

The Role of Civil Society (Nahdlatul Ulama, Ansharullah, and Khudamul Ahmadiyah) in Resolving the Conflict between Sunni Muslims and Ahmadis in Sindang Barang, Bogor City

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ABSTRACT:

Background: Religious conflicts between Sunni Muslims and Ahmadis in Indonesia have been ongoing for a long time and often lead to tension and discrimination. Sindang Barang, Bogor City, is an area of interest for study because it has been able to minimize conflicts through the involvement of various parties, particularly civil society organizations.

Aims: This study aims to explain the role of civil society, particularly Nahdlatul Ulama, Ansharullah, and Khudamul Ahmadiyah, in resolving the Sunni-Ahmadiyah conflict in Sindang Barang. In addition, this study also analyzes the factors that support the creation of social harmony in the region.

Methods: The study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive-analytical methods. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with NU leaders, Ahmadiyah leaders, GP Ansor members, and local residents, supplemented by documentation and literature review. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions by referring to civil society theory (Muhammad A.S. Hikam), direct relations and family theory (Clifford Geertz), and conflict resolution theory (Amin Abdullah).

Result: The results of the study indicate that conflict resolution in Sindang Barang was successful due to the active role of civil society in establishing dialogue, organizing joint social activities, and strengthening direct ties and kinship among residents. The principle of Love for All, Hatred for None upheld by the Ahmadiyya community also strengthened social acceptance and tolerance among the Sunni community.

Conclusion: This study concludes that civil society involvement plays a crucial role in maintaining religious harmony amid differences in beliefs. These findings show that civil society-based conflict resolution can be an effective alternative model for reducing potential intolerance in Indonesia, while complementing the limitations of the state's role in protecting the civil rights of minority groups.

Keywords: Civil Society, Sunni, Ahmadiyah, Conflict Resolution

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INTRODUCTION

The socio-religious conflict between Sunni and Ahmadiyah in Indonesia is a highly urgent issue that requires thorough examination, as theological differences often escalate into discriminatory actions, intolerance, and even violence (Aksa, 2018; Chairi, 2019; Muhtador, 2018; Saprih et al., 2020; Tarhan & Abdullah, 2024). A similar case occurred in Sindang Barang, Bogor City, where differences in beliefs have caused friction among residents. The urgency of this research lies in understanding the dynamics of horizontal conflicts based on religion and the strategies for resolving them to prevent disruption of broader social harmony.

In an ideal situation, the state is expected to act as a guarantor of religious freedom, provide equal protection, and enforce the law fairly (Fatmawati, 2016; Pinilih & Hikmah, 2018; Susilowati, 2016; Widiatama et al., 2020). However, the reality shows that there are gaps. The government often adopts a passive or ambiguous stance in handling Ahmadiyah cases, such as through the MUI fatwa that deems Ahmadiyah deviant, and the joint ministerial decree (SKB) that is frequently misinterpreted as the basis for legitimizing persecution (Najiburrohman et al., 2020; Ummah, 2016; Wahab & Fakhruddin, 2019; Wibowo, 2013). This situation exacerbates conflicts at the grassroots level, including in Sindang Barang.

However, there are great opportunities in this research because Sindang Barang shows a relatively peaceful pattern of conflict resolution. Unlike many other regions that have experienced severe persecution, in this area, Sunni-Ahmadiyah conflicts have been minimized thanks to the involvement of civil society elements such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Ansharullah, and Khudamul Ahmadiyah. This opens up opportunities to examine how community-based social mechanisms can promote constructive conflict resolution.

Based on a literature review, there is still a research gap regarding how local civil society can play a tangible role in mitigating religious conflicts. Previous studies have mostly focused on cases in Lenteng Agung, Tasikmalaya, or Manislor, but few have highlighted Sindang Barang as a unique example of successful social harmony. The novelty of this research lies in its integrative analysis of the role of civil society with direct relationship and family theory (Clifford Geertz) and conflict resolution (Amin Abdullah) in the specific context of Sindang Barang.

The selection of variable X, namely the role of civil society (NU, Ansharullah, Khudamul Ahmadiyah), was based on the fact that these organizations function as effective non-state actors in building dialogue, reducing friction, and facilitating cooperation among citizens. Thus, civil society is seen as an important instrument for addressing the limitations of the state's role in ensuring harmony.

Based on this background, the objectives of this study are to explain the role of civil society in resolving the Sunni Ahmadiyah conflict in Sindang Barang, to analyze the process and supporting factors of its success, and to contribute academically to the literature on civil society-based conflict resolution. Practically, this study is expected to serve as a reference for policymakers, religious organizations, and the wider community in fostering peaceful and sustainable interfaith relations. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on Sindang Barang as a relatively underexplored case of successful conflict resolution, contrasting with other regions where Sunni-Ahmadiyah conflicts often escalate into violence. By integrating civil society theory (Erisanna & Akbar, 2025), Geertz's theory of direct relations and family ties, and Amin Abdullah's conflict resolution theory, this study provides a unique interdisciplinary framework to understand how religious harmony can be maintained in a plural society. This integrative perspective not only enriches theoretical discourse but also offers a concrete model of community-based conflict resolution that can be replicated in other regions of Indonesia.

METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive-analytical methods. This approach was chosen because it provides an in-depth description of the role of civil society in conflict resolution between Sunni Muslims and Ahmadis in Sindang Barang, Bogor City. The focus of the study is on understanding the social processes, interactions, and strategies employed by civil society actors in minimizing conflict.

Participants

The research participants consisted of key figures directly involved in conflict resolution, namely the Head of the Ahmadiyah Congregation in Sindang Barang, Sunni community leaders, the Head of GP Ansor Bogor City, regional preachers, and representatives from Khudamul Ahmadiyah. In addition, several Nahdlatul Ulama figures at the local level were also used as key informants.

Population and Sampling Methods

The research population consists of all members of the Sindang Barang community who are involved in or affected by the Sunni–Ahmadiyah conflict. Given the qualitative nature of the research, purposive sampling was used to select informants who were considered to have the best understanding of the dynamics of the conflict, including members of civil society, religious leaders, and community members who were directly involved.

Instrumentation

The main research instrument was a semi-structured interview guide containing open-ended questions about the role of civil society, forms of interaction between groups, and conflict resolution mechanisms. The questions were designed to be flexible to allow for broader exploration of information based on the informants' experiences. The validity of the instrument was strengthened through triangulation of sources (interviews, documents, and observations) to ensure data accuracy.

Procedures and Time Frame

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with Sunni leaders, Ahmadiyah leaders, and civil society representatives in Sindang Barang, supplemented by documentation in the form of conflict event records, mass media archives, and observations of socio-religious activities in the field. This research was conducted over several months from 2022 to 2023, adjusting to the availability of informants and social dynamics at the research site.

Analysis Plan

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive-analytical methods through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Reduction was carried out by sorting relevant data according to the research focus, data presentation was used to show patterns of relationships between findings, while conclusions were drawn based on the integration of civil society theory, direct relationship and family theory (Clifford Geertz), and conflict resolution theory. Triangulation was carried out to increase data validity by comparing the results of interviews, documentation, and observations.

Data Analysis Process Funnel



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Table 1. Research Findings on the Role of Civil Society in the Resolution of the Sunni & Ahmadiyah Conflict

Aspect Findings	Description of Findings	Key Actors
Role of Civil Society	NU, Ansharullah, and Khudamul Ahmadiyah are actively engaged in dialogue, social activities, and cross-group cooperation to reduce conflict.	NU, Ansharullah, Khudamul Ahmadiyah
Conflict Resolution Strategy	Persuasive approaches through reconciliation forums, religious leader mediation, and joint activities (religious study sessions, health clinics, community service).	NU leaders, Ahmadiyah leaders, GP Ansor
Supporting Factors for Harmony	Direct interpersonal relationships and family ties serve as social capital that strengthens cohesion.	Local leaders, cross-group families
Ahmadiyah's Core Principles	The implementation of the motto "Love for All, Hatred for None" in social interactions strengthens acceptance from the Sunni community.	Ahmadiyah Community of Sindang Barang

The results of the study indicate that the role of civil society in Sindang Barang was a key factor in mitigating conflict between Sunnis and Ahmadis. Nahdlatul Ulama acted as a mediator through cultural and religious approaches, while Ansharullah and Khudamul Ahmadiyah were more involved in social activities that brought the two groups together. This synergy prevented the conflict from escalating into open violence, as had occurred in other areas.

The dominant conflict resolution strategy is a persuasive and social approach. Civil society facilitates forums for religious leaders to meet, organizes joint activities such as religious lectures, community service, and health services (posyandu), thereby creating opportunities for positive interaction among residents. This approach not only resolves tensions but also strengthens a sense of togetherness among different communities.

Another factor that strengthens conflict resolution is direct relationships and family ties. In Sindang Barang, many Sunni and Ahmadiyah leaders have personal connections that enable them to manage differences through deliberation. Primordial family ties and social closeness are important assets that prevent potential conflicts from escalating. This demonstrates the relevance of Clifford Geertz's theory of *direct relationships* and *family ties* in the context of religious conflict resolution.

In addition, the principles upheld by the Ahmadiyya community, namely *Love for All, Hatred for None*, have proven to have a positive impact on the acceptance of the surrounding community. The inclusive attitude and consistent social contributions of the Ahmadiyah community, such as blood donation drives and educational initiatives, have made some Sunni Muslims more open-minded and tolerant. This demonstrates that conflict resolution in Sindang Barang is not merely the result of organizational intervention but also the fruit of religious values practiced in daily life.

Discussion

The findings from Sindang Barang show that conflict resolution between Sunni and Ahmadiyah communities can be achieved through active involvement of civil society organizations and the strengthening of kinship-based ties. (Argenti et al., 2017; Riboldi, 2024; Tkachuk et al., 2023). This pattern differs significantly from other cases, such as those in Lenteng Agung, Tasikmalaya, or Manislor, where conflicts often escalated into violence and prolonged discrimination (Ekowati et al., 2023; Salsabila et al., 2023; Salsabila & Nurwianti, 2024). The critical difference lies in the presence of inclusive local actors—Nahdlatul Ulama, Ansharullah, and Khudamul Ahmadiyah—who facilitated dialogue and cooperation in Sindang Barang, compared to other regions where state policies or local elites tended to reinforce divisions. This indicates that community-based peacebuilding, when rooted in both social capital and religious values, can reduce intolerance more effectively than approaches dominated solely by legal or state intervention. (Ali et al., 2022; Baratullah & Annajah, 2022; Dona et al., 2025; Ismail et al., 2022; Nuh, 2014).

This study contributes to the theoretical discourse in three ways. First, it strengthens civil society theory by demonstrating that grassroots organizations can act as effective mediators in religious conflicts where the state's role is limited. Second, it expands Geertz's theory of direct relations and family ties by showing that kinship is not only a cultural element but also a powerful conflict resolution resource in plural societies. Third, it affirms Amin Abdullah's conflict resolution theory, highlighting that values such as dialogue, tolerance, and inclusivity can be institutionalized through community organizations. These contributions provide an interdisciplinary framework for analyzing religious conflict resolution in Indonesia. (Mawikere et al., 2024; Miftakhur Ridlo, 2021; Susanti, 2024). Another contribution is empirical verification, where the principles of dialogue, tolerance, and respect for plurality can serve as instruments for sustainable peaceful resolution.

Practically, the Sindang Barang case offers a model that can be replicated in other regions prone to sectarian tension. Policymakers should recognize the importance of empowering civil society groups as mediators and facilitators of dialogue, rather than relying exclusively on state-centric or repressive approaches. Religious organizations can adopt Sindang Barang's model by promoting joint activities, inter-group collaboration, and community-based initiatives that build trust across differences. For local communities, this study provides evidence that peaceful coexistence is possible when tolerance is practiced consistently and supported by inclusive leadership.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that the civil society-based conflict resolution model in Sindang Barang be replicated in other areas prone to religious conflict. The government needs to provide greater support and space for civil society organizations to act as mediators in conflicts. Further research could expand the scope of the study to other regions and involve more perspectives from the general public to enrich the analysis. Additionally, comparative studies between regions using a mixed-methods approach could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of civil society's role in various conflict contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the role of civil society, particularly Nahdlatul Ulama, Ansharullah, and Khudamul Ahmadiyah, is an important factor in mitigating Sunni–Ahmadiyah conflicts in Sindang Barang, Bogor City. Through inter-group dialogue, joint social activities, and the strengthening of tolerance values, conflicts that have the potential to escalate into open violence can be minimized. These findings validate the relevance of Muhammad A.S. Hikam's theory of civil society, which emphasizes the autonomy of civil society organizations, as well as Clifford Geertz's theory on direct relationships and family ties as social capital in uniting diverse communities.

In addition, the fundamental principle of Ahmadiyah, Love for All, Hatred for None, has contributed significantly to strengthening social harmony in Sindang Barang. This finding aligns with Amin Abdullah's conflict resolution theory, which emphasizes the importance of dialogue, justice, and respect for diversity. Thus, this study concludes that community-based conflict resolution can serve as an effective alternative in maintaining religious harmony in Indonesia, while complementing the state's role, which has remained limited thus far.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The main author (F.M.) contributed fully to the planning, field data collection, analysis, and preparation of the research manuscript. Meanwhile, the supervisor (A.B.I.) provided methodological guidance, theoretical insights, and academic supervision so that the research could be completed in accordance with the scientific standards of the study program.

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