities and concepts are individual's self-definition as female or male, based on their biological gender as interpreted in culture (Wood & Eagly 2012, 2015). Two big current theories that discuss the roles of men and women are nature and nurture. In linguistic term, nature is understood as a character that is inherent in a person as a natural condition or human nature. Differences between women and men are natural so they cannot be eliminated but have to create a harmonious relationship (Butler 2004). Women in this theory are identified as patient, loving, gentle, motherly, caring and diligent. Thus, they are suitable to take on domestic roles. Meanwhile, men who are assumed to have strong, manly, rational and assertive traits are interpreted as men who are more worthy to take on the roles of leaders, chiefs of households and have a lot of freedom in choosing any role.

Meanwhile, the nurture theory suggests that the differences in masculine and feminine are not determined by biological differences but by social constructs and the influence of cultural factors. The existential feeling of self as a woman or a man usually reflects aspects of biological sex (Miller 2015). In the context of this theory, there is a relative meaning of masculine and feminine concepts. The social constructs differences in society result in the relativity of masculine and feminine attributes indicators between cultures. Certain traits attached to a gender in a community are not necessarily the same as others (Butler 2004). There are roles and tasks that can be interchanged, but there are those that are not usually interchangeable because they are naturally different in nature.

Empirically, the role of women in socio-religious activities, as well as in building socio-religious relations is very prominent in the 'Aisyiyah organisation as a Muhammadiyah women's association. It was founded on 27 Rajab 1335 H/19 May 1917 in Yogyakarta by Nyai Siti Walidah or Nyai Ahmad Dahlan. The first chairwoman of 'Aisyiyah was not Nyai Siti Walidah, but Siti Bariyah. Siti Bariyah did not only study Islam with Kiai Ahmad Dahlan but also studied at the Neutraal Meisjes School (Muthmainnah 2019). In 1928,

'Aisyiyah was listed as one of the pioneering women's organisations or which initiated and was actively involved in the first Indonesian Women's Congress (Kowani) and from 1917 to 1998 was able to show its identity as a Muslim women's organisation, including the development of academic discourses on women rights (Van Doorn Harder 2006).

The locus of this research is Tana Toraja, an exotic area in Indonesia, which is world famous. Based on BPS (Indonesia's central agency on statistics) data, currently it is inhabited by 234002 people, with details based on religion: Protestant 68.66%, Catholic 17.09%, Muslim 12.25%, Hindu 1.74%, Buddhist 0.22% and Aluk Todolo 0.01%. With this composition, Tana Toraja shows religious pluralism in terms of religion and belief. However, they are actually united by a homogeneous ethnic group and a very high culture of mutual cooperation and become social capital in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations in this area. Toraja comes from the words *To Riaja*; *To* means people (*Bugis*) and *Riaja* means above, so *Toraja* means people who live at the top or in the mountains as the antonym of *Luu'*, which means coastal people, who used to have dominance in the highlands (Waterson 2009). In Toraja culture, the personality of the people is strongly influenced by the beliefs of their ancestors named *Aluk Todolo* (Fox 2006).

Then, what are the basic values that move Muslim women who are members of the Aisyiyah organisation in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations? and how are religious and traditional celebrations used by Muslim women to strengthen Muslim-Christian relations? This is the main focus in this research. The theoretical and practical theme of this research is expected to encourage women to play an active role in strengthening Muslim-Christian relations, which are sometimes damaged by radicalism and fundamentalism issues. Women play a significant role in carrying out their position as social bonder in various fields of life (Ruiter & De Graaf 2006), and carried out by women's groups who are members of civil society as actors. Women from various religions have the potential to maintain harmony between religious communities, but this potential has not been fully utilised.

Research methods

This research is a qualitative descriptive research. Qualitative research is a research model based on the philosophy of postpositivism, which is used to examine the condition of natural objects. It is very difficult to detect the population, which become the informants of this study, because there is not enough data available on the Aisyiyah organisation. There is no specific standard for the number of samples for qualitative research. Furthermore, the data collection method uses observation, interviews and discussions, which require such a long time so it is not possible to take large samples. In addition, qualitative research has three main components to be observed. Firstly, the place where the interaction occurs in the ongoing social situation, in this case at Bittuang Tana Toraja; secondly, the actors who are playing a certain role. In

the context of this research, the actors of the research object are women who are members of the Aisyiyah organisation; thirdly, activities (Tannenbaum 1980), carried out by actors in ongoing social situations. In research activities that will be the research object are all activities related to women's activities in relation to Muslim–Christian relations.

The participants in this study are 21 Aisyiyah women in Tana Toraja. Determination of data sources is performed by purposive sampling, based on certain characteristics (inclusion criteria) that are closely related to the characteristics, which have been known previously, based on the research objectives. The sample is classified into three: Firstly, Aisyiyah's management who have a decree and membership card. Secondly, women who become regular members. Thirdly, women who are Aisyiyah sympathisers and actively participate in activities.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews and documentation was conducted from June to September 2019 in Tana Toraja. The observation used is participant observation with base snowball method. The details of the observation activities are (1) observing women's activities at Christmas and Eid; (2) observing women's activities at the *rambu solo'* traditional party; (3) observing women's activities at *rambu tuka'*; and (4) women's activities in other social activities. The researchers used observation guidelines to record these activities. In order to maintain the validity of the observations, the authors use field notes (Bogdan & Biklen 1997) or commonly called a field notebook. Field notes were used to record various events related to the activities of women who were informants in this study and all were performed manually.

The approach used by the Discovering Cultural Themes model is to collect various themes, cultural focuses, values and cultural symbols in each domain (Spradley 2016). Data analysis was carried out using software for a qualitative study, which was needed in managing data found from the field, in this case, nVivo Basic 10.00 for Windows. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software developed by Qualitative Solution and Research (QSR) international. NVivo is a tool for processing qualitative data through highlighting, taking notes and linking ideas (Jackson 2021). The data analysed was base triangulation data (Mills 2011) through three stages: data reduction, data display, conclusion and verification.

Findings and discussion

Religion and the role of women in Muslim–Christian relations

Muslim women in Tana Toraja adhere to religious values as a guide in interacting with other religious communities, including Christians and the Aluk Todolo. Implemented religious values is middle character (*wasathiyah*), which is translated as moderate Islam. Religion, apart from having a theological dimension, also has a spiritual tradition as a primary mechanism for expressing and reinforcing group

sentiment and solidarity (Durkheim & Swain 2008). An open religious tradition can also be referred to as indigenous and local culture celebrations. The role of women in implementing moderate religious values can be seen from religious activities that always involve other religions' followers.

From the observation of the researchers, women become effective family mediators of different religions to meet and unite. Women are quite dominant in various socio-religious activities. They cook, serve guests and break the ice in a strong brotherhood. In other places, this kind of relationship is probably considered extreme, because it touches the spirit of mutual cooperation and kinship in religious traditions, building places of worship, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The role of women in peace building is multidimensional, and the issues are sufficiently representative and can bring a gender perspective to the main content of a negotiation. Women can contribute a lot to the recovery of post-conflict social, cultural, economic and political conditions. This is the flexibility of women who can enter peaceful spaces that men may not be able to do.

Based on interviews and discussions with informants, researchers conducted coding and interpretation to obtain conclusions about values and religion applied by women in interacting with adherents of other religions. The religious values used by Muslim women to strengthen Muslim–Christian relations are presented in Table 1.

In Table 1, Muslim women use the values of justice, empathy and rationality in building relationships with people of other religions. This attitude is part of Islamic teachings that contain moderate, accommodating and tolerant aspects. This fact implies that tolerance with Christianity is a moderate attitude that must still be based on rationality as long as it is not related to the realm of fiqh. It means that tolerance is not correlated with the Pillars of Islam and other acts of worship.

Moderation in Islam is the implementation of the teachings of the holy book in the Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah: 256 'There is no compulsion in believing the religion of Islam'. which means giving other people the opportunity to practice their religion. Likewise, the accommodative and tolerant aspects are the implementation of the Qur'an Surah Al-Kafirun: 6 'your religion is for you, and my religion is for me'. Theologically, it means that Muslim women make religious

TABLE 1: The religious value of women in Muslim–Christian relations.

No.	Statement/theme	Interpretation/conclusion
1	Everyone has the right to practice their own beliefs (Informants 1, 9, 5, 13)	Justice and/or moderate (Surat al-Baqarah: 256)
2	We help each other and support religious events but do not participate in worship activities (Informants 7, 8, 9, 3)	Empathy and/or accommodative (Surat al-Maidah: 2)
3	We may attend non-Muslim invitations as long as it is not related to worship (Informants 11, 17, and 20)	Rational and/or tolerant (Surat Mumtahan: 51)
4	Your religion is for you and my religion is for me, we apply this by not participating in Christmas celebrations, but we do <i>silatunrahmi</i> [visit each other] (Informants 7, 8, 9)	Empathy and/or accommodative (Surat al-Kafirun: 6)
5	Respect other people's religious teachings, without sacrificing my religious principles (Informants 8, 12, 20, 21)	Rational and/or tolerant (Surat al-An'am: 108)

values dominate strongly in the sociological realm concerning adherents of other religions.

At the micro level, the type of mechanism in the socio-religious area played by women has succeeded in preventing internal and interreligious harmony between religious communities and encouraging constructive cooperation. Such a mechanism forms a pattern of functional harmony for a particular geographic area. Socio-religious mechanisms must receive adequate attention in turning off the symptoms of social disintegration. That way, the Muslim minority group can be said to be safe from outside interference, because anyone who wants to disturb Muslims does not only deal with the Muslim community, but also deals with non-Muslims.

Through the role of women, the issue of food in a different theological context which Muslims can and cannot eat becomes clear and becomes a common understanding. Therefore, when Christian families invite them to religious or traditional events, Christian families prepare food that does not contain pork or food that is forbidden in Islam (Interview, female informant; 1, 3, 5, 7). According to one food ingredient informant, the containers used and the cooking were handed over to their Muslim neighbours or relatives so that the food they provide is guaranteed to be halal, and all done by women (Interview, female informant; 9, 12, 19, 21). Likewise at the time of slaughtering sacrificial animals on Eid al-Adha for Muslims, the rest of the meat which have been given based on Islamic law were cooked by women from different religions, Muslim and non-muslim and are eaten together on the *Silaturrehmi*/assemble in Mosque area.

Seen from the religious aspect, Muslim women in Tana Toraja who are a minority in quantity, have high religious enthusiasm, especially those related to relations between communities of different religions. Women naturally in doing internalisation on religious and cultural values related to strengthening Muslim–Christian relations. When they are together, the discussion never leads to theological differences in each religion, but rather to universal issues related to the future of the family. Family members remind each other to do their obligations and to not forget to ask for prayers so that their lives are safe and their family is given sustenance and health (Interviews, female informants; 2, 6, 9, 10). Another quite sensitive theme in inclusive education is joint prayer between Muslims and non-Muslims. In a pluralistic society, praying together is an activity that cannot be avoided both at family events and traditional activities in their family environment. The joint prayer carried out by people of different religions is not led by one person, but the praying is carried out based on their respective religions and beliefs (Interviews, female informants; 1, 6, 5, 11). The choice to choose this way of praying is to respect the differences in religion and beliefs between them and avoid debates related to joint prayer led by non-Muslims.

Cultural values of Muslim–Christian relations

Historically, the Torajanese had an encounter with Islam starting when they were in contact with the Kingdoms of Sidenreng, Bone and Luwu. Although at first the relationship was more dominated by economic interest, especially the coffee trade. Until the end of the 19th century, after more than 230 years of establishing power in South Sulawesi by defeating the Gowa-Tallo Kingdom, it seems that the Dutch have not shown any interest in occupying the Toraja region which is far in the middle of the Sulawesi region (Waterson 2012). The Dutch arrived in the Toraja area in 1905 and succeeded in conquering it completely in 1906. Christianity was introduced in Toraja, not long after the colonial government crushed the resistance of the Toraja people led by Pong Tiku. In 1908 the Dutch colonial government opened *Landschapschool* [self-governing schools] in Makale and Rantepao led by Christian teachers. Even though this government school is 'neutral', the teachers at Landschap taught Christianity to Landschap students (Kobong 2008).

This research found that the communal lifestyle of the Torajanese is reflected in the Tongkonan traditional house philosophy. Tongkonan cannot be owned by individuals, but is owned communally and from generation to generation by the family or clan of the Tana Toraja Tribe (Pakan et al. 2019). Tongkonan consists of the word 'tongkon', which means sitting and gets the suffix 'an' to become Tongkonan. Tongkonan means a seat that implies a place to sit together with members who are gathered to become a group of individuals who come from the same lineage, the house is a symbol of the unity of the cluster called 'Tongkonan' (Pakan et al. 2019). Culture in Toraja has developed into social capital which is very useful for maintaining inter-religious harmony (Pajarianto, Pribadi & Sari 2022).

To this day, the Torajanese consistently maintain the customs inherited from their ancestors. Torajanese recognise two main ceremonies related to the life cycle, namely *Rambu Tuka'* (*Alluk Rampe Matollo*) and *Rambu Solo'* (*Alluk Rampe Matampu*), each has its own characteristics (Adams 2004). The *Rambu Tuka'* ceremony is held to welcome joyful events such as marriage, harvesting (*Alluk Pare*), or entering a new house (*Mangrara Banua*). Meanwhile, *Rambu Solo'* is a reversal ceremony for the soul that died before being buried. In this traditional event, the role of women is very important in facilitating all family members of different religions to attend the event. The instrumental role of women as cooks, makeup artists, guest pickers, and emotional roles is the glue between large families (Interview, female informant; 12, 15, 17, 20). The transcripts summary and analysis from interviews related to cultural values and mechanisms that make Muslim women strengthen Muslim–Christian relations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that Muslim women are accommodating and empathetic towards various activities carried out by both

TABLE 2: The culture value of women in Muslim–Christian relations.

No	Statement/theme	Interpretation/conclusion
1	<i>Rambu Tuka'</i> [harvesting ceremony] and <i>Rambu Solo'</i> [death ceremony] as a meeting place for families of different faiths (Informants 2, 5, 7, 9)	Accommodating and/or empathy
2	The educational value in <i>Rambu Tuka'</i> and <i>Rambu Solo'</i> is mutual cooperation by helping with material and non-material (Informants 7, 18, 9, 21)	Mutual cooperation and/or empathy
3	All families of different religions are given the same opportunity to participate in the <i>Rambu Tuka'</i> and <i>Rambu Solo'</i> ceremonies (Informants 1, 2 and 11)	Egalitarian and/or democratic
4	Women's activities in <i>Rambu Tuka'</i> : <i>Ma'Pangan</i> [welcoming by serving betel, areca nut], <i>Ma'pairuk</i> [women serving dishes to all guests], <i>Ma'tumbuk</i> [the activity of pounding rice on mortar] (Informants 16, 18, 20)	Women's participation

Muslims and Christians. With high spirit of mutual cooperation they mingle and form egalitarian equality in the social and cultural realm. The culture of generosity and mutual help has become a tradition both in religious and customary activities. This activity involves all nuclear families and the wider community of different religions. For the Torajanese, *tongkonan* not only represents a physical manifestation but also represents a group of people (*pa'rapuan*). This is reflected in the term itself, which comes from the word *tongkon* [to sit] together. Thus, *tongkonan* means the centre where people gather for family groups, which come from their ancestors and living descendants (Idrus 2017). *Tongkonan* represents the types and characteristics of the main groups in Toraja society, as a place to discuss and carry out traditional ceremonies and problems of group members in general (Said 2004). This cultural activity is usually carried out for days and all costs incurred are borne by donations and the participation of all families.

Culturally and sociologically, Muslim women in Tana Toraja also collaborate with people of other religions based on cultural values. Muslims– and Christians interact without questioning their religious identity. They establish relationships with relatives or other people of different religions. They show active relationships in everyday life; friendly relations, mutual assistance in social activities, agriculture and even involvement in both traditional and religious meetings outside of the sacrament. There are even some residents who live in the same house with different religions, some whose father is Hindu (*Alukta*), mother is Christian and so on. Toraja culture accommodates all forms of these differences (Interviews, female informants; 13, 15, 18, 21).

Women's activities in building interfaith relations are essential, apart from being shown in the realm of religion and culture. The form is simple but has complex implications for maintaining brotherhood between Muslims and Christians. Brotherhood in the *Tongkonan* extended family, the celebration of *rambu tuka'* [harvest feast], the *rambu solo* ceremony (death ceremony), and taking advantage of religious holidays such as Christmas and Eid to meet outside the sacrament to stay in touch and give each other simple food. This proves that women have a very central role in playing emotional instruments and instrumental in Muslim–Christian relations.

The emotional pattern is expressed in the form of empathy for various activities carried out by other women even though they are adherents of different religions. The activities done by the women are welcoming the guests of the cultural and traditional events, serving food, and even to entertain the family of the dead.

At another locus in Indonesia, women have succeeded in creating a meeting room for women ranging from housewives in activism roles in the smallest environmental units to those involving interfaiths' female religious leaders (Wahyu et al. 2019). To minimise intolerance and the practice of pseudo-tolerance, a meeting room that is intimate and full of a sense of brotherhood is a form of strength that can establish complete peace. The study of *Pela gandong* in Maluku, women play an important role in the practice of cultural peace through social action in the symbolic liminality of *kain Gandong*. Without the role of women who hold the *kain Gandong*, liminality cannot play an effective role in creating a feeling of community and social solidarity, which is indispensable in the rituals of the Muslim–Christian community, such as the inauguration ritual of the King and the *Panas Pela* ritual (Pattiasina et al. 2018). Meanwhile in Central Java, women build the capacity of their communities in providing religious-social service and strengthen a moderate and tolerant understanding of Islam, as well as build internal and interreligious harmonisation by synergising agreements with government agencies and other religious organisations (Farida 2019).

In Buginese who inhabit South Sulawesi, the basic element in gender formation is the division of gender roles, which is formed because of the construction of culture and customs. In general, gender roles are a set of behavioural patterns that become social expectations to be displayed differently from both men and women according to their gender (Ramli & Basri 2021). The women who became informants in this research were not trapped in the prison of the theory of nature who were identified as patient and compassionate figures whose work area was only in the domestic area of household affairs, but women had broken male domination by playing an active role in strengthening Muslim–Christian relations (theory nurture). The theory of nurture does not deny the existence of certain natural characteristics such as pregnancy and childbirth, but in the aspect of social roles, cultural constructs determine the role of women. But the women in this research are very compromising. Towards a balance (equilibrium) that emphasises the concept of partnership and harmony in the relationship between women and men, both at religious events and customs.

From a leadership point of view, Islam views humans from the aspect of the caliph (*khalifah*) not from gender (Munir 1999). Allah *subhana wa ta'ala*, who is believed to be God for Muslims has given the task of caliphate to humans, both men and women, to manage, maintain and develop the earth. Women play an important role in building Muslim–Christian relations by utilising all the potentials that come from within

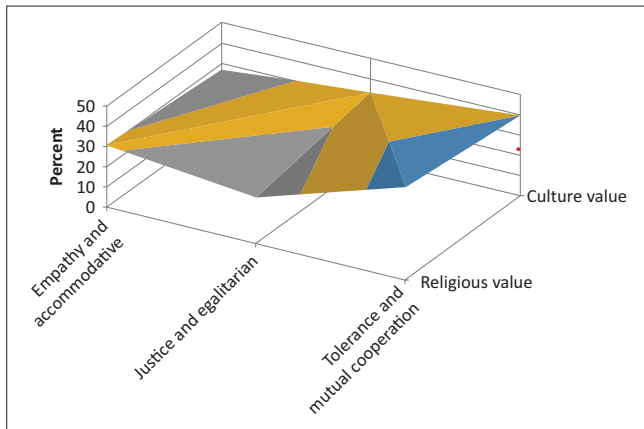


FIGURE 1: Venn diagram of religious and cultural values in Muslim–Christian relations.

women and the support of noble values of religion and culture. One aspect that is owned by women and becomes a reference both nationally and internationally is the large modality of both religion and culture, so that the strengthening of relations between adherents of different religions can be carried out on an ongoing basis. Therefore, the involvement of women, from management, negotiation to conflict resolution must be encouraged continuously.

This study finds essential facts related to the interaction of culture and religion and the role of women in Muslim–Christian relations. Of course, it is a characteristic of a particular community that cannot be generalised but can be replicated in areas with the same characteristics and socio-religious environment as the locus of this research. It can be seen based on the nVivo analysis shown in the Venn Diagram in Figure 1.

Based on the Venn diagram in Figure 1 as much as 23.08% of Muslim women expressed a sense of justice in strengthening Muslim–Christian relations, followed by empathy expressed by 30.77% of informants in Muslim–Christian relations. Meanwhile, 46.15% of Muslim women firmly believed in strengthening Muslim–Christian ties. The percentage distribution of the data indicates an interaction between religious values and cultural values in strengthening the relationship between Muslims and Christians. This means that culturally, the Tana Toraja people have a hereditary tradition to live side by side with adherents of other religions, especially Muslim women who are strengthened by their religious values and teach them to live in harmony with followers of other religions. Muslim women believe in combining these two cultures to establish harmonious relationships with Christians.

It is an interesting blend of religion and culture that reinforce each other, especially for empathy and accommodation. However, this does not mean that tolerance touches the realm of religiosity when it comes to fundamental teachings in religion (*aqidah*), a strong reason for Muslim women to remain based on mutually beneficial relationships

(cooperation). Freedom to carry out religious law is right (egalitarian) because each religious teaching has determined it. At this point, the sense of justice (justice) must be felt by all religious adherents in carrying out the relationship between the followers of the two religions. The interaction model of culture and religion will strengthen religious moderation in various activities and practically enhance Muslim–Christian relations.

Conclusion

Muslim women have an essential role in strengthening Muslim–Christian relations. This role is a manifestation of the noble values of religion, which instruct its adherents to compete in helping each other in goodness. It is also sourced from the local wisdom of the Toraja people, which has been preserved from generation to generation by their ancestors. The Muslim–Christian relationship in this research shows a positive direction with collaboration in various religious, social and customary social activities. It can be a model for areas with the same characteristics as the locus of this study. This contribution will further strengthen religious moderation in various fields to further strengthen Muslim–Christian relations as the two largest religious entities in Indonesia. The limitation of this study is that the locus and samples were taken from a particular and small area, so generalisations cannot be made. Nonetheless, it is possible to replicate it in regions with the same socio-cultural situation.

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Competing interests

The author declares that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Author's contributions

H.P. is the sole author of this article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards of research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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Data availability

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