

# Mutual Cooperation (*Gotong Royong*) in the View of Islam

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## Abstract

This study aims to discuss mutual cooperation in Islam as explored from the main sources of the Quran and Hadith. This qualitative descriptive study with literature review uses content analysis to sort data according to the focus of the study. This study found that Islam encourages mutual cooperation in goodness and piety, and prohibits mutual assistance in significant crimes, as stated in Surah Al-Maidah verse 2 and Surah Ali Imran verse 104. Mutual cooperation is encouraged because of social awareness among individuals, prioritizing togetherness to create harmony among members of society, as stated in Surah Al-Mujadilah verse 11. Mutual cooperation is also significant in HR. Muslim, HR. Bukhari and Muslim. Islam also allows cooperation and mutual assistance with those of different religions, as stated in Surah At-Taubah verse 6. There are three historical events in Arab civilization related to the culture of mutual cooperation, both before and after the arrival of Islam, namely: the renovation of the Kaaba, the construction of the Prophet's Mosque upon first arriving in Medina, and mutual cooperation in building a trench as a defense during the Battle of Khandaq.

The original value in this study is the discovery of the significance of mutual cooperation with Islamic values based on the Quran and Hadith, which has not been discussed by previous researchers.

**Keywords: mutual cooperation; helping one another; islam**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The word “gotong royong” comes from the Javanese language, where ‘gotong’ means to carry and “royong” means together. Thus, gotong royong can be defined as working together to complete a specific activity that concerns the common interests and individual interests of a community. The gotong royong system has been institutionalized in Indonesian society since the era of Hindu kingdoms in Java, such as Ancient Mataram and Majapahit (Suwondo, 1982; and Muryanti, 2014).

Gotong royong is one of the roots of Indonesian civilization and forms the foundation of national and state life. This value should remain the foundation of life in society and the state (Muryanti, 2014). Effendi (2013) states that mutual cooperation is a culture that has grown and developed in the social life of Indonesian society as a cultural heritage that has existed for generations (Fusnika, et al., 2022).

Gotong royong is a word borrowed from the Javanese language, where the word “gotong” can be synonymous with the word “pikul”, while “royong” can be synonymous with the words ‘berbarengan’ or “bersama-sama”. Thus, gotong royong means working together to lift something or working together to do something (Rochmadi, 2012). Meanwhile, Kemendikbud (2017) explains that gotong royong is an important term that describes the spirit of togetherness in Indonesian society.

In an impromptu speech on June 1, 1945, Bung Karno said that the essence of Pancasila is mutual cooperation, so that the strength of mutual cooperation marks the strength of the spirit of Pancasila, and vice versa. The spirit of mutual cooperation can be built in conjunction with strengthening social capital aimed at the success of various government programs (Kemendikbud, 2017). In the context of villages, Muryati (2014) stated that there are several conditions and reasons for mutual cooperation activities in villages to be carried out, including: (1) The work carried out must concern the interests of all or most of the community members; (2) The work in question is a local village

project and is funded by the central and local governments; (3) The work in question is usually important and needs to be completed quickly, for example, because it concerns the livelihoods of some or even all villagers; and (4) The community members who participate in the work do not receive wages (are not paid) and may even have to spend their own money for the work.

Gotong royong is a unique Indonesian culture that is highly valued and needs to be cultivated (Anggorowati & Sarmini, 2015). Gotong royong is a tangible manifestation of culture that arises from social interactions within the community and is a necessity for both individuals and society (Kurniawan & Tinus, 2019). Furthermore, it is explained that, fundamentally, gotong royong is a work ethic that prioritizes togetherness based on commonality, which Durkheim terms mechanical solidarity (Durkheim, 2011). Mulyatno and Yosafat (2022) describe several meanings of gotong royong, including the following:

**First**, mutual cooperation is a spirit of living together that is applied in various concrete forms. Concrete forms of mutual cooperation in everyday life are dialogue, deliberation, cooperation, and helping one another. **Second**, mutual cooperation is a practice or joint activity to achieve a higher quality of life together.

**Third**, mutual cooperation is an opportunity or space for togetherness that allows each individual to have rights and fulfill their responsibilities in determining policies for living together. Dialogue and deliberation, as stated in the fourth principle of Pancasila, are a great spirit in applying mutual cooperation in decision-making that involves all the potential of the community.

Gotong royong is a culture that has grown and developed in Indonesian social life as a cultural heritage that has existed for generations. Panjaitan (2016) adds that gotong royong will foster cooperation that results in mutual understanding and mutual assistance. With the dominance of the value of cooperation, the level of conflict will also be reduced.

In addition, mutual cooperation embodies values that can shape a nation, including the following: togetherness, kinship, brotherhood, justice, willingness, responsibility, mutual assistance, socialization, active participation of every individual in society, and unity in society (Fusnika, et al., 2022). Therefore, the culture of mutual cooperation, which is a legacy of our ancestors and has these positive values, should be preserved in today's society.

It cannot be denied that, as time goes by, the tradition of mutual cooperation is increasingly being abandoned by some communities. Of course, there are several reasons why they are abandoning this tradition. Elster (2000) mentions that in the 19th century, when money became an important economic factor in the lives of Javanese society (the archipelago), mutual cooperation in farming among Javanese farmers began to be abandoned. People considered the mutual cooperation system to be impractical. Naturally, this situation caused the sense of togetherness to fade, and the interests of each individual in the community began to diverge, giving rise to the seeds of capitalism.

However, this is not a problem. This is because there are various positive values that can be achieved by practicing mutual cooperation, both in the general community and in the world of education. Specifically regarding the positive benefits of mutual cooperation in education, Kemendikbud (2017) states that the positive impact of mutual cooperation in education can be seen from two aspects, namely: mutual cooperation that is beneficial for academic success; and mutual cooperation that is beneficial as a means of fostering the mentality of students now and in the future.

Kemendikbud (2017) recommends mutual cooperation for the world of education (schools) as follows, among others:

**First**, to strengthen mutual cooperation as a collective activity, it seems necessary to hold a special one-day event for mutual cooperation activities (involving the entire school community: teachers, students, and staff).

**Second**, to strengthen character, mutual cooperation must be maintained and carried out by students through the strengthening of the extracurricular curriculum. This extracurricular strengthening can be done through study tours, live-ins, observation trips, and other activities that can unite students and the community to engage in mutual cooperation activities.

**Third**, to support academic achievement, mutual cooperation needs to be strengthened in the form of activities that can support the learning process of students or school participants, including peer tutoring or peer support, as well as the optimal utilization by the school of the trust given by the parents of students and their relatives who have various skills. This can be utilized by providing opportunities for parents or school relations to fill various extracurricular activities aimed at academic achievement or other interests.

**Fourth**, in an effort to increase participation from parties outside the school, it is advisable for schools to open membership of the school committee not only to parents, but also to other parties with

the potential to contribute to the development of the school, such as alumni, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector.

Although all concepts of mutual cooperation have been expressed, there are still several factors that hinder its implementation. Suryohadiprojo (2016) mentions several factors that hinder mutual cooperation, including: (1) The aggressive and dynamic influence of Western culture, which increasingly dominates humanity worldwide, especially our own nation; (2) The attitude of the community has begun to embrace individualism and liberalism as a result of the impact and influence of Western culture. The community places more importance on their own opinions and is unwilling to respect the opinions of others during community service or deliberations; (3) Leaders lack sincere efforts to make Pancasila a living reality and to preserve the nature and attitude of mutual cooperation in society; and (4) Strong egoism in individuals and groups who are unwilling to help others after their work is done.

That is a brief overview of mutual cooperation, which should be taken into consideration by every individual in the educational environment. With mutual cooperation, anything that is difficult will become easy. Through mutual cooperation, what seems difficult will become easy, what is heavy will become light, what is complicated will be unrivaled, problems will find solutions, and so on.

Mutual cooperation is not something new in Islam or society in general. Kurnia, et al. (2023) state that mutual cooperation in society is generally reflected in several traditional activities and activities within the community. Through mutual cooperation carried out by the community, it will run smoothly. Mutual cooperation is related to solidarity, which will certainly have an impact on society, both individually and collectively. The role of solidarity is supported by how the community responds to the values embedded in mutual cooperation in their environment. Even though they live together, their responses will differ because they are adjusted to the existing solidarity.

In the Indonesian context, Muryanti (2014) states that mutual cooperation is one of the roots of Indonesian civilization and forms the basis of national and state life. According to her, this value remains a worthy foundation for life in society and the state. However, it must be acknowledged that the current social, economic, and political conditions of Indonesian society are highly susceptible to eroding the value of gotong royong. Arief and Yuwanto (2023) express a similar view, stating that gotong royong is an Indonesian culture that is not only about cleaning or building something, but also has a deep meaning of mutual assistance and harmony in life.

Putri, et al. (2023) mention that mutual cooperation is a fundamental value contained in the third principle of Indonesia's state ideology (Pancasila), namely Indonesian Unity. Indonesian society has always applied the culture of mutual cooperation to strengthen the sense of unity. Mutual cooperation also has the ability to transform difficult tasks into easier ones in an amazing way, almost as if hypnotizing people. Furthermore, mutual cooperation has the potential to create a supportive and collaborative social environment for overcoming common problems. The attitude of mutual cooperation is one of the main characteristics that distinguishes Indonesia as a country.

Several studies on mutual cooperation have been conducted by researchers in the past. Fusnika, et al. (2022) researched the implementation of mutual cooperation values in community life in Keladan Tunggal Hamlet, Mertiguna Village, Sintang District. Dewanti et al. (2023) researched mutual cooperation in strengthening citizen participation. Hayati and Utomo (2022) researched the cultivation of mutual cooperation and responsibility through habituation methods in elementary schools. Marhayati (2021) researched the internalization of the culture of mutual cooperation as a national identity. From these studies, it appears that no one has researched mutual cooperation from an Islamic perspective. Therefore, this study will begin to fill this gap that has not been addressed by previous researchers.

## II. METHOD

This qualitative paper uses library research in conducting its research. As stated by Nazir (2011), this library research technique allows for a systematic study of books and reports to solve the research problem. This philosophical and theoretical processing (Muhadjir, 2000) utilizes deduction and induction to ensure the results are scientifically acceptable. Library research is a study to collect information and data from various sources in the library, such as books, magazines, and others (Mardalis, 2006).

Meanwhile, it is called qualitative research because it is used to study natural conditions, where the researcher is the key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out through data triangulation, data analysis is inductive, and qualitative research results emphasize the meaning of generalization (Abdussamad, 2021). Furthermore, data collection is not guided by theory but by facts found during field research.

Meanwhile, Muhadjir (2000) states that library research requires more philosophical and theoretical processing than empirical testing in the field. Because it is philosophical and theoretical in nature, library research more often uses a philosophical approach than other approaches. The methods used in the discussion are deduction (thinking from the general to the specific), induction (thinking from the specific to the general), and comparison (thinking to find differences and similarities) (Hadi, 2004).

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

The tradition of gotong royong was exemplified directly by the Prophet Muhammad SAW when renovating the Kaaba, building places of worship (mosques), digging trenches for defense in the Battle of Khandaq, during the hijrah to Medina, and others. Additionally, according to Sodikin and Haqqi (2022), Islam permits people to engage in mutual cooperation or assistance in acts of goodness and piety, and prohibits such cooperation in matters of evil. This is stated in the following verse of Allah (SWT):

“O you who believe, do not violate the sacred symbols of Allah, nor the sacred months, do not (disturb) the sacrificial animals (*hadyu*) and the sacrificial animals that have been marked (*qala'id*), and do not (also) disturb those who visit the Sacred House; they seek the bounty and pleasure of their Lord. But when you have completed your ihram, then you may hunt. Let not your hatred of a people for preventing you from the Sacred Mosque leads you to transgress against them. And help one another in righteousness and piety, but do not help one another in sin and aggression. Fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in punishment” (QS. Al-Maidah: 2).

The Word of Allah SWT, “Let there be among you a group of people who call to virtue, enjoin what is good (*ma'ruf*), and forbid what is evil (*munkar*). They are the ones who are successful” (QS. Ali Imran: 104).

According to Sodikin and Haqqi (2022), these two verses show that the role of religion is deeply rooted and serves as a guide for people's lives. Religion and tradition coexist side by side. In addition, the community feels like one big family with close brotherhood. This is encouraged by the social awareness of each individual who truly prioritizes togetherness to create harmony among community members.

The Word of Allah SWT, “O you who believe, when you are told, ‘Make room in the assembly,’ then make room; surely Allah will make room for you. When you are told, ‘Stand up,’ then stand up; surely Allah will raise those who believe among you and those who have been given knowledge several degrees. And Allah is All-Knowing of what you do” (QS. Al-Mujadilah: 11).

The above verse contains a message about social life, whereas servants of Allah who are believers, we are commanded to make things easy for others. Whoever makes things easy for others will receive a commensurate reward from Allah SWT.

The words of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, “Whoever removes hardship from the hardships of the world of believers, Allah will remove the hardships of the Day of Judgment. Whoever makes things easy for those in difficulty, Allah will make things easy for him in this world and the hereafter. Whoever conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults in this world and the Hereafter. Whoever helps his brother, Allah will help him as he helped his brother. Whoever travels in pursuit of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him the path to Paradise. No group of people gather in one of the houses of Allah (mosques) to read the Book of Allah and study it among themselves, except that tranquility will descend upon them, mercy will envelop them, angels will surround them, and Allah will praise their names to the angels who are with Him. Whoever is slow in their deeds will not be able to be overtaken by their lineage” (HR. Muslim).

The above hadith is also an Islamic argument related to mutual cooperation. Mutual cooperation is an effort to ease the burden of others' suffering, carried out collectively. Whoever alleviates the suffering of others will be guaranteed by Allah SWT to receive a fair reward, even better. The Prophet Muhammad SAW said, “Whoever helps his brother, Allah will always help him” (HR. Bukhari and Muslim).

#### Discussion

Islam also allows cooperation and mutual assistance with those of different religions. Allah SWT says, “And if any of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the words of Allah. Then escort him to a place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know” (QS. At-Taubah: 6).

Mahmudi (2000) mentions three historical events in Arab civilization related to the culture of mutual cooperation, both before Islam arrived (before Muhammad SAW was appointed as a messenger) and after the arrival of Islam.

**First**, the renovation of the Kaaba. It is described that they divided the corners of the Kaaba and assigned each tribe its own section. Each tribe collected the best stones and began building. The person in charge of the construction of the Kaaba was Baqum, an architect of Roman nationality.

**Second**, the event of the construction of the Prophet's Mosque when he first arrived in Medina. Namely, the construction of the mosque was carried out jointly by the Ansar and Muhajirin. At that time, the Prophet Muhammad SAW said, "There is no life except the afterlife, forgive the Ansar and Muhajirin".

**Third**, mutual cooperation in building a trench as a defense in the Battle of Khandaq. Namely, every 10 adult men were assigned to dig a trench 40 cubits long. All Muslims worked together to realize this trench.

This is what mutual cooperation means in Islam. Islam teaches unity and solidarity in order to create a culture of mutual cooperation. There are many Islamic activities carried out through mutual cooperation today, for example: mutual cooperation in cleaning roads in preparation for Eid al-Fitr, mutual cooperation in building mosques or prayer rooms, mutual cooperation in establishing educational institutions or madrasahs, and so on (Shofwan, 2025). Clearly, Islam strongly emphasizes mutual cooperation in doing good deeds.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Islam strongly encourages mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) in matters of goodness and piety while strictly prohibiting assistance in crime or aggression, as evidenced in Surah Al-Maidah: 2. This cooperation is driven by social awareness and the intent to create harmony, a principle supported by both the Quran and Hadith (HR. Bukhari and Muslim). Furthermore, Islam demonstrates inclusivity by allowing cooperation with people of different faiths for the sake of human protection. Historically, the Prophet Muhammad SAW institutionalized this culture through major community projects like the construction of the Nabawi Mosque and the defense of Medina.

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