



Harmonizing Religious Diversity: Exploring Effective Intercultural Communication in Dukuh Sampetan Village

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Abstract

Religious tolerance is important to be instilled and carried out in building an interaction relationship in order to avoid divisions that can lead to conflict in society. The existence of a tolerant attitude towards religious differences and is expected to encourage the creation of a peaceful situation so as to create harmony in the interaction of people of different religions. In addition, it is also necessary to foster good harmonious communication so that it can form an understanding that leads to unity. Dukuh Sampetan is one of the dukuhs in Sampetan Village whose people consist of various religions, namely Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. This research uses qualitative research and the theory used is Effective Intercultural Workgroup Communication Theory. This research discusses cultural diversity, which means religious diversity in community groups in Sampetan Village in forming group communication that is able to achieve decisions, satisfaction and effectiveness of group performance in fostering tolerance between religious communities. The conclusion in this study is that communication that occurs in social life in Dukuh Sampetan runs effectively so that religious tolerance exists there is indeed true, seen from the forms of communication seen from general activities, communication that is usually carried out and religious activities.

Keywords: *Tolerance; Group Communication; Multi Religious*

Introduction

Indonesia is an archipelago which has a vast and strategic area that stretches from Sabang to Merauke. Because it has a large area, Indonesia is inhabited by many people, each of whom has different and diverse characteristics. One of the many diversities that Indonesia has is the existence of various religions that are embraced. The Indonesian government recognizes six religions in Indonesia, including Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism (Kementrian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2023).

We need to be grateful for this religious diversity because it can make Indonesia a unique and rich nation. But the reality is that this religious diversity sometimes creates conflicts that can trigger tensions and divisions in society (Groff, 2022). Conflicts over religious differences can be caused by something that is "mutual-sectoral" or also called a clash of different teachings, and can also be due to

different opinions or perceptions of the religion that is embraced by each community. A frequent case of religious conflict in Indonesia is the rejection of houses of worship. According to the longitudinal data of Setara Institute from 2007-2022 shows, there are 573 disturbances in worship and places of worship, the disturbance can be seen from the events in the dissolution and rejection of worship activities, the rejection of the construction of places of worship, intimidation, arson, and so on (Insiyah & Antika, 2023). The occurrence of these disturbances has an impact on external relations and also internal religion by minority groups.

In order to avoid divisions that can lead to conflict in society, in building a relationship in an interaction it is necessary to instill an understanding of the importance of having tolerance (Jinguang, 2013). Religious tolerance is an attitude of mutual respect and appreciation for the existence of religious diversity in society. In addition, tolerance is also included in one of the four indicators of religious moderation which is inseparable between moderate religious practice and behavior. The existence of a tolerant attitude towards religious differences and is expected to encourage the creation of a peaceful situation so as to create harmony in the interaction of people of different religions. In addition to having an attitude of tolerance, it is also necessary to foster good harmonious communication so that it can form an understanding that leads to unity (Abdul Rahman & Shapie, 2023; Marpuah, 2019; Pangalila & Mantiri, 2019).

Communication according to Schramm's concept (S. McCabe, 2009; Suherman, 2020) is an activity that focuses on the effectiveness of communication between people involved in the communication process that can produce *commonness*, understanding between the *source* and the recipient (*audience*). The communication process takes place in certain contexts and situations where it becomes an important focus to find out in depth in developing tolerance between religious communities seen through intergroup communication (Akbar & Fitriawati, 2022). According to Michael Burgoon, group communication is a face- to-face interaction carried out between three or more people who have a known goal, can share information, maintain themselves, solve problems and each member knows in detail in-depth characteristics of each other member (Afdjani, 2014).

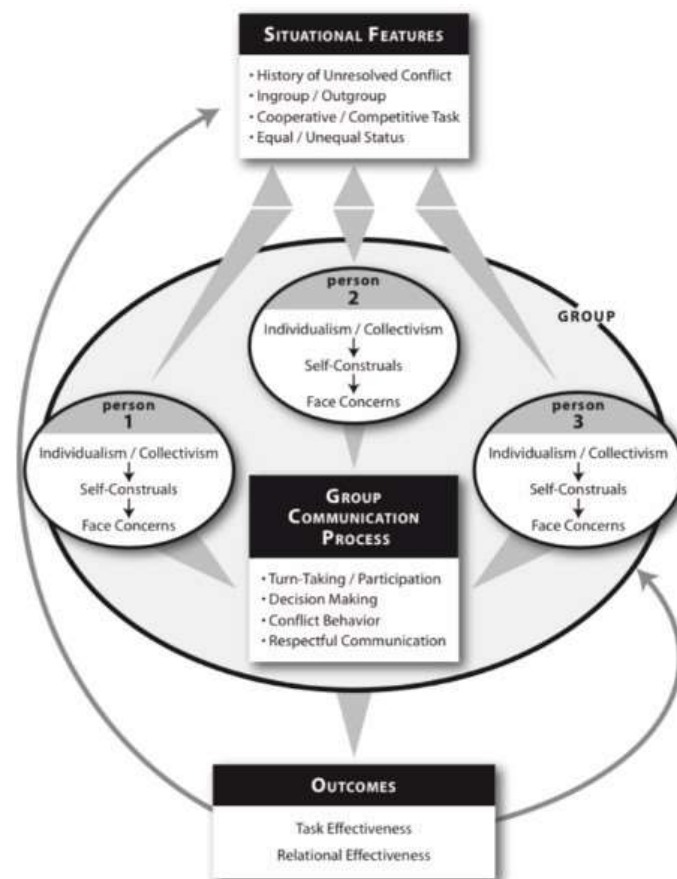
In this study, the authors used the *Effective Intercultural Workgroup Communication Theory* (Littlejohn, Stephen W., Karen A Foss, 2017; Oetzel, 2017) in Group Communication, where this theory explains how culture and cultural diversity are able to shape group communication, which is expected to have an impact on the group itself such as the level of quality of decision making, satisfaction achieved, and the productivity of the group's performance. According to John Oetzel, this theory uses an input-process-output model which is the basis of the theory of effective intercultural work group communication (Oetzel, 2017). Oetzel assumes that a culturally diverse group means having cultural differences among its members, namely differences in nationality, ethnicity, language, gender, position, age, disability and others are important to help the functioning of a group.

The phenomenon that the author is discussing this time is about communication between people of different religions in fostering tolerance in the Dukuh Sampetan community. Dukuh Sampetan is one of the dukuh in a village, namely Sampetan Village, which is located in the Ampel District, Boyolali Regency, Central Java. This village is located on the slopes of Mount Merbabu, which is about 2,000 meters away 35 km from the city center of Boyolali Regency. In addition, the researcher decided to take the object of research in Sampetan Village because the community consisted of from various religious backgrounds, but there are three religions that dominate, namely Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity and live in harmony side by side. In 2020 Sampetan Village was named the Pancasila Village profile as a model for a strong tolerance village, then in 2023 it was awarded as Pancasila Village by the Boyolali Regent (Jateng, 2023).

Therefore, through the explanation of the phenomenon discussed above, the author wants to examine the phenomenon with the *Effective Intercultural Workgroup Communication Theory* (Littlejohn,

Stephen W., Karen A Foss, 2017). This theory focuses on how cultural diversity consists of three forms of areas including, *Individualism / Collectivism*, *Self-Constructual*, *Face Concern* (Littlejohn, Stephen W., Karen A Foss, 2017). In this study the cultural diversity referred to is religious diversity in the community group in Dukuh Sampetan in forming group communication that is able to achieve decisions, satisfaction and productivity of group performance in fostering interfaith tolerance (Jinguang, 2013; Mohd Khalli et al., 2022) .

Where in this study the cultural diversity in question is the religious diversity of community groups in Dukuh Sampetan in forming group communication that is able to achieve decisions, satisfaction and productivity of group performance in fostering tolerance between religious communities. In addition, the author wants to know how the form and process of communication that is intertwined until it can achieve the goals as described from the communication process carried out by people of different religions (Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity) and it is hoped that after knowing these processes, the goal of fostering tolerance between religious people in the community can be achieved.



Picture 1. Model of the Effective Intercultural Workgroup Communication Theory (Littlejohn, Stephen W., Karen A Foss, 2017; Oetzel, 2017)

Research Methodology

This research uses qualitative research methods and uses the type of exploratory research (Carvalho et al., 2005; Nam et al., 2015) where this research focuses on explaining the interaction process in Group Communication that occurs between religious communities in a village. The subjects in this study were the people of Sampetan Village, Boyolali Regency. Data collection techniques used in this research are observation, interview and documentation (Moleong, 2017). This research will produce a

description of the state of the object to be studied based on existing facts according to the facts, the actual situation in interfaith communication through observation of community interactions in Sampetan Village, namely Dukuh Sampetan.

After that the data that has been collected is analyzed, the data analysis technique used in this research is data reduction, data presentation, and then drawing conclusions. The form of the results of this research is in the form of written words or sentences that can be oral in the form of people and behaviors that are being observed (Miles et al., 2014).

Results and Discussion

Religion is often considered an integral part of culture, both of which can coexist and influence each other because they both have values and symbols (Groff, 2022; Hommel, 2023). Culture covers various aspects of people's lives including value systems, social norms, customs, art, language and spiritual beliefs (Warburton, 2024). According to Haviland, religion is a belief and pattern of behavior used by humans to deal with what will be seen in the future (Marzali, 2017). Religion is one of the important elements in shaping the value system and beliefs in society. Religion also focuses on its role in shaping cultural identity, directing norms of behavior that will later become a frame of reference in the attitude and behavior of individuals and society. Religious rituals, festivals and other religious practices are also part of a group's cultural heritage. In addition, religion can influence art, architecture, literature and other cultural expressions. Religious beliefs and practices can be seen in works of art, folklore and oral traditions (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004; Owoc, 2008).

So, religion and culture are two things that are inseparable in the lives of individuals in society. If examined more deeply, religion and culture have their own functions, therefore the degree of influence of religion on culture can vary among societies and over time. Religion influences belief systems and life practices, whereas culture can influence religion in terms of how religion is interpreted and how religious rituals can be performed.

Form of Group Communication in Fostering Interfaith Tolerance

In a society that has diversity, one of which is religious diversity, it is very important to maintain and foster an attitude of tolerance there. In order to foster and maintain the attitude of tolerance, the need for a good and effective communication between groups of people of different religions. Based on the results of interviews and observations made by the author, there are several forms of group communication that exist between religious communities in Sampetan Village in Sampetan Hamlet. In the dukuh there are groups of people who are Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian. Group communication seen from the results of the author's observations in the form of activities and habits that conducted and organized by each interfaith community group there (Tanakajaya, 2015).

Religious Activities

Sampetan hamlet has Buddhist, Christian and Muslim communities who live side by side, but Buddhism and Christianity dominate in the hamlet. The results of the researcher's observations in the Dukuh routine religious activities carried out there are for the Christian community to carry out worship activities. The activity is carried out every Sunday at the church in Sampetan hamlet and on the previous day, Saturday, worship practice is routinely carried out to prepare for worship on Sunday. Tolerance seen in these activities is when the church is being rehearsed and is being cleaned, seen some residents of other religions whose homes are around the church, they sometimes when they are not busy will gather to chat near the church with the Pastor who is assisting the preparation activities or the church congregation. Then when the church in Dukuh Sampetan held a Social Service *event* which distributed free groceries, appropriate clothing and others in the form of coupons to people in several hamlets in Sampetan,

Buddhist and Muslim community groups supported by helping to organize the activity and also participated and supported the event by coming to the activity. Another activity is the implementation of the Christmas celebration organized by Christian residents in Dukuh Sampetan, the activity also invites the community of Dukuh Sampetan who are Buddhist and Christian to participate in the Christmas celebration activity.



Picture 2. Social service activities organized by the church in Sampetan hamlet

Buddhist community activities carried out in Dukuh Sampetan are routine Buddhist services at the monastery and are carried out well and solemnly because of the high attitude of respect by other religious communities when the activity takes place. Then through the results of the author's interview with the Chairman of *Gotong royong* Dukuh Sampetan, Mr. Rusmin, during the moment of Vesak Day in Dukuh Sampetan, the Buddhist community went to the monastery to pray together. Furthermore, the Vesak celebration is carried out by organizing wayangan and inviting Muslim and Christian communities to watch the wayangan performance. Through Mr. Rusmin's explanation, the people of Dukuh Sampetan were very enthusiastic about the activity because the residents took part in helping prepare until the puppet show could be carried out. For people who are Muslim, religious activities are routinely carried out is the five daily prayers. Another routine activity is recitation or the people of Dukuh Sampetan used to say "berjanjen", this recitation is held every Monday night and Friday night. In addition, during religious holidays, namely Eid al-Fitr, the village community has a habit of celebrating together with people of other religions (Al-Gazali, 2023).

Interaction between People of Different Religions

Mutual Cooperation Activities

In addition to religious activities carried out in the three hamlets in Sampetan Village, inter-religious communities that coexist there also often hold other activities, namely *gotong royong*¹(Lukiyanto & Wijayaningtyas, 2020). The term "*Gotong Royong*" itself is used to name the community gathering activities in Sampetan Village and the name has been used from generation to generation from ancestors / grandparents and finally used until now. *Gotong royong* activities or the people of Sampetan Village often say *gotong royong* association. Each hamlet in Sampetan Village has its own gathering schedule and each hamlet has a different schedule. If in Sampetan Village, the gathering activities are carried out every 35 days or Saturday Legi night.

The form of the *gotong royong* gathering activity is almost the same as the RW meeting, where each community in the hamlet gathers at the house of one of the residents then has a meeting agenda in the gathering such as discussing the current work program planned or being worked on in the Dukuh. In addition, this *gotong royong* gathering is also a means to provide information to each other, whether it is information about village administrative affairs or other information. This gathering is attended by one representative from each household that resides in Dukuh Sampetan, which means that every resident of any religion takes part side by side and even provides suggestions and input for plans to advance the Dukuh in the future. If there are residents who are expressing their opinions, for example, the residents are Muslim, Buddhist and Christian people pay attention and respect the opinions of residents who are speaking so that the discussion can run well and orderly (Nasruddin, 2023).



Picture 3. Gotong royong Meeting Activity

Then tolerance between religious communities is also seen in mutual cooperation activities. Mutual cooperation contributions are activities to help residents who are affected by a disaster, maybe they are sick or help if a resident dies. Contribution activities The *gotong royong* is coordinated by the head of the hamlet and when it has been collected, the head of the hamlet will give it to the families of residents who are sick. If a resident dies, people of all religions will help take care of layat activities regardless of the religion of the deceased (Nisa, 2019).

Community Service Activities

Another activity that involves Buddhist, Muslim and Christian communities is community service. This activity is a routine activity as a result of an agreement between community members in

¹ Means Mutual Aid (English)

Dukuh Sampetan. The community service organized in Dukuh Sampetan is to clean the park and the road between dukuhs. The location where the Sampetan Dukuh community conducts community service activities is near the Kantil Tree, which is also the road between dukuhs and there is a park there as previously explained. This community service activity is routinely held as a means for the community in each hamlet to maintain environmental cleanliness and strengthen community harmony between religious communities (Nisa, 2019).



Picture 4. Community service activities (Documentation of Dukuh Sampetan resident)

Everyday Communication

When researchers made observations in Dukuh Sampetan, the thing that became a habit of the people there was that they liked to interact by always greeting each other. If a resident passes by another resident's house and the resident greets and surely the greeting will be reciprocated, then the resident who is in the house will invite the resident who passed by his house to stop by (Faridah, 2013; Tanakajaya, 2015). This habit is carried out by the entire community, of course, every religion, both Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, who live side by side in Sampetan Village. The existence of the habit of greeting and friendly nature between these communities is able to increase togetherness and create a positive social atmosphere which later these habits as a form to always foster inter-religious community life that is tolerant.



Picture 4. Interfaith Communication

Theory Interpretation

In this study, the authors used *Effective Intercultural Workgroup Communication Theory*. When associated with the results of the research that the author has described, how religious diversity can form a group communication where the hope is that the results of group communication can provide quality in making decisions, satisfaction, creating productivity/effectiveness in interfaith communication to foster tolerance in Sampetan Village.

In *Effective Intercultural Workgroup Communication Theory*, there is a *situational feature* or how a group is considered capable of managing diversity from its situational factors. If in this discussion, Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim community groups in Dukuh Sampetan are able to manage religious diversity seen from several situational factors, namely (1) *History of Unresolved Conflict*, (2) *Ingroup/Outgroup*, (3) *Cooperative/Competitive Task*, and (4) *Equal/Unequal Status*. These factors can later produce an effective form of communication and be able to strive for the achievement of a goal, namely respect or tolerance of religious diversity in Sampetan Village.

The first situational factor is *History of Unresolved*, this factor looks at whether there is a history of unresolved conflict between religious communities. In Buddhist, Christian and Muslim communities in Sampetan hamlet, conflicts caused by religious issues are rare. In activities and social life, the problems that occur are more in the direction of differences of opinion or arguments between one another and also the lack of community sensitivity in implementing decisions that have been agreed upon together. However, these problems are faced with a calm attitude so that it does not become a prolonged conflict because it is resolved with kinship. Then in the second factor, namely *Ingroup / Outgroup*, where discusses the balance of the number of members of religious groups. As already explained, Dukuh Sampetan consists of three religions: Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. The community there is dominated by Buddhism and Christianity, making the religious groups have a balance in number, but for the Islamic community group in Dukuh Sampetan, the number is smaller.

The third factor discusses *Cooperative / Competitive Task*. In Dukuh Sampetan, there is a culture of mutual cooperation that has been passed down from generation to generation and is still being implemented in community life there. Therefore, all tasks, which in other words are activities and programs owned by Dukuh Sampetan that will be implemented or held, all religious communities work together through the culture of *gotong royong* to prepare for the task so that the activities or programs that are attempted can run smoothly and be able to advance life in Dukuh Sampetan. Then on the fourth factor, namely *Equal/Unequal Status*, Dukuh Sampetan has a variety of religious diversity there, even so harmony is established in community life there so that people between religions remain fair to each other and no one discriminates. This is supported by an interview with Mr. Sutar, one of the residents in Dukuh Sampetan, he explained that indeed the life of the people in Dukuh Sampetan although people still get along well, help each other and support each other when there are religious activities regardless of which religion.

Mr. Sutar: " then this sampetan

Although there are three religions, we can also be united in the sense that we also commemorate religious holidays such as Christmas and Vesak, which are still supported by three religions that are bound by one gotong royong. So whoever and from wherever even any tribe enters the Sampetan gotong royong becomes a member of the gotong royong we have to follow here. Then what I know is that it is also harmonious here, so like what the same light is carried

even though it is heavy in any work we still carry together because if you want to make pluralistic citizens who are united so that we can achieve harmony The first is like that"

After knowing some factors situational factors in *Effective Intercultural Workgroup Communication Theory* there are individual cultural factors, this factor discusses the characteristics of the people of each religion in Dukuh Sampetan which include *individualism/collectivism, Self-Constructual, Face Concern* In the community of each religion, namely Buddhism, Christianity and Islam in Dukuh Sampetan, most of them have the same characteristics. The characteristic that the community has there is *collectivism* because they have a close relationship where some of the residents have a close relationship with each other. there has been in Dukuh Sampetan from since birth so that it consists of the same ethnic background and also some residents still have family ties. Because the culture of *gotong royong* is always prioritized and implemented in the life of the people in Dukuh Sampetan, it makes the community, both Buddhists, Christians and Muslims, if there is a certain gathering that discusses a matter, it must reach a mutual agreement and fulfill group goals so that the decision is accepted by all parties. In addition, the characteristic possessed by the people of Dukuh Sampetan, which if associated with a conceptual self, is a sense of caring for one another. It can be seen from the results of the author's observations previously described that the people of Dukuh Sampetan have a high caring nature to help fellow communities, whether Buddhist, Christian or Muslim, all help each other if there are residents who need help, either residents who are sick, then residents who are *gawe / gondangan* or can also be called a wedding event, or when there are residents who are grieving because they died. In the characteristics also discuss the composition of the group, the Dukuh Sampetan community has a heterogeneous group composition because it has religious diversity there, where the community consists of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.

In addition, in *Effective Intercultural Workgroup Communication Theory* there are various forms of results from communication processes that comprise effective communication. There are four communication processes that comprise effective communication, namely *equal participation, concensus decision-making, cooperative conflict, and respectful communication*. When viewed from the author's observations, the community runs the social life of each resident of Dukuh Sampetan, both Buddhists, Christians and Muslims when interacting to produce a communication process that uses effective communication. In the first process, namely *equal participation*, which discusses the participation of each member of the community group equally. This process explains that how much participation of interfaith community members, both Buddhists, Christians and Muslims, in participating in activities held in Dukuh Sampetan. If there are activities, whether religious or non- religious, almost all residents from Buddhism, Christianity and Islam participate in these activities. Then in the second process *concensus decision-making* explains decision making that focuses on the results of an agreement that has been mutually agreed upon. In this second communication process, the Dukuh Sampetan community has implemented this because every time they want to carry out certain activities or dukuh programs, they need to involve the opinions of each resident there and discuss them together so that later they can reach a mutually agreed decision. The process can be seen from one of the routine activities there, namely the *gotong royong* meeting, where the activity is a forum for the community to discuss their opinions. Buddhists, Christians and Muslims discuss everything from activities, work programs, input and suggestion and so on.

Then in the third process is *cooperative conflict* which explains the management or resolution of conflict if it occurs. Through the author's observations in social life in Dukuh Sampetan, conflicts, especially conflicts that refer to religion, rarely or never occur, the problem is more about differences of opinion between residents with one another when discussing something so that the solution is to remain calm and conduct further discussions until later it can reach a joint decision that is good to build for the continuity of the progress of the dukuh. This is supported through an interview with one of the residents of Dukuh Sampetan, namely Mr. Maryadi, who said that in Dukuh Sampetan there are no conflicts that refer to religion, but there are usually differences of opinion that occur, for example when determining the time for community service and many opinions are also given in order to advance the life of the dukuh.

Mr. Maryadi: "If there is a debate in the community group, it is sometimes for community service or progress or something like that, but if it is a religious issue, there is never... it is never a problem"

The last process is *respectful communication*, communication that respects each other despite differences of opinion. In Dukuh Sampetan itself conducts respectful communication, the interaction in a mutual cooperation gathering that is discussing a certain topic will certainly have many opinions so that it can lead to differences of opinion, even so each other remains calm and respectful of each other's opinions. Opinion opinions of each citizen.

Judging from the analysis of the model on *Effective Intercultural Workgroup Communication Theory* starting from situational factors owned by the community in Dukuh Sampetan, then individual cultural factors or characteristics of each community group both Buddhists, Christians and Muslims and communication processes that occur there produce task effectiveness and rational effectiveness. The results of task effectiveness and rational effectiveness refer to the achievement of effectiveness in group communication (Tarmo & Issa, 2022) that exists in each community group with each other, both Buddhists, Christians and Muslims in social life, namely the implementation and creation of a life of religious tolerance.

Summary

Based on the results of research and discussion that has been described above, it can be concluded that the community in Dukuh Sampetan consists of people who have religious diversity including Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. Even so, the communication processes that occur in social life there run effectively so that religious tolerance there is indeed true. This can be seen from the communication between religious communities there who get along well with each other and also the participation of the entire dukuh community in helping each other in preparing activities to participate in these activities so that they can be carried out both general activities such as community service and ordinary daily communication, namely greeting each other and religious activities. In addition, the people of Dukuh Sampetan have a culture of *Gotong royong* which is also their guideline for living in society so that it supports the establishment of religious tolerance life there.

The author's suggestion for future researchers is that future researchers can make deeper observations of what activities show religious tolerance there so that in the future readers can find out about the many activities that are held. Then the hope is that communication between religious communities in Dukuh Sampetan and the activities that take place can continue to be carried out and fostered so that the life of religious tolerance can always be established until the future and can even be an example for other communities.

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