



Intercultural Communication Among the Bugis Community In Fostering Harmony Within The Buton Society

S. Jalaluddin¹, Hastuti², Muhammad Rizal Ardiansah Putra³

^{1,2,3} Jurusan Ilmu Komunikasi, Fakultas Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik (Fisip), Universitas Muhammadiyah Buton

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*Correspondence: S. Jalaluddin

Email: jalalvasko5@gmail.com

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Abstract:

This study aims to understand and explain how intercultural communication between the Bugis and Buton ethnic groups fosters harmony within the Pajalele community in Baubau City and to identify the barriers faced by the Bugis in establishing harmony with the Buton community. A qualitative approach with a Symbolic Interactionism method was used. The study involved 7 informants: 3 Ambonese, 3 Bugis, and 1 Community Leader. Data was collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, which were then analyzed thematically to identify effective communication in different cultural contexts. The results indicate that there is distinct yet complementary communication between the Bugis and Buton ethnic groups. The Bugis people have successfully fostered harmony within the Buton community according to the concepts of Thought, Self, and Social. The communication barriers identified include differences in language, cultural values, and the ongoing development of stereotypes and prejudices between the two ethnic groups.

Keywords: : Intercultural Communication, Harmony

Introduction

Culture and communication are two interrelated elements that are deeply connected. Experts claim that these two aspects are intertwined. As Edward T. Hall stated, “culture is communication” and “communication is culture,” meaning that culture and communication are fundamentally linked. They are like two sides of the same coin: culture is part of communicative behavior, and communication, in turn, defines, preserves, develops, and transmits cultural studies. Language, in cultural studies, is placed as an essential element alongside other elements such as knowledge, livelihood, customs, arts, and living systems. Language is even classified as part of intangible culture, along with values, norms, and beliefs (Suryani, 2014).

Intercultural communication occurs when the sender of a message is a member of one culture and the recipient is a member of another. This situation is inevitable, as every

interaction between people carries the potential for intercultural dynamics. This is because every individual comes from a different cultural background, and even small differences can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or conflicts between groups (Ayuni et al., 2022). Harmony involves efforts to unify social beings, providing peace and comfort to individuals or groups using certain concepts to create social integration within a community. According to the KBBI (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia), harmony is a community agreement implemented through diverse social, cultural, ethnic, and religious lives to achieve goals together (Oktavia, 2019).

Harmony refers to a state of peace without conflict, characterized by mutual support and cooperation. The goal of harmony is to achieve a situation where everyone coexists peacefully, accepts each other, and works together. The realization of harmony is expected in social interactions, particularly in community life (Suseno, 2023). In general terms, harmony denotes a state of peaceful coexistence among individuals or groups, characterized by tolerance, appreciation of differences, and mutually beneficial cooperation to create a prosperous environment (Usman, 2023).

Baubau City is located in Southeast Sulawesi and is home to a diverse array of ethnic groups, including the Buton, Muna, Tolaki, Moronene, Bajo, as well as immigrant groups such as the Bugis, Javanese, Batak, and many others. Indonesia, a large country with various ethnicities, religions, races, and cultural traditions, has historically embraced diversity, as reflected in the national motto “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” (Unity in Diversity). Consequently, Baubau City is a place where Bugis people are well-integrated and accepted by the local community. Currently, Bugis residents live in several areas within Baubau City, including the Pajalele neighborhood in Waliabuku Sub-district, Bungi District. The residents are engaged in various activities, with adults working and children and adolescents attending school. Some have even moved away for education or work. This diversity leads to unavoidable intercultural interactions between Bugis residents in Pajalele. While such diversity enriches communication and presents valuable opportunities, it also challenges the community to manage and align perceptions during intercultural exchanges, ensuring that harmony is effectively maintained.

The arrival of the Bugis people to Buton Island involved a long journey and participation in maritime trade activities. The Bugis, originating from South Sulawesi, are known for their expertise in navigation and have a rich maritime sailing tradition. They sailed across Indonesian waters, including the Makassar Strait, and established trade relationships with various communities along these routes. Buton Island, located in Eastern Sulawesi, became a significant destination in their trade network. The arrival of the Bugis to Buton Island not only impacted the economic aspects but also contributed to cultural and social exchanges between ethnic groups. Marriages and tradition exchanges are some of the dynamics that result from interactions between the Bugis and the local communities on Buton Island. This history reflects the complexity and dynamics of intercultural relations that have shaped ethnic diversity in the Indonesian region (Nelmawarni, 2017).

Based on initial observations, issues related to language communication often arise in social interactions between the Bugis and Buton communities in Southeast Sulawesi. These two groups have distinct regional languages (Bugis and Buton) and accents, which sometimes lead to cultural misunderstandings in everyday communication. On the other hand, the use of regional languages by one group can sometimes be perceived as exclusive and unfriendly by the other group. Especially if used in inappropriate settings or conditions, this can lead to negative perceptions that may worsen intercultural relations between the two groups.

Therefore, in light of these issues, the researcher aims to examine the underlying factors that contribute to maintaining harmony between the Bugis community in the Pajalele area, Waliabuku Sub-district, Bungi District, Baubau City, as outlined in the research title: "Intercultural Communication Among Bugis Residents in Fostering Harmony in Buton Society".

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative method with a case study approach. A case study is an in-depth and detailed research method focused on a specific phenomenon, entity, or situation. The goal is to understand, analyze, and explain particular events or occurrences within a real-world context. This research typically involves collecting qualitative data through interviews, observations, and document analysis to provide a comprehensive and contextual understanding of the research subject. Case studies tend to focus on specific occurrences rather than attempting to generalize findings to a broader population.

Qualitative research utilizes open interviews to explore and understand the attitudes, views, feelings, and behaviors of individuals or groups. The researcher poses several questions and then conducts a detailed discussion of the interview results. Data analysis in this study is derived from interviews with sources and includes various scholarly references such as academic articles, news reports, and websites. The interviews are conducted with informants, including Bugis and Buton community members residing in the Pajalele area. This study uses a qualitative case study approach to address issues and describe effective strategies for gaining deeper insights into the perceptions of Bugis and Buton residents in fostering harmony.

Result and Discussion

Discussion on Intercultural Communication among Bugis Residents in Fostering Harmony within the Buton Community in Pajalele

Intercultural communication between Bugis residents and the Buton community in Pajalele serves as an intriguing example of how two different ethnic groups can coexist harmoniously. The long-standing and well-maintained harmony between these groups illustrates the success in overcoming cultural differences and building mutually beneficial relationships. In this context, intercultural communication plays a crucial role in bridging differences and fostering mutual understanding. The Bugis community, as newcomers, has successfully adapted to their new environment in Pajalele, while the Buton

community, as the hosts, has shown openness in accepting the presence of other ethnic groups in their area.

Several factors contribute to effective intercultural communication and harmony between the Bugis and Buton communities in Pajalele: 1) Language: Language plays a critical role, with both groups using Indonesian as a common language or learning each other's languages to bridge communication gaps. 2) Customs: The respect and understanding of each group's customs facilitate harmonious daily interactions. 3) Religious Tolerance: Both groups demonstrate respect for each other's religious beliefs and practices, showing a commitment to honoring religious differences. 4) Economic Cooperation: Economic collaboration, including trade and joint efforts in agriculture and fishing, is crucial for mutual benefit. 5) Interethnic Marriage: Marriages between different ethnicities reflect a high level of acceptance and integration, blending cultures through family relationships. 6) Participation in Social Activities: Active involvement in various cultural and social events in Pajalele strengthens the sense of community and collaboration between the two groups.

The success of this intercultural communication is a result of both parties' efforts to understand, appreciate, and adapt to each other. This reflects an openness and willingness to learn from other cultures, ultimately leading to harmonious and mutually beneficial relationships. Explanation of the concepts of mind, self, and society in symbolic interactionism theory. Symbolic interactionism, developed by George Herbert Mead and later refined by Herbert Blumer, emphasizes the importance of meaning and interpretation in social interactions. This theory focuses on how individuals interpret and respond to symbols in their social environment.

Concept of Mind

The concept of mind in symbolic interactionism refers to an individual's ability to think about and reflect on their experiences. The mind is seen as a continuous process in which individuals interpret situations and consider various possible actions. In the context of intercultural communication in Pajalele, the concept of mind is reflected in how Bugis people and the Buton community think about and interpret their interactions with each other, as well as how they consider ways to communicate and behave according to existing norms.

Concept of Self

The concept of self refers to an individual's perception and understanding of themselves. The self is formed through interactions with others and the interpretation of others' responses to us. In the context of Pajalele, the self-concept of Bugis people and the Buton community can be influenced by how they view themselves in relation to other groups and how they feel accepted and valued within the broader community.

Social Concept

The social concept in symbolic interactionism theory relates to how individuals understand and interact with society as a whole. It involves understanding social norms, roles, and expectations within a group or community. In Pajalele, the social concept is reflected in how the Bugis community and the Buton people understand and adapt to the

existing social structure, including unwritten rules in intercultural interactions, and how they participate in community social life.

These three concepts are interconnected and play a crucial role in shaping intercultural interactions and communication in Pajalele. Through the process of thinking, individuals from both ethnic groups interpret each other's symbols and behaviors. Their self-concept is influenced by these interactions, which in turn affects how they behave and communicate within the broader social context. Successfully managing these three aspects contributes to maintaining harmony between the Bugis community and the Buton people in Pajalele.

Discussion on Barriers to Intercultural Communication between the Bugis and Buton Ethnic Groups in Maintaining Harmony in Pajalele

Barriers to intercultural communication between the Bugis and Buton ethnic groups in Pajalele can arise from several factors. One major barrier is the language difference, as each ethnic group has its own distinct regional language. This can lead to misunderstandings or difficulties in communicating effectively. Differences in cultural values and customs can also create obstacles. Each ethnic group has its own norms, beliefs, and cultural practices, which can lead to varying perceptions and interpretations in daily interactions. Stereotypes and prejudices between the groups can also impede effective communication. Preconceived notions about the other ethnic group can influence how individuals interact and interpret messages from members of the other group. Differences in communication styles between the two ethnic groups can also be a barrier. For instance, one group may communicate more directly, while the other might use indirect language or rely on more figurative expressions. A lack of knowledge or understanding about the other group's culture can further hinder effective communication. This can lead to misunderstandings or ignorance regarding important aspects of the other culture.

To address these barriers, efforts from both ethnic groups are needed to understand, respect, and learn about each other's cultures. Using Indonesian as a unifying language, increasing social interactions between the groups, and promoting cross-cultural education can help reduce communication barriers and enhance harmony in Pajalele. Here is an explanation of the concepts of mind, self, and society in symbolic interactionism theory:

Concept of Mind

In this theory, the concept of mind refers to an individual's ability to use and interpret symbols. The mind is viewed as a continuous process where individuals interpret situations and assign meaning to their experiences. Through this thinking process, individuals can plan actions, anticipate others' responses, and adjust their behavior.

Concept of Self

The concept of self in symbolic interactionism relates to how individuals view themselves. This self-concept is formed through interactions with others and interpretations of others' reactions to oneself. Individuals develop an understanding of

who they are based on how they believe others perceive them. This self-concept is dynamic and can change over time through social interactions.

Concept of Society

The social concept in this theory emphasizes that meaning and identity are formed through interactions within a social context. Society is seen as a network of symbolic interactions where individuals share meanings and interpret each other's actions. Social reality is considered a result of ongoing negotiations of meaning between interacting individuals. In this context, social norms, roles, and institutions are viewed as products of continuous symbolic interactions within society.

Conclusion

Based on the description above, the researcher concludes that the study conducted in Pajalele, Waliabuku Village, Bungi District, Baubau City, reveals that the intercultural communication between the Bugis and Buton communities involves three concepts: 1) Concept of Mind: The use of symbols such as the Bugis language, which is rooted in the cultural background from their previous residence in South Sulawesi, plays a role. The Bugis people use this language because of their ancestry and the customs they have maintained, such as greeting others on the street and waving. This symbolizes the Bugis tradition of friendliness, which the Bugis community in Pajalele continues to practice. 2) Concept of Self: The Bugis people are perceived as good-natured, friendly, smiling, and sincere in the eyes of the Buton community. This perception is due to the upbringing from their parents and the influence of their environment, which teaches them to be respectful to elders and to show mutual respect. 3) Concept of Society: The Bugis community adheres to the principle of "siri' na pacce." "Siri'" refers to self-esteem, honor, and dignity, while "Pacce" reflects solidarity, togetherness, and empathy. The Buton community has a strong social philosophy known as PO-5. Based on these principles, there is a high level of empathy and mutual support among the communities.

Thus, the Bugis community in building harmony with the Buton community continuously fosters tolerance and maintains social relationships. Harmony is a fundamental aspect to uphold in any environment, allowing the Bugis people to coexist harmoniously with the Buton community. Ensuring fairness and equality without discrimination is crucial to prevent social issues such as jealousy and potential conflicts. Addressing environmental support concerns also helps prevent disparities and conflicts. However, these issues can be avoided due to the principles and symbols brought by the Bugis community, which are still practiced in Pajalele today, leading to good acceptance by the Buton community and ensuring lasting harmony.

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