

Building Peace through Social Capital: Preventing Religious Intolerance in Manggarai, Indonesia

Mirsel Robertus, Felix Baghi, Puplius M. Buru

Ledalero Institute of Philosophy and Creative Technology, Maumere, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia

Received: 20/08/2025

Revised: 29/09/2025

Accepted: 27/10/2025

Abstract

This article examines how social capital prevents and manages religious intolerance and conflicts in Manggarai, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. Departing from the limited attention paid to local community practices compared to previous studies emphasizing state regulation or religious leadership, this study focuses on how bonding, bridging, and linking social capital are operationalized in everyday life. Drawing on Putnam's social capital framework and a qualitative approach, the research employed 20 in-depth interviews, four focus group discussions (FGDs), and document analysis in Ruteng (urban) and Reo (rural), with data triangulation and cross-case comparison to enhance validity. The findings show that symptoms of intolerance are relatively rare. Conflicts such as youth disputes triggered by hoaxes or contestations over places of worship are resolved peacefully through collaborative mechanisms involving religious leaders, traditional leaders, the Interreligious Harmony Forum (FKUB), youth forums, and local government. Cultural norms of kinship, inclusivity, and unity strengthen bonding capital, cross-group dialogues serve as bridging capital, while FKUB's institutional role and government-community partnerships provide linking capital. Theoretically, the study contributes by demonstrating a hybrid model of social capital in Manggarai, where cultural traditions and institutional structures reinforce one another in sustaining interfaith harmony while exposing vulnerabilities such as minority exclusion and dependence on proactive leadership. These findings enrich scholarly debates on social capital and tolerance in plural societies and offer practical recommendations for strengthening interfaith youth engagement, embedding cultural wisdom into institutional forums, and ensuring inclusive representation within FKUB to support broader national efforts.

Keywords

social capital; intolerance prevention; bonding social capital; bridging social capital

Corresponding Author

Mirsel Robertus

Ledalero Institute of Philosophy and Creative Technology, Maumere, NTT; Indonesia; rmirsel@yahoo.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is widely recognized as one of the world's most religiously, culturally, and ethnically diverse countries, making interfaith tolerance a key foundation for sustaining social harmony and national stability. However, recent global and national trends indicate a rise in intolerance, discrimination, and religiously motivated conflicts, which threaten the very basis of social cohesion. In this context, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Province stands out. The Interfaith Harmony Index released by the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Research and Development Center in 2019 scored NTT at 81.1 on a



© 2025 by the authors. Open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY NC) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

scale of 0–100, placing it among Indonesia's three most tolerant provinces and above the national average of 75.36. This exceptionally high level of tolerance raises an important question in social studies: why and how is NTT, particularly the

Manggarai region, able to maintain harmony and prevent intolerance amid increasing national and global pressures? Although various studies have identified factors contributing to intolerance in Indonesia, the role of social capital—particularly kinship networks, cultural norms, and local institutions—in building and sustaining tolerance has not been systematically explored in a local context such as Manggarai. This constitutes the main research gap addressed by the present study. By focusing on Manggarai as a case study, the research seeks to demonstrate how community-level social capital practices can effectively prevent religious conflicts and maintain social harmony. Unlike previous studies, which tend to rely on statistical indicators or treat intolerance as a general national phenomenon, this study deliberately adopts social capital as its primary analytical lens. Drawing on Claridge and Woolcock's typology, social capital is conceptualized here as comprising three dimensions: bonding capital (internal community ties), bridging capital (connections across groups), and linking capital (relationships between communities and formal institutions).

This framework makes it possible to capture not only the structural but also the normative and cultural underpinnings of interfaith harmony in Manggarai, and to show how these three forms of social capital are operationalized in everyday life. Manggarai is chosen as a critical case study because it uniquely combines strong traditional kinship values with a history of religious diversity and relatively open interfaith practices. This configuration makes Manggarai an ideal "social laboratory" for examining how social capital functions as a structural resource and a cultural foundation for sustaining tolerance. By situating Manggarai within national debates on religious harmony, this study aims to generate locally grounded and theoretically significant findings, offering lessons for other pluralistic regions in Indonesia. Against this backdrop, the study explicitly addresses the following research questions: (1) What forms of social capital—bonding, bridging, and linking—play a role in preventing intolerance and religious conflict in Manggarai? (2) How do local mechanisms, norms, and institutions strengthen these forms of social capital to sustain interfaith harmony? Furthermore, (3) what are the theoretical and practical implications of the Manggarai case for strategies to strengthen tolerance at local and national levels? Correspondingly, the objectives of this study are to identify and analyze the social capital that underpins tolerance and prevents interfaith conflict in Manggarai, to examine the social mechanisms and institutional arrangements through which this social capital is mobilized, and to evaluate the implications of these findings for policy and practice in managing interfaith harmony in plural societies.

The novelty of this research lies in its empirical emphasis on social capital as a key driver of tolerance in a highly pluralistic region, while offering a hybrid model of how cultural traditions and institutional structures reinforce one another. This approach enriches the literature on social capital and tolerance by grounding theory in the Indonesian context and highlighting the strengths and vulnerabilities of local practices. Thus, the study provides not only a theoretical contribution to the development of the social capital concept in plural societies but also practical recommendations for strengthening interfaith youth engagement, embedding cultural wisdom into institutional forums, and ensuring inclusive representation in bodies such as FKUB to support national efforts to maintain interfaith harmony. Indonesia is widely recognized as one of the world's most religiously, culturally, and ethnically diverse countries, making interfaith tolerance a key foundation for sustaining social harmony and national stability. However, recent global and national trends indicate a rise in

intolerance, discrimination, and religiously motivated conflicts, which threaten the very basis of social cohesion. In this context, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Province stands out.

The Interfaith Harmony Index released by the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Research and Development Center in 2019 scored NTT at 81.1 on a scale of 0–100, placing it among Indonesia's three most tolerant provinces and above the national average of 75.36. This exceptionally high tolerance level raises an important question in social studies: why and how is NTT, particularly the Manggarai region, able to maintain harmony and prevent intolerance amid increasing national and global pressures? Although various studies have identified factors contributing to intolerance in Indonesia, the role of social capital—particularly kinship networks, cultural norms, and local institutions—in building and sustaining tolerance has not been systematically explored in a local context such as Manggarai. This constitutes the main research gap addressed by the present study. By focusing on Manggarai as a case study, the research seeks to demonstrate how community-level social capital practices can effectively prevent religious conflicts and maintain social harmony. Unlike previous studies, which tend to rely on statistical indicators or treat intolerance as a general national phenomenon, this study deliberately adopts social capital as its primary analytical lens. Drawing on Claridge and Woolcock's typology, social capital is conceptualized here as comprising three dimensions: bonding capital (internal community ties), bridging capital (connections across groups), and linking capital (relationships between communities and formal institutions).

This framework makes it possible to capture not only the structural but also the normative and cultural underpinnings of interfaith harmony in Manggarai, and to show how these three forms of social capital are operationalized in everyday life. Manggarai is chosen as a critical case study because it uniquely combines strong traditional kinship values with a history of religious diversity and relatively open interfaith practices. This configuration makes Manggarai an ideal "social laboratory" for examining how social capital functions as a structural resource and a cultural foundation for sustaining tolerance. By situating Manggarai within national debates on religious harmony, this study aims to generate locally grounded and theoretically significant findings, offering lessons for other pluralistic regions in Indonesia. Against this backdrop, the study explicitly addresses the following research questions: (1) What forms of social capital—bonding, bridging, and linking—play a role in preventing intolerance and religious conflict in Manggarai? (2) How do local mechanisms, norms, and institutions strengthen these forms of social capital to sustain interfaith harmony? Moreover, (3) what are the theoretical and practical implications of the Manggarai case for strategies to strengthen tolerance at local and national levels? Correspondingly, the objectives of this study are to identify and analyze the social capital that underpins tolerance and prevents interfaith conflict in Manggarai, to examine the social mechanisms and institutional arrangements through which this social capital is mobilized, and to evaluate the implications of these findings for policy and practice in managing interfaith harmony in plural societies. The novelty of this research lies in its empirical emphasis on social capital as a key driver of tolerance in a highly pluralistic region, while offering a hybrid model of how cultural traditions and institutional structures reinforce one another.

This approach enriches the literature on social capital and tolerance by grounding theory in the Indonesian context and highlighting the strengths and vulnerabilities of local practices. Thus, the study provides not only a theoretical contribution to the development of the social capital concept in plural societies but also practical recommendations for strengthening interfaith youth engagement, embedding cultural wisdom into institutional forums, and ensuring inclusive representation in bodies such as FKUB to support national efforts to maintain interfaith harmony.

2. METHODS

This research was conducted in two contrasting locations within Manggarai Regency: Ruteng, representing the urban setting, and Reo, representing the rural setting. The fieldwork took place from June 28 to July 5, 2022. These sites were deliberately selected to capture the diversity of social and demographic characteristics in the regency. Ruteng is the administrative and educational center with a dense and heterogeneous population, and Reo is a smaller coastal town where traditional kinship ties and rural livelihoods are more prominent. This comparative design enabled a comprehensive understanding of how social capital functions across different community contexts in preventing intolerance. The study employed a qualitative approach to explore the values, norms, and social structures that underpin interfaith harmony.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). A total of 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants, including religious leaders (Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, and Hindu), traditional leaders, local government officials, youth representatives, women's community activists, and members of interfaith forums such as the Inter-Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB). Informants were selected purposively to reflect variations in religious affiliation, gender, age, and social roles, ensuring a breadth of perspectives. In addition, four FGDs were organized—two in Ruteng and two in Reo each involving ten participants. Participants were selected using purposive criteria to ensure diversity in religion, gender, age group, and social background. The FGDs were facilitated by the research team using a semi-structured guide focusing on experiences of interfaith relations, conflict prevention, and community-based mechanisms of tolerance. Each session lasted approximately 90–120 minutes, and participants were encouraged to share experiences through open dialogue, with moderators ensuring that all voices—including those of women and younger participants were equally heard.

Participants and informants were recruited through coordination with community leaders, local religious organizations, and youth groups. The process followed the principles of inclusivity and representativeness, ensuring that marginalized voices were not excluded. Ethical considerations were strictly observed: written and verbal informed consent was obtained before participation; confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed by coding respondents' identities; and participation was entirely voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time without consequences.

The data analysis followed a systematic thematic approach. All FGDs and interviews were transcribed verbatim. An open coding process was first applied to identify key concepts emerging from the data. These codes were clustered into thematic categories aligned with the analytical framework of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. A comparative method was applied between the urban (Ruteng) and rural (Reo) cases to identify both commonalities and contextual differences in the functioning of social capital. The validity of findings was strengthened through triangulation across data sources (FGDs, interviews, and documents) and member checking with selected participants to ensure the accuracy of interpretations. By combining diverse perspectives, careful facilitation of group dynamics, and rigorous analytic procedures, this methodological framework enabled the study to generate a nuanced and valid understanding of the role of social capital in preventing and addressing religious intolerance in Manggarai Regency.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

General description of Inter-Religious Relations

The study indicates that inter-religious relations in Manggarai are generally characterized by openness, mutual respect, and an atmosphere of brotherhood that transcends ethnic and religious boundaries. This relational pattern is visible not only among leaders but also at the grassroots level, as highlighted by Sr. Maria Yohana Momas, SSpS, Chairwoman of the Interreligious Forum of Manggarai Regency: *“Inter-religious relations in Manggarai are very fluid, harmonious, and open. People of different religious backgrounds respect each other’s differences”* (interviewed, June 30th, 2022). Rev. Max Timu, pastor of GBI Rock Church in Ruteng, expressed a similar view, who emphasized that *“the relationship between religious communities in Ruteng is very good”* (interviewed, June 30th, 2022).

While these testimonies confirm the prevalence of harmony, they also reflect the operation of bonding social capital, where kinship, trust, and solidarity strengthen intra-community cohesion. At the same time, instances of cooperation across faiths, such as the participation of religious leaders in joint events described by Haj Kasim (interviewed, July 2nd, 2022), suggest elements of bridging social capital, creating networks that link different religious groups. Furthermore, interfaith youth initiatives, as noted by Siprianus Adut, who explained that young people actively counter divisive issues like hoaxes and gossip (interviewed, July 2nd, 2022), illustrate how younger generations contribute to resilience against intolerance by engaging in proactive conflict prevention.

However, despite this strong social fabric, the narrative also reveals potential vulnerabilities. For instance, while preserving harmony effectively, reliance on personal trust and communal rituals may mask latent tensions or structural fragilities, especially when external pressures such as digital misinformation or sectarian provocations emerge. These dynamics show that Manggarai’s tolerance is not a static condition but a negotiated outcome of continuous social interaction, supported by traditional structures and interfaith forums.

The comparison between Ruteng (urban) and Reo (rural) further underscores variations in how tolerance is practiced. In urban Ruteng, harmony appears more formalized through interfaith forums and institutionalized gatherings, while in rural Reo, everyday interactions and kinship-based solidarity play a more dominant role. This indicates that while the overarching ethos of harmony is shared, the mechanisms of social capital differ contextually, pointing to the need for nuanced strategies in sustaining tolerance across diverse settings.

Community Social Capital

The ability of religious communities and indigenous peoples in Manggarai to sustain tolerance is strongly shaped by multiple forms of social capital. These are expressed through the roles of religious leaders, community leaders, traditional authorities, interfaith organizations such as FKUB, and the local government. Rather than being isolated actors, these stakeholders collectively reinforce networks of trust and cooperation that function as mechanisms for preventing intolerance and resolving emerging tensions.

The role of religious leaders exemplifies how *bonding social capital* operates within and across faith communities. In Ruteng, leaders facilitate regular interfaith gatherings in rotation at different places of worship, combining spiritual dialogue with social interaction (FGD in Ruteng, June 30th, 2022). In Reo, religious leaders maintain close personal ties, becoming role models of solidarity, as emphasized by Muhammad Saleh: *“the community believes in religious leaders, because they unite and help the community*

prevent the spread of issues related to intolerance, radicalism and terrorism" (interviewed, July 2nd, 2022). These practices deepen internal cohesion and generate trust across groups, illustrating bonding and bridging dimensions.

Community and traditional leaders strengthen this process by embedding cultural wisdom and kinship values into interfaith relations. Phrases such as "*nai ca anggit, tuka ca léleng*" (one heart and soul) and "*lonto torok, bantang cama, réjé lélé*" (sit and consult together) embody the cultural norms of deliberation and reconciliation (FGD in Ruteng, June 30th, 2022). In rural Reo, such customary principles carry more weight, while in urban Ruteng, formalized dialogues are more prominent. This contrast highlights how local context shapes the ways social capital is enacted. Importantly, while these traditions foster harmony, informants acknowledged limitations, noting that not all conflicts can be fully addressed through cultural wisdom alone. This suggests that, although powerful, reliance on tradition may leave gaps when dealing with structural or externally driven challenges.

The FKUB (Religious Harmony Forum) represents an institutionalized form of *linking social capital*, connecting communities to formal governance structures. In Ruteng, FKUB organizes outreach activities, seminars, and workshops promoting tolerance, multiculturalism, and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (FGD in Ruteng, June 30th, 2022). In Reo, FKUB's influence is evident in conflict mediation, such as the 2019 case of interfaith youth unrest triggered by misinformation, where collaboration between Father Herman Ando, community leaders, and government authorities successfully restored peace (interviewed in Reo, July 2nd, 2022). These examples underscore how institutional mechanisms complement grassroots solidarity in conflict resolution.

Finally, through KESBANGPOL LINMAS and KEMENAG, the local government reinforces tolerance by providing educational programs and facilitating collaboration between civil society and interfaith groups (FGD, Ruteng, June 30th, 2022). As Rev. Maxi Timu noted, "*the role of the government is to enforce applicable law through a social approach, with religious leaders, community leaders, and also FKUB, and think together the best way out for a conflict that has religious nuances*" (interviewed, Ruteng, June 30th, 2022). This reflects the interplay between state authority and social capital in ensuring peaceful coexistence.

Manggarai's community social capital functions through a multi-layered interaction of bonding, bridging, and linking ties. Nevertheless, these strengths must be critically assessed alongside their vulnerabilities: the harmony achieved often depends on informal trust, charismatic leadership, and customary practices that may not always withstand external pressures such as radical ideologies or socio-economic inequalities. Moreover, differences between Ruteng and Reo show that tolerance is context-dependent, shaped by whether networks are more institutional (urban) or kinship-based (rural). Recognizing these nuances enriches our understanding of how social capital operates as both a resource and a potential limitation in sustaining interfaith harmony.

Identifying Symptoms of Intolerance

When respondents and informants in both Ruteng and Reo were asked about signs of intolerance such as hate speech, slander, hoaxes, sweeping of worship places, rejection of religious minorities, or discriminatory regulations, most participants stated that such symptoms were generally absent in their communities. This widespread perception underscores the strength of bonding social capital, where community trust and solidarity foster a sense of security and minimize visible hostility.

However, the absence of open conflict does not mean intolerance is nonexistent. A notable case occurred in Reo in 2019, when a hoax alleging harassment of a Muslim girl by a Catholic youth sparked

interfaith tensions among young people. The escalation was mitigated through the combined efforts of government, religious leaders, traditional leaders, and interfaith youth groups, who relied on cultural mechanisms such as the sacrificial ritual (cow slaughter) followed by communal meals to restore peace (FGD in Reo, July 2nd, 2022). This case illustrates the importance of bridging and linking social capital dialogues across communities and collaboration with institutions to contain conflict. Nevertheless, it also reveals a structural vulnerability: misinformation circulating through digital platforms can rapidly inflame interfaith relations, exposing the fragility beneath the surface harmony.

Other subtle signs of tension were also acknowledged. Sr. M. Yohana noted the presence of objections to Christian sects perceived as attempting to "grab" adherents from other faiths (interviewed, Ruteng, June 30th, 2022). Similarly, Rev. Maxi Timu highlighted occasional disputes over establishing places of worship, which were eventually resolved through staged negotiations (interviewed, Ruteng, June 30th, 2022). These examples point to latent boundaries in religious coexistence that are not always visible in daily interactions.

The urban–rural contrast adds further nuance. In Ruteng, contestation often emerges in more formalized domains, such as worship permits and sectarian dynamics, where government intervention and institutional mediation are crucial. In Reo, tensions manifest in youth interactions and are addressed through kinship-based reconciliation practices. This variation demonstrates that while Manggarai's tolerance is resilient, the strategies to address intolerance are context-dependent, reflecting different balances between traditional, communal, and institutional forms of social capital.

Overall, the findings suggest that Manggarai's relative harmony should not be read as an absence of intolerance but as evidence of effective conflict management rooted in overlapping networks of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. At the same time, the persistence of hoaxes, proselytization disputes, and worship-place objections highlights the need for continuous vigilance, as tolerance in Manggarai is not a given but an achievement that must be sustained against structural and external pressures.

Efforts to Prevent and Manage Conflict and Intolerance

Efforts to prevent intolerance and manage conflict in Manggarai are not confined to individual initiatives. Still, they are embedded in a web of organizations and networks that combine cultural traditions, interfaith collaboration, and institutional support. The Ruteng Diocese's Interfaith and Belief Relations Commission (HAK) and FKUB, for example, have initiated platforms such as the *Interfaith Fraternity Bridge* and the *Local Food Empowerment Group (JELITA)*, which function across ethnic, regional, and social lines. These initiatives exemplify bridging social capital, creating spaces where diverse groups cooperate beyond their immediate affiliations.

Women's and youth groups play a particularly strategic role. Interfaith women's unions address economic empowerment and broader social issues, including education for harmony, tolerance, and resistance to fanaticism. Meanwhile, JELITA's youth division provides structured opportunities for interfaith collaboration, as seen in its joint activities with Catholic Youth and Mosque Youth during religious and national celebrations (FGD, Ruteng, June 30th, 2022). These activities, ranging from guarding places of worship during major holidays to organizing sports, seminars, and cultural performances (FGD in Reo, July 2nd, 2002), demonstrate how bonding capital within youth groups is transformed into bridging capital that strengthens cross-community trust.

The examples from Ruteng and Reo also highlight different mechanisms of conflict management. In urban Ruteng, interfaith collaboration tends to be institutionalized through forums,

structured outreach, and formal events. By contrast, in rural Reo, practices such as youth guarding each other's religious celebrations are deeply embedded in everyday social life, reflecting a reliance on kinship-like solidarity. This contrast suggests that while both settings rely on the same underlying values of mutual trust, their strategies for sustaining tolerance are context-specific, formalized in the urban center and informal but equally effective in rural areas.

Critically, these initiatives show how *linking social capital* through coordination with religious and governmental institutions ensures that policy frameworks and institutional legitimacy support grassroots efforts. However, while these practices are highly effective in fostering harmony, they are also resource-intensive and dependent on sustained participation. While powerful in the short term, the reliance on symbolic rituals and volunteerism may face challenges if external pressures such as radical ideologies, economic inequalities, or generational disengagement weaken the commitment to interfaith cooperation. Manggarai's strategies for preventing intolerance are reactive and proactive, building resilience through overlapping networks of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. At the same time, the durability of these efforts depends on their ability to adapt to changing social dynamics and to address underlying structural vulnerabilities, ensuring that tolerance is continuously renewed rather than taken for granted.

The influence of the Local Customs

Local customs and cultural traditions in Manggarai play a central role in reinforcing tolerance and managing conflicts with religious or ethnic dimensions. These practices embody bonding social capital, relying on shared values, rituals, and kinship ties that bind community members together. At the same time, they also function as bridging mechanisms, creating platforms for reconciliation across groups with different religious identities.

Two examples stand out in this context. First, the *hambor* (peace) ritual, performed through the sacrificial slaughter of a cow (*paki japi*), is a communal act that symbolizes reconciliation and the restoration of social harmony (FGD, Ruteng, June 30th, 2022; FGD, Reo, July 2nd, 2022). Second, the *lontok leok* forum (sitting together in consultation) is a traditional institution for dialogue and consensus-building, passed down across generations. Both practices were mobilized in Reo during the 2019 interfaith youth conflict, with the support of the Manggarai Regency Government, religious leaders, and community leaders. Sr. M. Yohana says these ceremonies invite God and the ancestors to reconcile conflicting groups and reaffirm unity and brotherhood (interviewed, Ruteng, June 30th, 2022).

While effective in fostering reconciliation, these customs also highlight the contextual variations between urban and rural settings. In Reo (rural), rituals and kinship-based forums remain central to conflict management, reflecting the strong reliance on traditional authority. In Ruteng (urban), however, the role of local customs is often integrated with formalized interfaith dialogue and institutional mediation, showing a hybrid interaction between cultural traditions and modern governance structures. This contrast illustrates how social capital manifests differently depending on the social environment, ritualized and kinship-based in rural areas, institutionalized and policy-linked in urban ones.

From a critical perspective, reliance on customs and rituals can also present limitations. While these practices strengthen solidarity and provide culturally resonant means of conflict resolution, they may overlook structural issues such as unequal power relations, generational differences, or external ideological pressures. Moreover, the emphasis on harmony and ritual reconciliation risks masking latent tensions that could resurface under changing socio-political conditions.

Manggarai's local customs serve as vital cultural resources that reinforce bonding and bridging social capital, supporting the community's capacity to maintain tolerance and manage conflict. Nevertheless, their effectiveness depends on continual adaptation to new challenges, including the influence of digital misinformation and broader national debates on pluralism. Understanding these dynamics underscores the importance of integrating cultural wisdom with institutional mechanisms to sustain long-term interfaith harmony.

3.2 Discussion

This study illustrates that tolerance constitutes a defining feature of social relations and structures in Manggarai Regency. While open conflict has been rare, moments of tension, such as proselytization disputes or the 2019 hoax in Reo, reveal that harmony is not static but the outcome of continuous negotiation supported by social capital. These findings align with the 2019 Ministry of Religious Affairs report that placed NTT among the most tolerant provinces in Indonesia. However, they also underscore the importance of understanding *how* tolerance is sustained rather than assuming it as a given.

The key contribution of this study lies in analyzing Manggarai's experience through the typology of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital (Claridge, 2018; Woolcock, 1998). Bonding social capital is evident in the kinship networks, customary expressions, and communal rituals that reinforce solidarity within and across religious groups. Phrases such as *nai ca anggit, tuka ca léleng* (one heart and soul) encapsulate the cultural values that bind individuals. At the same time, the trust placed in religious and traditional leaders illustrates how bonding ties sustain everyday tolerance. However, an overreliance on bonding can risk insularity, raising questions about whether minorities are protected through genuine inclusion or primarily through majority benevolence.

Bridging social capital emerges in collaborative initiatives that connect different communities, such as FKUB outreach activities, interfaith youth cooperation, and joint celebrations. The 2019 conflict in Reo provides a concrete example: misinformation initially threatened to divide communities, but bridging networks mediated by youth groups, religious leaders, and community elders facilitated reconciliation. Nonetheless, bridging remains uneven across settings. In urban Ruteng, it is institutionalized through seminars and interfaith forums, while in rural Reo, it is practiced more informally through daily interactions and shared responsibilities. These differences suggest that bridging capital adapts to local social structures, but they also expose vulnerabilities where digital misinformation or sectarian competition can overwhelm fragile cross-group ties.

Linking social capital, the connections between communities and formal institutions, is equally important but often underemphasized. The involvement of local government agencies, FKUB, and church commissions ensures that grassroots initiatives are reinforced by institutional legitimacy. For instance, government collaboration in conflict resolution and tolerance workshops demonstrates how linking capital transforms local practices into broader governance frameworks. Nevertheless, reliance on state support raises further questions: to what extent do bottom-up communal values versus top-down interventions sustain tolerance, and how resilient is it when state capacity is limited?

While Manggarai's social capital contributes significantly to conflict prevention, it also has limitations. Harmony is often maintained through rituals, communal meals, and symbolic gestures, which, while effective, may overlook deeper structural challenges such as economic inequality, youth unemployment, or susceptibility to external radical ideologies. Moreover, the valorization of cultural

unity may inadvertently obscure minority voices or silence dissenting perspectives, highlighting the ambivalence of social capital as both an asset and a potential barrier to inclusivity.

Placing these findings in a broader scholarly conversation, Manggarai's case resonates with studies of tolerance in other plural societies where local customs, kinship networks, and religious leadership mitigate conflict (Putnam, 1995; Bourdieu, 1983). However, it also challenges overly celebratory accounts by revealing that tolerance depends on strong social capital and adaptive mechanisms to confront misinformation, sectarian competition, and structural inequalities. Thus, the novelty of this study lies in showing that Manggarai's harmony is less a permanent condition than a dynamic process anchored in bonding ties, expanded through bridging networks, and secured by linking institutions, yet always vulnerable to disruption.

Bonding Social Capital

Bonding social capital in Manggarai Regency is expressed through kinship values, traditions, and cultural norms that strengthen solidarity and reinforce community cohesion. Brotherhood, harmony, and unity are not merely abstract ideals but are institutionalized through kinship systems and everyday practices, ensuring that trust, reciprocity, and mutual recognition are reproduced across generations. As observed in this study, the involvement of traditional leaders, religious figures, community leaders, youth organizations, government, and interfaith forums (FKUB) further amplifies these bonding ties, creating a strong cultural and moral framework for tolerance.

Theoretically, these dynamics exemplify Claridge and Woolcock's concept of bonding social capital, which emphasizes internal solidarity and dense networks of trust within communities. The protective function of such networks is visible in Manggarai's ability to shield itself from external threats of intolerance or radical influence. For example, the emphasis on collective identity "nai ca anggit, tuka ca léleng" (one heart and soul) has provided a cultural bulwark against divisive narratives.

However, a critical reflection reveals that bonding social capital also has limitations. While it fosters security and belonging, it can simultaneously reinforce in-group boundaries, raising the question of how genuine inclusion of minorities is ensured. The comfort of minority groups "side by side with the majority" may depend more on benevolent tolerance than equal power relations, suggesting a potential fragility if demographic or political dynamics shift. Furthermore, the reliance on strong kinship ties and customary values may obscure structural vulnerabilities, such as socio-economic inequalities or the influence of external radical ideologies, which cannot always be addressed through bonding ties alone.

This resonates with findings from plural societies elsewhere, where bonding capital strengthens resilience but risks parochialism if not complemented by bridging and linking forms (Putnam, 1995; Woolcock, 1998). In Manggarai, the strength of bonding networks contributes significantly to harmony. Nevertheless, their long-term effectiveness depends on their interaction with bridging initiatives (cross-community cooperation) and linking mechanisms (institutional support). Thus, while bonding social capital is central to preventing intolerance, it should be viewed as one element within a broader ecology of social capital that must continuously adapt to shifting social and political contexts.

Bridging social capital

The role of bridging social capital in Manggarai can be observed in the institutional and communal efforts to connect groups across religious, ethnic, and social boundaries. Empirical evidence, such as the mediation of youth conflicts in Reo and the facilitation of contested places of worship by

FKUB, illustrates how multi-stakeholder dialogues serve as bridges that prevent escalation and foster reconciliation. These practices show that bridging social capital does not merely preserve harmony, but actively creates intergroup trust through inclusive forums and sustained dialogue involving FKUB, traditional leaders, community leaders, and local government.

However, the analysis reveals that bridging processes are uneven and context-dependent. While Ruteng demonstrates stronger institutional mediation through FKUB's structured programs, Reo relies more heavily on informal ties and community rituals. This difference highlights the importance of context in shaping how bridging operates urban areas tend to institutionalize dialogue, while rural areas emphasize cultural practices and interpersonal trust. Therefore, the bridging mechanisms in Manggarai align with and extend Claridge and Woolcock's typology by showing how local cultural traditions (such as communal rituals and proverbs) are embedded into institutional mediation efforts.

At the same time, it is necessary to recognize the potential limitations of bridging social capital. While it helps prevent open conflict, unresolved tensions may persist beneath the surface, particularly regarding minority rights or contestations around religious conversions. The fact that bridging in Manggarai is often reactive, activated after provocation such as hoaxes or disputes over worship spaces, raises questions about its sustainability and capacity to address structural vulnerabilities. Situating these findings within broader Indonesian scholarship on interfaith dialogue suggests that bridging social capital in Manggarai is a valuable but fragile resource, requiring continuous institutional support and cultural reinforcement to maintain its effectiveness.

Linking social capital

Linking social capital in Manggarai is visible in establishing formal institutions such as the *Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama* (FKUB) and interfaith youth forums in each district. These organizations serve as crucial connectors between grassroots communities and state structures, ensuring that interfaith cooperation is based on cultural values and kinship and reinforced by institutional legitimacy. FKUB, for instance, organizes regular meetings, facilitates multi-religious gatherings, and plays an active role in major interfaith celebrations. Similarly, youth forums conduct social and environmental activities, demonstrating how young generations collaborate collaboratively across religious boundaries.

Theoretically, these initiatives align with Claridge and Woolcock's conception of linking social capital, where vertical connections between communities and formal institutions provide resources, legitimacy, and channels for conflict management. Manggarai is significant because these formal mechanisms are infused with local cultural values of openness and inclusivity. As noted in the findings, the culture of accepting outsiders across ethnic, tribal, and religious boundaries ensures that these forums are not perceived as purely bureaucratic but as meaningful spaces where differences are embraced rather than suppressed.

Nonetheless, a more critical reflection reveals the limits of linking capital. While FKUB and interfaith youth forums have proven effective in preventing escalation of conflicts and promoting tolerance, their capacity depends heavily on continuous institutional support and leadership commitment. Questions remain about the sustainability of these efforts if political will weakens, or if economic and ideological pressures exceed the forums' reach. Furthermore, while linking capital is designed to be inclusive, there is a risk that marginalized groups, such as smaller sects or less represented minorities, may still feel excluded if their voices are not adequately integrated into institutional decision-making.

Comparatively, these dynamics resonate with findings from other plural societies in Indonesia, where FKUB often plays a dual role as mediator and regulator. In some regions, the reliance on FKUB has been criticized for privileging dominant religious voices, raising concerns about token representation. Against this backdrop, Manggarai's model stands out for embedding local customs and grassroots participation into formal linking structures, suggesting a hybrid form of linking capital that combines cultural legitimacy with institutional authority.

In short, linking social capital in Manggarai is essential for sustaining long-term tolerance. It bridges the gap between communal harmony and state regulation, ensuring tolerance is institutionalized rather than left to chance. However, its effectiveness depends on balancing inclusivity, addressing potential exclusions, and maintaining resilience against broader structural and ideological challenges.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the prevention and management of religious intolerance in Manggarai Regency are supported by overlapping forms of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital that collectively sustain interfaith harmony. Kinship values, cultural norms, and customary rituals provide strong bonding ties; multi-stakeholder dialogues and intergroup cooperation represent bridging mechanisms; while institutional structures such as FKUB and interfaith youth forums embody linking capital that connects communities with state frameworks. These dimensions illustrate why Manggarai, despite its religious diversity, has managed to mitigate tensions and maintain peaceful coexistence.

Theoretically, this research contributes by extending Claridge and Woolcock's typology of social capital, showing how cultural traditions and institutional frameworks can operate as a hybrid and mutually reinforcing system. It underscores the importance of embedding local wisdom into formal institutions and empowering inclusive, youth-centered forums to strengthen resilience against intolerance at both grassroots and policy levels. Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. Its qualitative scope and focus on only two locations, Ruteng and Reo, may not fully represent the broader diversity of Manggarai's religious life. The reliance on participants' perceptions may also underrepresent latent conflicts or marginalized voices. Future research could address these limitations through comparative studies across different regions, longitudinal analyses of how social capital evolves, or policy evaluations assessing interfaith initiatives' long-term effectiveness. By situating Manggarai within wider debates on tolerance in plural societies, this study contributes empirically and theoretically to understanding social capital as a dynamic and negotiated foundation for sustaining interfaith harmony in Indonesia.

REFERENCES

- Adut, Siprianus, 32, Catholic Youth Representative, Reo, 2 July 2022.
- Al Gadri, Husein, a religious leader and retired local parliament member of the Manggarai Regency, Reo, 3 July 2022.
- Aldridge, S., David Halpern, and Sarah Fitzpatrick. (2002). *Social Capital: A Discussion Paper*. London, England: Performance and Innovation Unit.
- Ando, Herman, 67, head of FKUB Kec. Reo, Reo, 3 July 2022.
- Anheier, H. & Kendall, J. (2002). "Interpersonal Trust and Voluntary Associations," *British Journal of Sociology* 53, pp. 343-362.
- Badan Pembinaan Ideologi Pancasila. (n.d.). *Badan Pembinaan Ideologi Pancasila*. Diakses 10 Februari 2022,

- dari <https://www.bpip.go.id/bpip/>
- Bourdieu, P. (1983). "Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital" in *Soziale Ungleichheiten* (Soziale Welt, Sonderheft 2), edited by Reinhard Kreckel. Goettingen: Otto Scharitz & Co.
- Claridge, T. (2018). "Functions of social capital – bonding, bridging, linking" in *Social Capital Research*, (1-7) accessed on 22 May 2022, <https://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Functions-of-Social-Capital.pdf>.
- Coleman, J. C. (1988). "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital". *American Journal of Sociology*. 94, 95–120.
- Dolfsma, W. & Dannreuther, C. (2003). "Subjects and boundaries: Contesting social capital-based policies," *Journal of Economic Issues* 37, 405-413.
- Focused Group Discussion di Reo, 2 Juli 2022.
- Focused Group Discussion in Ruteng, 30 Juni 2022.
- Grootaert, C. & Van Bastelaer, T. (2002a). "Conclusion: measuring impact and drawing policy implications" in *The Role of Social Capital in Development*, (pp. 341 – 350) by Thierry Van Bastelaer (ed.). Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Halili. (2017). *Supremasi Intoleransi*. Yogyakarta: Setara Institute, accessed on February 2022 from <https://www.ahlulbaitindonesia.or.id/berita/index.php/s13-berita/resensi-buku-supremasiintoleransi/>.
- Heffron, J. M. (2000). "Beyond community and society: The externalities of social capital building," *Policy Sciences* 33, 477-494.
- Hitt, M. A., Lee, H-U, and Yucel, E. (2002). "The importance of social capital to managing multinational enterprises: Relational networks among Asian and Western firms," *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* 19, 341 - 53.
- Huda, N.M. (2017). *Intoleransi Kaum Muda di Tengah Kebangkitan Kelas Menengah Muslim di Perkotaan*, PDF, Jakarta: The Wahid Foundation, accessed on February 8th, 2022, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VFWN8blwQzjCqDIHUwyFrCddOTouT8QU/view>.
- Imparsial. (2019, November 17). *Imparsial Temukan 31 Kasus Intoleransi selama Setahun*. Diakses 5 Februari 2022, dari <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20191117163821-32-449096/imparsial-temukan31-kasus-intoleransi-selama-setahun> CNN Indonesia
- Kasim, Ahmad, 73, Muslim figure, Reo, 2 July 2022.
- Krishna, A. and Uphoff, N. (2002). 'Mapping and measuring social capital through assessment of collective action to conserve and develop watersheds in Rajasthan, India,' in Thierry Van Bastelaer (ed.). *The Role of Social Capital in Development* (pp. 85 – 88, 115 – 124), Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- LIPI. (n.d.). *LIPI: Intoleransi Politik di Indonesia Meningkat*. Diakses 3 Februari 2022, dari <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/lipi-intoleransi-politik-di-indonesia-meningkat/4687374.html>
- Momas, Sr. Maria Yohana, Head of FKUB Kab. Manggarai, 51 years old, Ruteng, 30 June 2022.
- Narayan, D. & Pritchett, L. (1999). "Social capital: Evidence and implications." in Ismail Serageldin (ed.), *Social Capital: A multifaceted perspective*, (pp. 269-296). Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Narayan, D. (2002). "Bonds and bridges: social capital and poverty." Sunder Ramaswamy (ed.), *Social Capital and Economic Development: Well-being in Developing Countries*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Nugraheny, D. E. (2019). "Ini Tiga Sebab Menguatnya Sikap Intoleransi di Indonesia Versi Polri", accessed on February 22, 2022 from <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2019/11/16/07364551/ini->

- tiga-sebabmenguatnya-sikap-intoleransi-di-indonesia-versi-polri?
- Portes, A. (1998). "Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology". *Annual Review of Sociology*. 24, 1–24.
- Puslitbang Bimas Agama dan Layanan Keagamaan Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama Indonesia. (2019). "Daftar Skor Indeks Kerukunan Beragama versi Kemenag 2019", accessed on February 8th, 2022, <https://tirto.id/daftar-skor-indeks-kerukunan-beragama-versi-kemenag-2019-engH>.
- Putnam, Robert D. (1995, January). "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital". *Journal of Democracy*. 6 (1), 65–78.
- Qodir, Z. (2016, May). "Kaum Muda, Intoleransi, dan Radikalisme Agama", *Jurnal Studi Pemuda*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 429 – 445.
- Rahman, D. A. (2019). "Imparsial: Intoleransi Masih Jadi Masalah yang Terus Berulang di Indonesia" accessed February 5th, 2022, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2019/11/17/16015521/imparsialintoleransi-masih-jadi-masalah-yang-terus-berulang-di-indonesia>.
- Saleh, Mohammad, 38, Muslim Youth Representative, Reo, 2 July 2022.
- Timu, Maxi, SE, 53, Pastor of Bethel Indonesia Rock Church, Ruteng, 30 June 2022.
- Uphoff, N. & Wijayaratna, C.M. (2000). "Demonstrated Benefits from Social Capital: The Productivity of Farmer Organizations in Gal Oya, Sri Lanka." *World Development* 28, 1875-1890.
- Van Deth, J. D. (2003). "Measuring social capital: orthodoxies and continuing controversies," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 6, 79-92.
- Wallis, A. (1998). "Social capital and community building. (Building Healthier Communities: Ten Years of Learning)(part 2)," *National Civic Review* 87, 317-19.
- Wallis, A., Crocker, J.P. and Schechter, B. (1998). "Social capital and community building, part 1," *National Civic Review* 87, 253-72.
- Woolcock, M. (1998). "Social Capital and Economic Development: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis and Policy Framework", *Theory and Society* 27 (2), 151-208.
- Woolcock, M., & Narayan, D. (2000). *Social Capital: Implications for Development Theory, Research, and Policy*. *World Bank Research Observer*, 15(2), 225-249. [Oxford Academic+2SCIRP+2](#)