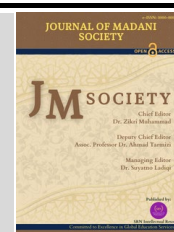




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Original Article

Diversity Communication of Interreligious Harmonization: A Case Study of Rama Agung Village, Bengkulu Utara Regency, Indonesia

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Abstract: Indonesia is known as a country that has many tribes, cultures, races, religions, and codes of conduct of the people. But the exciting thing is that the complexity of diversity does not divide Indonesia. Rama Agung Village, Bengkulu Utara Regency, was designated as a Religious Harmony Village in Bengkulu Province in 2018 by the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Upon launching the minister of religion, the Governor of Bengkulu designated it as a Miniature Village of Religious Harmony in Bengkulu Province. This is in line with the decision of the Regent of Bengkulu Utara in 2021, which established Rama Agung Village as a Religious Tourism Village. In this position, religious and cultural tolerance becomes important as the main indicator that can reduce points of conflict between individuals, social classes, and society. This tolerance was formed not on the basis of an accident. Still, the similarity of struggle that gave birth to valuable lessons bound in the points and points of Pancasila elaborated in the State Constitution and actualized in everyday life. This research design uses qualitative methods with a single instrumental case study approach. Data collection will be collected through interviews and document review. The results showed that the harmonization that occurs in Rama Agung village is currently maintained because of the value of harmony instilled by the community in interreligious life, namely open communication between fellow believers, mutual respect for other religious celebrations, and the rules of other religions.

Keywords: Diversity; Communication patterns; Interreligious; Harmonization.



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1. Introduction

In 2018, the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (Mahamid, 2023) launched Rama Agung Village, Bengkulu Utara Regency, as a Religious Harmony Village in Bengkulu Province. Upon the launching of the minister of religious affairs, then formally legalized based on the Decree of the Governor of Bengkulu Number W.119.KESBANGPOL In 2000, Rama Agung Village was designated as a Miniature Village of Religious Harmony in Bengkulu Province. On the other hand, the Governor's decision is also in line with the Decree of the Regent of Bengkulu

Utara, which then designated Rama Agung Village as a Religious Tourism Village by the Regent through Decree Number 536/114/DP/2021, dated 12 April 2021. Even in 2021, the Pancasila Ideology Development Agency, through the Head of BPIP, Prof. Drs K.H. Yuhdian Wahyudi, MH, P.h.D appreciated the "Rama Agung Religious Tourism Village of Bengkulu Utara" as a Miniature Village of Indonesian religious harmony. This determination is quite reasonable because, in Rama Agung Village, several potential destinations are worth interesting, such as Talang Begenda Valley, Joint Cemetery, and Panca Bhineka House of Worship. The Monument of Harmony is a cultural event and religious ritual. Another uniqueness compared to other villages is that religious people live side by side in harmony amid ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity gathered in one village. This is one of the concrete proofs of community life based on Pancasila, which must be preserved and promoted. Rama Agung is known as a village with a high level of tolerance. All residents live in harmony and peace with each other despite having different beliefs. The potential of Rama Agung Village deserves mutual attention, and each party must contribute according to their respective portions and capacities, starting from residents of Rama Agung Village, Tourism Awareness Group, FKUB, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Tourism Office, and Regional Government. The miniature icon of Indonesian religious harmony must be managed seriously so that Rama Agung Village can become a complete model village in Indonesia, which will be a source of pride for Bengkulu Province.



Figure 1. Welcome Gate and Religious Harmony Monument of Rama Agung Village

Interreligious harmony is built into inter-religious dialogue. In order to be communicative and avoid theological debates between religious believers, religious messages that have been reinterpreted in harmony with the universality of humanity become the capital for creating harmonious dialogue in diversity.



Figure 2. BNPT Survey 2019

Figure 2 shows the results of a survey conducted by the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) in collaboration with the Terrorism Prevention Coordination Forum (FKPT) in 2019 revealed data on provinces with the highest potential for radicalism in Indonesia. The first rank occupied by Bengkulu Province is quite surprising because BNPT 2016 released twelve red provinces, suspected as areas of radicalism and terrorism, where Bengkulu Province is not included. The results of BNPT's research are measured from perpetrators and victims of terrorism who come from certain provinces. Data released by BNPT in 2019 informed that there were conditions in Bengkulu that gave room for the development of radicalism issues in the area. The survey results are an early warning that must be anticipated immediately so that the development does not increase and expand. Another shocking incident occurred when a lecturer with the initials R.H. in Bengkulu City was arrested by members of the Special Detachment (Densus) 88 Anti-terror on Wednesday (9/2/2022) on suspicion of involvement in a criminal case of terrorism. Studying the harmonization of diversity in communication science can be a strategic study in the future, especially in coexistence

studies in Indonesia, especially for Bengkulu Province, which conforms with the strategic research plan at Bengkulu University.

The purpose of this study is to find out and explain the forms of communication that are considered effective and interesting and carried out by the community, village government, and religious leaders of Rama Agung Village to harmonize the diversity of ethnicity, religion, race, and between groups as one Indonesian nation. This research will focus on efforts to foster diversity coexistence based on aspects of customer focus, leadership commitment, situational awareness, and media partnership, which will explain the process of collecting, processing, and distributing messages or information effectively and interestingly about diversity communication patterns for interfaith harmonization (Study in Rama Agung Village, Bengkulu Utara Regency). A communication pattern is the relationship between two or more people sending and receiving the right way. The dimensions of communication patterns consist of two kinds, namely concept-oriented patterns and socially oriented patterns that have different relationship directions" (Hazani, 2019). The results of this research can later be used as a role model program for harmonizing diversity for other local governments based on the perspective of communication science and enriching diversity communication research in Indonesia.

2. Materials and Methods

This research design will use qualitative methods through empirical observation to find/confirm the law of cause and effect, which can be used to predict general patterns of certain social symptoms using qualitative methods. This study expects to obtain an overview of human behavior and social context in social interaction. The type of research used is a case study. This research is a single instrumental case study conducted to describe an issue, namely the handling of others without intermediaries or communication media as a messenger of messages or information. In direct communication between individuals, groups, or communities, the influence of individual relationships is included in this understanding of communication. Thus, this communication activity is a systematic process and forms a system consisting of system components, such as communicator context, message context, idea construction, interaction pattern context, situational context, context of individual attitudes towards groups and vice versa, and context of tolerance. Data collection will be collected through interviews and document review. Data analysis will use Miles and Huberman to focus on in-depth depiction. At the same time, the data's validity uses the source and method triangulation approaches. The initial data collection stage will be through fact-finding, finding many facts or events related to religious diversity in Rama Agung Village.

3. Results

3.1. Harmonization in Plurality

Indonesia is part of a nation in the world on the basis of divine values. Even though it is not a religious country, it is inseparable from religious clothing. It is guaranteed in Article 29, paragraph (2) of the 1945 NRI Constitution, which affirms the right to freedom of religion and worship according to one's beliefs and religion. The basic human instinct is as a religious being (*homo religiousus*), either for its religion as a pure religion or pseudo-religion. Religious freedom is one of the fundamental personal freedoms of the individual. A person can profess or not profess any religion individually or with others, freely choose, hold, and propagate religious beliefs, and act accordingly. Freedom of religion is a necessary condition for functioning in a democratic society and one of the basic elements of a system of human rights and freedoms (Zhanat et al., 2023). Henri Bergson's statement in the book *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, quoted by Joachim Wach, is that there can never be a society without religion. Religion has brought out many essential elements in society. Along with changes in the thinking power and treasures of human knowledge accompanied by cultural and environmental changes. Religion in the aspect of religiosity continues to change from time to time and from place to place with changes in times and regions.

The plurality of religions in Indonesia is a clear reality, and this has eventually led to the formation of cultural diversity in Indonesia. Pluralism is closely related to understanding attitudes towards others. Society can make diversity as something harmonious, not as something to be hostile. Cultivation of plurality values needs to be developed in effective and relevant ways today so that it is easily understood and accepted by the community. The plurality value aims to foster mutual respect, understanding, and tolerance between human beings in the community to harmonize diversity between religious communities. Religious plurality becomes the capital of a nation's cultural wealth and benefits the Indonesian nation. It can be used as a very rich source of inspiration for democratic consolidation in Indonesia. In a plurality of religions, you should be able to understand and respect the beliefs or beliefs of each religion. It is very important in development efforts in all fields, including building harmony in religious life.

Harmonization of plurality is one of the important pillars in maintaining the unity and integrity of the nation. Without harmonizing plurality among various religions, a region or nation will be threatened with division. Maintaining religious plurality is a joint effort from the government or organizations to serve, regulate, and empower religious people. Through this effort, issues that will cause division can be eliminated, so a religious harmonization process can be created in the form of religious plurality. The manifestation can be reflected in mutual respect and cooperation between various

religious communities and governments with responsibilities. Have mutual tolerance and tolerance by not forcing adherence to the religion he believes on others.

We know that the discourse of religious harmony in Indonesia has sucked up a lot of energy and mind. The phenomenon of disharmony is characterized by several social clashes manipulated into conflicts between religious groups. Although the government and law enforcement officials tried to cover up the objective conditions of the conflict, the indications found could not be translated unless they showed disharmony among religious communities. In the reform era, the flow of freedom that should be managed into a constructive force for nation-building has become counterproductive by giving birth to new sources of tension. Freedom becomes a wild rolling ball, which is difficult to distinguish from anarchism. Society feels it is legal to do anything in the name of freedom. Not a few, for example, groups of people who suddenly feel authorized to fight violence by using violent means and attacking other religious groups. In this position, it becomes important that the pattern of diversity communication for interreligious harmonization, especially in Rama Agung Village, is to be studied.

3.2. Community Life of Rama Agung

Communication patterns are relationships between two or more people characterized by complementarian and symmetric relationships (Yohandi & Fajriyah, 2019). The communication process will certainly never be separated from all activities in life, especially in life with a variety of diversity. Like the village of Rama Agung, which is currently recorded to have five religious adherents who live side by side. The communication process certainly occurs every day with a fairly high intensity of communication in it as social creatures, and this is due to the location of their neighboring homes that blend in. The two informants the researchers interviewed explained that there is an awareness of diversity in neighborly life. This awareness is the point of respecting the beliefs of others and not discriminating and not interfering with each other's lives about anything in the establishment of good communication and relationships. Communication is something that cannot be left behind in everyday life. Thus, in good communication, some rules and ethics regulate the communication to be conveyed correctly and adequately (Yunaldi et al., 2021). Another informant, a religious leader, explained how a communication series was carried out to maintain the harmonization of religious harmony in Rama Agung Village. The role of religious figures is central to tolerance in Rama Agung. Religious figures become the highest pillar of Rama Agung's society in daily life, and they are examples and mediators for each of his religious people. In order to obtain additional information from elements of society, the researcher also interviewed a stall owner. He stated that religion is not a differentiator for communicating with others in daily social life. He said that people never make religion a limitation in social life, so they let go of religion in everyday life.

3.3. Awareness of Maintaining Inter-Religious Feelings

In addition to mutual assistance, the people of Rama Agung also care about the great activities carried out by religious people. Like weddings and deaths, religion has not become an obstacle for the community to attend and even become a committee in the event. The pattern of communication done together, and sharing is a pattern of communication done together where communication in building harmony can be created if different groups of people of different religions and cultures can do something together for common interests. This joint communication process will foster five approaches to building religious harmony: openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality. Humans as social creatures are inseparable from their interaction with other societies, giving birth to a sense of need to have something (A sense of belonging) (Khatibah et al., 2021).

From the interviews conducted, researchers found that in the great activities of marriage and death, the awareness of tolerance has been continuously intertwined and has become a separate culture in Rama Agung. This study also found firsthand facts in the field, where people of different religions attended the event at the time of death. The form of respect in guaranteeing inter-religious beliefs is seen as the main thing in these activities. The people of Rama Agung try to open trust and minimize forms of suspicion towards other people. The results of the interview also found data that the development of issues about religious diversity in Rama Agung was quite popular in life, not separated from the community's assumptions that were sufficient in responding to the problems of rules or rules from other religions. Communication is very effective; notification of food feasibility (halal / non-halal) to the community is used as a new culture to maintain trust in each other.

Therefore, one way to realize interfaith solidarity is to be willing to cross one's religious boundaries against those who profess other religions, and another way is to be willing to cooperate for the benefit of humanity with followers of other religions (Holda, 2023). Religious diversity has always been the main value in maintaining the harmony of the village community. Awareness of the rules and regulations in other religions raises awareness for the Rama Agung community, who have been cultured. The level of public awareness to tolerate each worship activity has been understood by each other. There is awareness in the form of tolerance; over time, the people of Rama Agung village realized this was a need that must be met. A need that will make it easier for them to socialize with people in this village. This situation makes them initially try to get used to understanding what is happening in their neighborhood. They will

not be able to socialize well if they are not able to carry out a good communication process between the communication actors. The absence of conflict occurs because each religious adherent realizes a very important value in realizing a harmonious society in a state of pluralism. Likewise, what happened in Rama Agung Village, a peaceful situation, is a result that is influenced by several things, such as the value embedded in every human being, namely how the perspective instilled in individuals is further implemented in everyday life. A clear perspective will make the atmosphere positive.

From interviews with informants, it was also found that the concept of life that is built starts from the first thing in society, namely the family. Awareness and understanding formed in the family become basic values for society in religious life, such as in Rama Agung Village. The religious principles that everyone has instilled in Rama Agung have been formed and have occurred since childhood and are carried out continuously from generation to generation so that the cultivation of the value of mutual respect has entrenched itself in the social life of the community. Researchers found that every social activity in society depends on expected reciprocity, so there will be a process of delivery that is in harmony with each other. From all the quotes above, the concept of the internal value of each religion becomes the main intention in the life of diversity. The naming and implementation of religious values merge into the community's social life. To add information on value cultivation, researchers also conducted interviews to obtain additional information from one of the FPUB members. He stated that education about living in diversity has been taught from an early age. It is said that parents are taught about openness and accepting differences from an early age. Even so, the openness remains within the corridors of their respective beliefs.

Religious tolerance sounds like a matter of course. However, its implementation sometimes faces various obstacles (Yunus & Mukhlisin, 2020). Teaching the values of tolerance and respect for each other does not make them create a high wall against each other's teachings in socializing. Parents realize that each religion has its rules, so older people must remind them to carry out these obligations, regardless of their friends' religion. Communication patterns will greatly determine how the relationship will run smoothly and harmoniously (Tan & Tamburian, 2021). A more comprehensive understanding is needed in the interfaith communication process in Rama Agung. Learning about other people's religious cultures is one way to realize this understanding. However, it needs to be communicated well so that the people of Rama Agung, in managing communication in life, can use communication to maintain feelings for interfaith life in Rama Agung. Communication to maintain feelings is carried out when communication actors are in diverse circumstances so all parties can accept differences.

Communication to maintain feelings in Rama Agung is pursued by being aware of the existing differences while still raising differences and trying not to offend each other. The study of accommodation theory is close to the concept of divergence. After the awareness of differences, communication to maintain feelings is also carried out by the people of Rama Agung to adjust to existing life so that each religious community gets comfort. At the same time, the study of accommodation theory is close to the concept of convergence. Communication to maintain feelings starts from how they instill the values of religious harmony to the next generations in Rama Agung. The cultivation of this value is recognized from childhood by understanding that the diverse circle of friends they have met since childhood will continue to occur in Rama Agung. The role of parents as a channel of understanding that differences are not a condition that must exist right in it. But differences are a situation that needs to be realized and can be accepted without hurting the other party and not forcing them to follow each other's beliefs.

Cultivating harmonious values is accompanied by strong spiritual values in each internal religious community to manage communication effectively. This is evidenced by the position of parents who are a reminder in playing time. A small example they did was when children were playing in one of their Catholic friends' houses and heard the call to prayer from their parents, who would then tell them to go home to pray before continuing their playtime. Communication to maintain feelings is done to respect every belief and be able to tolerate these differences, and not infrequently; children also wait for friends in the mosque to perform their prayers before continuing to play. The existing religious diversity is not a barrier to the Rama Agung community daily; rather, the diversity is managed by communicating effectively. From the cultivation of harmonious values, a community life emerges that no longer questions differences but realizes how these differences are managed as well as possible. It means that the communication management carried out by the Rama Agung community in managing differences runs reciprocally. Society tries not to distinguish from each other in life. A high sense of solidarity in building a plural village is built by communication that cares for each other's religious feelings. This communication is carried out to accommodate all parties to unite in diversity.

Such encounters are part of long-term friendships, family, and neighborly relations. They may be more important for and characteristic of interreligious encounters and our understanding of them (van den Toren, 2023). Communication to maintain feelings that are carried out also raises the value of openness. This value arises when each interacting religious element can accept the background of their respective beliefs and not offend each other in communicating. A high sense of kinship makes people understand and accept that their living conditions differ greatly. They understand that communication is accompanied by humanitarian alignments so as not to cause whispers of potential conflict. Apart from the value of openness that has been built and embedded in every society, the level of awareness in respecting and tolerating is the main point in carrying out every activity related to religion. When the

wedding party, in the processing and presentation of food, has cultivated itself to appreciate religious people whose religious rules some foods are forbidden, they try to accommodate every religious community. They work on how every religious person who wants to eat pork can still enjoy the food, and people who do not eat pork still feel comfortable without feeling alert to enjoy the food served. So, the solution they make is to order catering from people with Islamic religious backgrounds. They also write this solution in their invitations and share or convey it during the opening remarks. This communication is called communication to maintain feelings. It accommodates every religious community, aiming for each religion to accept the existing conditions and be enjoyed by everyone.

The application of harmonization between religious people in an area is something that religious people must do in uniting and instilling a sense of brotherhood as well as a sense of kinship despite different beliefs, ethnic, ethnic and racial diversity (Khoiruzzadi & Dwi Tresnani, 2022). Communication to maintain their feelings is also an effort to maintain harmonization in interfaith life in Rama Agung. Communication to maintain this feeling is also implemented in the FPUB organization in Rama Agung. In this FPUB, each religion communicates how the harmony in Rama Agung can continue. The differences in Rama Agung village have the potential for friction that can lead to racist conflicts. However, they can maintain this by realizing and appreciating the efforts manifested in communication to maintain the feelings carried out. The communication concept to maintain this feeling is on reinforcements to tolerate each other. Communication management managed by the Rama Agung community is on the values in interfaith life in Rama Agung Village, which are implemented in communication to maintain feelings carried out daily.

4. Conclusions

Communication occurs circularly and continuously. Respectful communication is given by religious people who carry out religious activities to people outside them, while people outside them tolerate activities carried out by other religious people. Communication that builds relationships between the two uses communication to maintain feelings. The existence of this balance makes interfaith life in Rama Agung village harmonious because they can accommodate all religious people to feel comfortable with every activity carried out by religious people. Harmonization that occurs today is maintained because of the value of harmony instilled by the community in interreligious life, namely the existence of open communication between fellow believers, mutual respect for other religious celebrations, and mutual respect for the rules of other religions.

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