

Beyond Doctrinal Exclusivism: Human Dignity and Diaconal Engagement as a Practical Theology for Social Cohesion in Indonesia

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Abstract: This study investigates how Christian Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Kristen* / PAK) lecturers in Indonesian higher education institutions facilitate interreligious dialogue to mitigate horizontal conflicts and nurture systemic tolerance. Employing a qualitative descriptive methodology grounded in a comprehensive literature review, this research systematically analyzes the transformation of pedagogical approaches from doctrinally exclusive models toward context-sensitive, dialogical frameworks. The findings reveal that academic actors serve as essential ethical and pedagogical agents by integrating interreligious dialogue into the curricula, facilitating structured interfaith discussions, modeling inclusive behavior, and leading cross-faith institutional partnerships. The study's main novelty lies in its operationalization of practical "diaconal engagement" and a lived "philosophy of encounter" within Christian higher education to transcend mere normative ideals. This research contributes to global discourses on peace education and moderating religious radicalism by providing a replicable matrix of scholastic leadership for multi-faith nations.

Keywords: Interreligious Dialogue, Christian Religious Education, Pluralistic Society, Scholastic Leadership, Social Cohesion, Peacebuilding

1. Introduction

Indonesia is globally distinguished by its remarkable diversity, which encompasses a rich tapestry of ethnicity, culture, religion, and indigenous belief systems (Antameng, 2021; Siregar, 2017). This pluralistic condition positions structured interreligious dialogue as a vital, stabilizing mechanism to prevent deep-seated social conflicts and promote sustainable communal harmony (Baharudin, 2014; Kusuma, 2015). In contemporary civil spheres where religious identity can readily emerge or be manipulated as a source of horizontal tension, engaging in strategic dialogue across faith boundaries becomes an absolute structural imperative (Febriyandi, 2019; Rosyid, 2017). Traditionally, the state has borne the primary burden of managing these pluralistic frictions through macro-level political and legal frameworks (Muhadjir & Sumarno, 2016; Siregar, 2017). However, proactive social engagement aimed at promoting systemic tolerance, mutual respect, and genuine harmony is essential to counteract persistent micro-level threats of violence, discrimination,

intolerance, and radicalism (Antameng, 2021; Boiliu, 2020). Consequently, the preservation of social peace in a highly diverse nation cannot be achieved solely through reactive security measures, but requires a foundational, proactive paradigm shift within civil society (Antameng, 2021; Siregar, 2017).

Within this socio-political framework, higher education institutions serve a fundamental role in shaping civic attitudes and nurturing mutual understanding among individuals of disparate religious backgrounds (Boiliu, 2020; Muhadjir & Sumarno, 2016). Within the specialized educational sphere, lecturers and academic practitioners are not merely responsible for the cold transmission of theological data, but are legally and ethically expected to nurture inclusive values that encourage students to actively participate in building harmonious interreligious relations (Darwis, 2012; Jura, 2020). This pedagogical task has become increasingly challenging in the post-reform era given that religion is frequently identified as a significant, mobilized factor in social conflict (Febriyandi, 2019; Kusuma, 2015). As a result, educators are urgently called to function as transformative agents of value formation who are capable of equipping students with the intellectual and ethical tools necessary to engage constructively with religious differences (Rumahuru, 2019; Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021). Therefore, universities must transition from being isolated bastions of sectarian doctrinal reproduction into dynamic public spheres that actively foster democratic engagement and interfaith literacy (Boiliu, 2020; Muhadjir & Sumarno, 2016).

To address these sociological realities, religious education in higher education institutions—both public and private—requires an immediate transformation in both its structural content and pedagogical approach (Darwis, 2012; Rohmiyati et al., 2023). Historically, religious education has often been perceived as exclusive, emphasizing defensive doctrinal understanding and personal belief formation in a strictly normative and sometimes indoctrinative manner (Boiliu, 2020; Rumahuru, 2019). Such an isolationist approach risks reinforcing socio-religious exclusivism, marginalizing minoritized traditions, and severely limiting students' capacity for meaningful cross-cultural dialogue (Darwis, 2012; Muhadjir & Sumarno, 2016). Without a robust dialogical framework, religious education may unintentionally reinforce sectarian prejudices and contribute to horizontal conflict rather than social cohesion (Febriyandi, 2019; Rohmiyati et al., 2023). Academic institutions must recognize that this systemic gap in inclusive instructional design leaves a critical vulnerability in the nation's educational defense against radicalism (Darwis, 2012; Rohmiyati et al., 2023).

Therefore, educators hold a central role in reshaping learning processes toward more inclusive, dialogical, and context-sensitive models that align with the urgent needs of a multicultural society (Jura, 2020; Luji, 2023). Educational practices that are deeply sensitive to religious diversity can function as effective, preventive grassroots mechanisms against radicalization while simultaneously strengthening the foundational bonds of national unity (Boiliu, 2020; Rohmiyati et al., 2023). Through constructive engagement and open communication, structured interreligious dialogue enables fractured communities to move beyond mere passive coexistence toward genuine mutual understanding and collaborative peacebuilding (Baharudin, 2014; Kusuma, 2015). This article addresses this operational gap by positioning Christian Religious Education (PAK) within higher education as a strategic, transformative arena for cultivating lived interreligious dialogue (Jura, 2020; Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021). By analyzing specific pedagogical strategies, this study argues that

sustained interreligious dialogue within academic spaces is essential for nurturing long-term social harmony within Indonesia's plural society (Jura, 2020; Luji, 2023).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Interreligious Conflict and the Urgency of Dialogical Transformation

Religious diversity in pluralistic societies has frequently been accompanied by structural tensions arising from unequal power relations, identity politics, and exclusivist interpretations of sacred texts (Febriyandi, 2019; Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023). Studies on majority-minority dynamics demonstrate that localized conflicts are often intensified when religious identities are mobilized as rigid socio-political boundaries rather than as sources of universal ethical values for coexistence (Antameng, 2021; Rosyid, 2017). In these contexts, exclusive attitudes tend to generate a series of highly volatile negative dispositions, including closed-mindedness, the systematic marginalization of "the other," extremism, and overt intolerance (Boiliu, 2020; Rohmiyati et al., 2023). Such socio-psychological attitudes pose an exceptionally high risk of triggering horizontal social conflict within volatile, multi-ethnic societies (Febriyandi, 2019; Kusuma, 2015). Consequently, dialogue across faiths and belief systems offers an effective, vital mechanism to preserve cultural and religious diversity while fostering a peaceful, cohesive nation (Febriyandi, 2019; Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023).

To counteract these divisive structures, interreligious dialogue must be elevated from a casual interaction to a crucial mechanism for transforming systemic conflict into constructive social engagement (Baharudin, 2014; Kusuma, 2015). Empirical findings indicate that structured dialogical spaces—both institutional and grassroots—can effectively de-escalate communal tensions when they deliberately emphasize shared human concerns rather than dogmatic doctrinal superiority (Farida, 2016; Iswari et al., 2013). Authentic dialogue is not merely a formal, elite conversation but a rigorous process of mutual recognition that actively reduces prejudice and dismantles radical narratives (Baharudin, 2014; Boiliu, 2020). Within this framework, dialogue functions simultaneously as a preventive and restorative approach, addressing not only overt conflicts but also latent hostilities embedded in social structures (Febriyandi, 2019; Kusuma, 2015). Ultimately, sustainable interreligious harmony requires continuous, structurally supported interaction that is anchored in intentional education, ethical reflection, and collaborative social action (Baharudin, 2014; Kusuma, 2015).

2.2. Inclusive Religious Education as a Foundation for Tolerance

Inclusive religious education holds a crucial, non-negotiable role in cultivating attitudes of cognitive openness and mutual respect within pluralistic societies (Rumahuru, 2019). Numerous educational studies indicate that rigid, monological, and exclusivist instructional models often deepen existing social divisions and directly contribute to the growth of systemic intolerance among youth (Darwis, 2012; Muhadjir & Sumarno, 2016). In sharp contrast, inclusive educational paradigms are far more likely to promote intergroup empathy, authentic dialogue, and critical self-reflection among diverse learners (Rumahuru, 2019; Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021). An inclusive pedagogical model does not seek to relativize or dilute distinct religious convictions, but instead situates them within a broader ethical framework that values human dignity and peaceful coexistence (Madung, 2012; Pranowo, 2023). Therefore, a dialogical orientation in religious

education is structurally necessary to facilitate deep interreligious understanding and foster active social tolerance (Rumahuru, 2019).

Furthermore, educational practices that seamlessly integrate interfaith dialogue, comparative perspectives, and intentional character formation have been proven to strengthen long-term tolerance among learners (Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021). Inclusive religious education directly supports socio-political moderation by equipping learners to engage constructively with religious differences without fear, defensiveness, or hostility (Jura, 2020; Luji, 2023). Contemporary studies on plural education emphasize that tolerance is not an innate human trait but is a complex disposition that must be cultivated through intentional pedagogical design and reflective learning experiences (Rumahuru, 2019; Stevanus, 2018). By fostering these inclusive perspectives, the academic classroom is transformed into a vital, defensive space that effectively counters radicalism and promotes national social cohesion (Boiliu, 2020; Rohmiyati et al., 2023). Consequently, inclusive religious education serves as the critical, primary foundation for interreligious dialogue, enabling future leaders to navigate diversity with psychological maturity and ethical responsibility (Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021).

2.3. Human Dignity and Cross-Religious Social Collaboration

The philosophical and theological notion of universal human dignity offers a resilient, shared ethical foundation for interreligious dialogue and the promotion of social harmony (Hoekema, 2010; Madung, 2012). Both philosophical and theological perspectives consistently emphasize that acknowledging the intrinsic value of every individual is a fundamental, non-negotiable requirement for maintaining peaceful relationships within multicultural societies (Madung, 2012; Uling, 2020). When human dignity becomes the core ethical principle governing a society, religious differences are no longer perceived as existential threats but as legitimate expressions of rich human diversity (Pranowo, 2023; Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023). Studies on social relationships indicate that trust, empathy, and meaningful friendship are the primary key factors in reducing intergroup prejudice and institutional discrimination (Paparang, 2024; Stevanus, 2020). Therefore, ethical engagement rooted in dignity encourages dialogue that prioritizes active listening, mutual respect, and shared moral commitments to the common good (Hoekema, 2010; Madung, 2012).

Interreligious dialogue reaches its fullest, most transformative expression when it is translated directly into concrete, cross-religious social collaboration (Sahertian et al., 2021; Nugroho et al., 2022). Empirical research shows that joint grassroots initiatives in social service, humanitarian work, and community development significantly strengthen interreligious trust and reduce historical suspicion between faith groups (Farida, 2016; Nugroho et al., 2022). Collaborative social action allows dialogue to move from elite academic discourse to everyday practice, demonstrating shared ethical commitments to justice and compassion (Nugroho et al., 2022; Stevanus, 2020). Furthermore, engagement in common social causes helps reframe distinct religious identities as collaborative partners in nation-building rather than competing interest groups (Luji, 2023; Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023). Educational and community-based initiatives that integrate dialogue with social action create what is theoretically described as a “philosophy of encounter,” where dialogue becomes a lived experience rather than a theoretical ideal (Sahertian et al., 2021; Nugroho et al., 2022).

3. Methods

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive methodology grounded in a comprehensive, systematic review of relevant literature to explore scholastic contributions to interfaith dialogue (Jura, 2020; Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021). The qualitative descriptive design is selected because it allows for an extensive, non-quantifiable analysis of pedagogical frameworks and social harmony models (Boiliu, 2020; Muhadjir & Sumarno, 2016). This approach is specifically aimed at offering an analytical account of the ways in which religious educators play a pivotal role in shaping learners' dispositions toward openness (Jura, 2020; Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021).

The analytical focus of this study centers on the strategic pedagogical contributions of Christian Religious Education (PAK) lecturers within higher education institutions in Indonesia (Boiliu, 2020; Jura, 2020). The target domain encompasses both public and private universities where religious pluralism interfaces with academic instructional design (Jura, 2020; Luji, 2023). This specific operational locus allows the study to examine the intersection of normative religious values, pedagogical mandates, and national social cohesion frameworks (Boiliu, 2020; Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021).

The data sources for this study consist entirely of secondary documentary data extracted from high-impact academic publications and official policy texts (Febriyandi, 2019; Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023). The primary data corpus includes peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly monographs, and legal-educational directives concerning religious moderation (Antameng, 2021; Rohmiyati et al., 2023). These documents were harvested from global and national indexes, specializing in works from the fields of religious studies, higher education, social harmony, and interreligious dialogue (Baharudin, 2014; Kusuma, 2015).

The data collection technique followed a systematic, multi-stage document gathering protocol to ensure bibliographic depth (Jura, 2020; Luji, 2023). Initial keyword configurations included "interreligious dialogue," "Christian religious education," "pluralistic society," and "indonesia" to identify candidate texts (Boiliu, 2020; Siregar, 2017). These harvested documents were then systematically filtered based on chronological relevance (focusing on contemporary publications) and their specific analytical focus on higher education and conflict resolution mechanisms (Jura, 2020; Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021).

The data analysis technique employed qualitative thematic analysis and content interpretation to synthesize the gathered literature (Madung, 2012; Pranowo, 2023). Methodologically, the analysis proceeded in two main analytical stages: first, exploring the conceptual and philosophical foundations of human dignity, and second, analyzing the practical responsibilities of religious educators (Hoekema, 2010; Uling, 2020). The structural texts were coded to extract operational strategies for curriculum design, classroom role-modeling, and cross-faith institutional collaboration (Jura, 2020; Nugroho et al., 2022).

4. Result

4.1. Philosophical Foundations: Human Dignity, Equality, and Relational Cohesion

The principles of universal human dignity and equality serve as the fundamental, non-negotiable conceptual framework for executing interreligious dialogue within a pluralistic society

(Pranowo, 2023). From this ethical perspective, every human individual is understood to possess inherent worth and inalienable rights that demand absolute respect, completely irrespective of ethnic background, social position, or religious affiliation (Madung, 2012; Uling, 2020). This foundational perspective establishes a clear, binding ethical responsibility for all societal actors to treat others with respect, avoid structural discrimination, and foster long-term social harmony (Hoekema, 2010; Pranowo, 2023). In the context of Indonesia's religiously diverse society, these humanistic principles underpin the moral and social imperative to engage in dialogue across religious boundaries (Pranowo, 2023; Siregar, 2017). Violations of these principles through active discrimination or systematic marginalization constitute serious moral wrongs that disrupt national stability (Antameng, 2021; Pranowo, 2023).

Furthermore, the empirical reality of human existence dictates that individuals naturally require social interactions and reciprocal relationships that extend far beyond their immediate sectarian communities (Paparang, 2024). The cultivation of deep personal friendship, empathy, and structured cooperation across diverse groups is essential for maintaining social cohesion and collective well-being (Paparang, 2024; Stevanus, 2020). Interreligious dialogue directly fosters these vital social qualities by encouraging individuals to actively listen, understand, and collaborate with others from different faiths, thus reducing deep-seated prejudice and potential communal conflict (Farida, 2016; Iswari et al., 2013). Ethical engagement with "the other" requires treating all individuals as equal partners in dialogue, fully acknowledging their unique perspectives, and respecting their core theological beliefs (Madung, 2012; Paparang, 2024). Such relational approaches significantly strengthen community bonds and provide highly practical pathways for peaceful, daily interactions in multi-faith societies (Paparang, 2024; Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023).

Ultimately, within a pluralistic nation, structured interreligious dialogue is not merely an optional or peripheral academic activity but is a critical moral and social responsibility (Farida, 2016). Authentic social tolerance involves actively recognizing and respecting religious diversity without ever attempting to impose one's own dogmatic views on minoritized communities (Rumahuru, 2019; Siregar, 2017). It enables diverse communities to discover shared ethical values, build deep institutional trust, and create collaborative networks while maintaining their distinct theological identities (Nugroho et al., 2022; Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023). Structured interfaith networks significantly reduce potential horizontal conflicts by promoting proactive communication and cooperative problem-solving among diverse groups (Farida, 2016; Kusuma, 2015). Dialogue thus becomes both a highly effective preventive and constructive mechanism for sustaining harmony and reducing social tensions in pluralistic societies (Baharudin, 2014; Farida, 2016).

4.2. Scholarly Leadership, Curriculum Design, and Interreligious Media

Religious education holds a fundamental, highly strategic position in forming the baseline attitudes, value systems, and long-term patterns of behavior that support peaceful relationships among followers of different faiths (Boiliu, 2020). Accordingly, university educators and religious leaders bear the direct professional responsibility of developing inclusive curricula and educational settings that intentionally promote mutual respect, foster empathy, and strengthen ethical accountability toward diverse religious traditions (Boiliu, 2020; Muhadjir & Sumarno, 2016). By integrating theological, philosophical, and ethical principles into pedagogical practice, religious education can equip students to navigate diversity constructively and engage in meaningful dialogue

with adherents of other faiths (Jura, 2020; Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021). In pluralistic societies, such targeted educational interventions are essential to sustain interfaith cooperation, prevent radicalization, and promote peaceful coexistence as a lived social reality (Boiliu, 2020; Rohmiyati et al., 2023).

In operational practice, interreligious dialogue serves as a strategic communication tool to foster harmony and stability within highly volatile pluralistic societies (Iswari et al., 2013). Openness toward followers of other religions is empirically proven to prevent social conflict from escalating at the university level (Iswari et al., 2013; Muhadjir & Sumarno, 2016). Dialogue, therefore, is not merely a passing communication channel but a fundamental foundation for building social cohesion and maintaining structural stability in diverse communities (Baharudin, 2014; Iswari et al., 2013). Mutual respect, active listening, and empathetic understanding of other faiths have been proven to transform diversity from a perceived threat into a shared societal asset, while strengthening collective responsibility for peaceful coexistence (Iswari et al., 2013; Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023). Effective dialogue allows structural differences in beliefs to be seen as opportunities for continuous learning and social development rather than as sources of political tension (Iswari et al., 2013; Luji, 2023).

However, the empirical data also demonstrates that pluralism often triggers severe horizontal conflicts when religion is misused for narrow group interests or identity politics (Kusuma, 2015). Religion itself is structurally not the root cause of social conflict; rather, violent conflicts arise when sacred symbols are exploited to strengthen specific group identities against others (Febriyandi, 2019; Rosyid, 2017). Consequently, interreligious dialogue that is conducted in an open, sincere, and human-oriented manner emerges as a strategic instrument for diminishing prejudice and sustaining processes of social reconciliation (Baharudin, 2014; Kusuma, 2015). Interreligious dialogue also functions as a highly effective preventive measure against prolonged communal conflict (Antameng, 2021; Kusuma, 2015). Structured dialogue among religious leaders and academic actors provides a resilient space for each party to listen, understand, and constructively manage differences through inclusive communication (Farida, 2016; Kusuma, 2015).

4.3. Structural Strategies of Christian Religious Education Lecturers

In pluralistic societies such as Indonesia, interreligious dialogue acts as a vital bridge to build peace and social harmony within the higher education apparatus (Jura, 2020; Uling, 2020). A systemic lack of communication and understanding of other faiths often deepens social divisions and fosters negative, unverified prejudices among university students (Boiliu, 2020; Jura, 2020). By opening deliberate spaces for dialogue, academic communities learn to respect, acknowledge, and accept diversity as a normal, healthy social reality (Muhadjir & Sumarno, 2016; Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021). Dialogue becomes a practical means to cultivate tolerance, establish harmony, and prevent religion-based conflict, turning pluralism into a unifying social asset (Jura, 2020; Luji, 2023). Lecturers in Christian Religious Education (PAK) occupy an exceptionally strategic position in mentoring students to engage critically and reflectively with the complex realities of religious diversity (Jura, 2020; Uling, 2020).

To operationalize these goals, PAK lecturers deploy specific pedagogical strategies, beginning with the direct integration of interreligious dialogue and religious moderation into the university curriculum (Jura, 2020; Uling, 2020). Traditional PAK in Indonesia has historically focused on narrow

cognitive aspects in the classroom, often neglecting practical or diaconal dimensions, which limits its impact on promoting social peace (Boiliu, 2020; Uling, 2020). By updating the curriculum, PAK can raise students' awareness of pluralism and cultivate openness, tolerance, and critical thinking (Jura, 2020; Rumahuru, 2019). The revised curriculum encourages students to study and understand other religions alongside their own faith, fostering moderate and inclusive perspectives while actively preventing radicalism in educational settings (Jura, 2020; Rohmiyati et al., 2023). Additionally, updated PAK curricula incorporate collaborative social projects, where Christian and non-Christian students work together in humanitarian initiatives to build peace (Jura, 2020; Nugroho et al., 2022).

Furthermore, PAK lecturers actively facilitate structured interreligious dialogue, training students to engage respectfully with followers of other faiths through seminars, workshops, or discussion forums focusing on conflict resolution (Stevanus, 2020). By providing these structured opportunities, lecturers equip students with practical skills to manage potential religious conflicts constructively (Kusuma, 2015; Stevanus, 2020). Inviting religious leaders from diverse faiths into academic discussions allows students to gain first-hand, authentic understanding of other religious perspectives (Farida, 2016; Stevanus, 2020). Astronomically, structured interfaith dialogue and theological exchange strengthen tolerance, reduce prejudice, and build mutual understanding without threatening the students' core religious identity (Baharudin, 2014; Stevanus, 2020). PAK lecturers also foster inclusive learning spaces by serving as visible role models of tolerance, openness, and empathy, thereby motivating students to internalize and practice these values in broader society (Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021; Stevanus, 2020).

5. Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that the operationalization of interreligious dialogue within higher education depends on the strategic leadership of Christian Religious Education (PAK) lecturers (Jura, 2020; Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021). The findings outline four distinct structural strategies deployed by these academic actors: the systemic redesign of the curriculum to include religious moderation, the facilitation of structured interfaith discussion forums, the intentional modeling of inclusive behavior, and the leadership of institutional cross-faith partnerships (Boiliu, 2020; Jura, 2020). These interconnected strategies effectively transition religious education away from historical, exclusive models that focused heavily on internal dogmatic indoctrination (Darwis, 2012; Rumahuru, 2019). By shifting the educational focus toward a context-sensitive framework, educators are able to equip students with both the theoretical knowledge and the practical competencies required to successfully navigate a multi-faith society (Jura, 2020; Muhadjir & Sumarno, 2016). Ultimately, the data confirms that when higher education institutions adopt these dialogical models, they function as vital grassroots arenas for cultivating sustainable social harmony and reducing sectarian prejudice (Jura, 2020; Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021).

Reflecting deeply upon these findings highlights a critical structural tension within the historical implementation of religious education in Indonesia (Boiliu, 2020; Muhadjir & Sumarno, 2016). For decades, traditional PAK pedagogical frameworks have suffered from an acute cognitive bias, focusing exclusively on classroom-bound doctrinal mastery while completely separating faith from its public, diaconal responsibilities (Boiliu, 2020; Uling, 2020). This historical segregation has inadvertently reinforced socio-religious exclusivism, leaving university students highly vulnerable to radical narratives and horizontal suspicion (Darwis, 2012; Rohmiyati et al., 2023). The results of this

study challenge this obsolete paradigm by demonstrating that theoretical progress cannot occur without a corresponding focus on practical peace education (Boiliu, 2020; Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021). By actively deconstructing exclusive instructional models, PAK lecturers re-establish religious education as a transformative public space where faith is expressed through ethical engagement with "the other" (Boiliu, 2020; Muhadjir & Sumarno, 2016).

The core pedagogical mechanism identified in this study is the integration of practical "diaconal engagement" into the interreligious educational framework (Nugroho et al., 2022; Stevanus, 2020). Theoretically, this implies that the traditional Christian concept of diakonia (service) must be stripped of its parochial, inward-looking limitations and re-established as a universal ethical tool for public welfare (Nugroho et al., 2022; Uling, 2020). When PAK lecturers organize collaborative social projects that require Christian and non-Christian students to work together on humanitarian initiatives, they are operationalizing this model (Nugroho et al., 2022; Stevanus, 2020). This strategy shifts the focus of interfaith interaction away from volatile doctrinal debates toward shared ethical actions that address real-world human suffering (Madung, 2012; Nugroho et al., 2022). The study interprets this shift as a vital pedagogical breakthrough: when students collaborate to solve shared social problems, their historical prejudices are dismantled far more effectively than through classroom lectures alone (Nugroho et al., 2022; Stevanus, 2020).

When compared with broader international discourses on interfaith literacy, the strategies identified in this study significantly advance the global "philosophy of encounter" (Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023; Siregar, 2017). While standard Western models of plural education frequently rely on secular civic frameworks that seek to minimize religious identity in the public sphere, the Indonesian academic model achieves tolerance by leaning directly into religious identities (Muhadjir & Sumarno, 2016; Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023). The work of Sahertian, Metekohy, and Ming (2021) emphasizes that authentic dialogue must occur through lived experiences rather than theoretical ideals, a claim that is strongly supported by the findings of this study (Sahertian et al., 2021; Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023). Furthermore, this approach aligns with global educational standards by demonstrating that teaching comparative religious perspectives does not threaten a student's personal faith identity, but instead deepens their ethical maturity (Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021; Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023). By combining national priorities like *Moderasi Beragama* with localized theoretical insights, Indonesian scholastic leadership offers a highly resilient paradigm for other multi-faith developing nations facing threats from religious extremism (Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023; Siregar, 2017).

Despite the clear benefits of these dialogical strategies, higher education institutions face significant structural obstacles when attempting to implement them widely (Farida, 2016; Luji, 2023). In practice, many universities continue to operate under rigid institutional regulations that favor sectarian isolation, often driven by a fear that interfaith exposure will lead to theological relativism (Luji, 2023; Rumahuru, 2019). To overcome these obstacles, academic administrations must proactively establish formal policies that protect and fund cross-faith institutional collaborations (Farida, 2016; Luji, 2023). PAK lecturers require specialized professional training in conflict resolution and interreligious pedagogies to ensure they can facilitate complex, sensitive classroom discussions safely and effectively (Jura, 2020; Luji, 2023). Furthermore, universities must actively resist the exploitation of religious identities by outside political interest groups, ensuring that academic spaces remain dedicated to sincere, human-oriented dialogue (Farida, 2016; Luji, 2023).

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that structured interreligious dialogue within higher education institutions serves as an essential, non-negotiable foundation for fostering long-term social cohesion and mitigating the risks of horizontal conflict. Christian Religious Education (PAK) lecturers serve as pivotal ethical and pedagogical agents in this process, systematically shaping students into reflective, tolerant, and socially responsible citizens. By utilizing a comprehensive matrix of four distinct strategies—curricular integration, structured interfaith facilitation, visible role-modeling, and cross-faith institutional partnerships—these educators bridge the historical gap between abstract theological concepts and practical peacebuilding. The research confirms that moving away from obsolete, exclusive instructional models toward inclusive, context-sensitive frameworks allows higher education to function as a powerful, transformative force for social harmony (Boiliu, 2020; Jura, 2020).

The primary scientific contribution of this research lies in its operationalization of practical "diaconal engagement" and a lived "philosophy of encounter" within sectarian higher education. By providing a clear, reproducible framework for integrating interfaith dialogue directly into confessional religious courses, this study transcends the vague, normative ideals that often stall peace initiatives. It offers a valuable model for socio-pedagogical researchers by demonstrating how a distinct religious curriculum can actively support national pluralistic harmony without compromising its unique theological identity. Furthermore, this framework directly supports national and global efforts to counteract radicalization by positioning academic actors as key leaders in security and social stability (Rumahuru & Talupun, 2021; Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023).

However, this study has limitations, as it relies primarily on a qualitative analysis of secondary literature and conceptual data. To build upon these findings, future research should implement rigorous empirical field studies, such as mixed-methods assessments and multi-site case studies, across diverse public and private universities in Indonesia. Future projects should measure the long-term impact of cross-religious social projects on reducing prejudice among students, while examining the specific institutional resistance faced by educators in conservative regions. Additionally, comparative studies analyzing how Islamic, Catholic, Hindu, and Buddhist education programs implement similar dialogical strategies would greatly enrich the development of a unified, national peace pedagogy (Antameng, 2021; Rohmiyati et al., 2023).

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