

FOSTERING SOCIAL HARMONY IN DIVERSITY: INTER-ETHNIC INTERACTIONS AMONG SASAK, BALI, AND SAMAWA COMMUNITIES IN LUNYUK DISTRICT, SUMBAWA

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Abstrak

This study examines the inter-ethnic interactions among the Sasak, Balinese, and Samawa communities in Lunyuk Subdistrict, Sumbawa, to understand how social harmony is maintained amidst cultural and religious diversity. The research is significant as it sheds light on practical strategies for fostering coexistence in rural multicultural settings, contributing novel insights into community resilience and interdependence. The study aims to identify the forms of social interaction across economic, agricultural, and cultural domains while addressing the challenges posed by differences in language, customs, and religion.

Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews with 15 informants, and documentation. The analysis was conducted using data triangulation to ensure validity and reliability. The findings reveal that trading, agricultural collaboration, and cultural events are vital avenues for strengthening inter-ethnic relationships. Key challenges include linguistic barriers and differing cultural practices, which are mitigated through mutual respect, empathy, and effective communication. The study highlights the importance of adaptive strategies in sustaining harmony and provides a model for addressing diversity-related challenges in similar settings. These insights have implications for community development and policy-making in multicultural societies, promoting inclusivity and cohesion in both rural and urban contexts.

Keywords: Bali ethnic group; Culture diversity, Social interactions, Sasak ethnic group, Samawa ethnic group.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's multicultural landscape is characterized by a rich tapestry of ethnicities, cultures, and religions, which presents both opportunities for enrichment and challenges for national unity. The interplay of diverse ethnic groups significantly influences social interactions and relationships, particularly in regions where multiple ethnicities coexist. Research indicates that maintaining unity in multi-ethnic societies can be complicated by differences in customs, languages, and religious beliefs, which may lead to social tensions if not managed effectively (Demartoto & Ramdhon, 2023; Hikmah & Suharno, 2022; Karomani, 2019). However, positive inter-ethnic relationships can emerge, fostering solidarity and cooperation when communities prioritize healthy communication

and mutual understanding (Gutiérrez-Carmona et al., 2021).

Studies illustrate how inter-ethnic interactions can lead to cooperation and accommodation among different groups. For instance, research on the Buton and Javanese in Ambon highlights that social interactions often involve collaborative efforts in community activities, which promote tolerance and understanding (Kuang & Nishikawa, 2021). Similarly, findings regarding the Javanese and Madurese in Jember emphasize the importance of shared rituals and common languages in facilitating harmonious relationships (Yulianto et al., 2021). These studies underscore that fostering tolerance and cooperation is essential for creating peaceful social conditions amid Indonesia's diversity.

In Lunyuk District, the challenge of maintaining

harmony among the Sasak, Bali, and Samawa ethnic groups is particularly pronounced due to their differing customs, languages, and religions. The development of social interaction patterns that encompass economic, cultural, and religious dimensions is a common strategy employed by these communities to promote mutual respect and collaboration (Jayusman et al., 2022; Sari et al., 2018). Research indicates that practices such as mutual cooperation and social assimilation are vital for maintaining social harmony in multi-ethnic settings (Brown et al., 2019; Maulana et al., 2023). For example, inter-ethnic interactions in Ambon are characterized by compromise and joint efforts in social activities, which effectively mitigate conflict potential (Elfira, 2011). Cooperation in significant life events, such as weddings and funerals, plays a crucial role in fostering inter-ethnic harmony (Gartner et al., 2013)

Moreover, the significance of cultural diversity as both a strength and a challenge for Indonesian society is well-documented. Research discusses how local communities have successfully navigated their relationships with various ethnic groups through social accommodation and healthy competition, emphasizing the importance of focusing on shared interests to avoid conflict (Setiawan, 2023). However, it is essential to recognize that factors such as religion and customs can create specific obstacles that need addressing in multi-ethnic contexts, particularly in regions like Lundyuk where distinct religious and cultural backgrounds coexist (Rahman et al., 2014). This gap in research highlights the need for further exploration of how diverse ethnic groups can maintain unity amidst their differences.

The present study aims to elucidate the forms of social interaction among the Sasak, Bali, and Samawa ethnic groups in Lundyuk District, identifying both the factors that support harmony and the challenges encountered in these interactions. By focusing on the social, economic, cultural, and religious aspects influencing inter-ethnic dynamics, this research seeks to contribute original insights into the social fabric of multicultural rural areas in Indonesia, which may differ significantly from urban settings

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the social interaction patterns among the three main ethnic groups in Lundyuk District, namely Sasak, Bali, and Samawa, in maintaining harmony. Data collection was conducted through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation,

involving 15 informants: 5 from the Sasak community, 4 from the Bali community, and 6 from the Samawa community. Non-participant observation focused on daily activities that reflect social interactions among the three ethnic groups, particularly in economic, agricultural, and cultural activities. Semi-structured interviews allowed informants to express their experiences, perspectives, and challenges in maintaining harmony. Documentation, including notes and photographs of social interactions, was used to complement the data from observations and interviews. The data obtained were analyzed through reduction to focus on relevant information and then presented descriptively. The validity of the data was checked using triangulation techniques by comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation, as well as verification through peer discussions and reference checks to ensure the adequacy of the information supporting the research findings.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

a. Forms of Interaction Among Sasak, Balinese, and Samawa Communities in Lundyuk Subdistrict

The interaction between the Sasak, Balinese, and Samawa communities in Lundyuk Subdistrict reflects a complex and mutually beneficial social dynamic, especially in the contexts of economy, agriculture, and culture.

1) Interaction in Trading Activities

Economically, the Sasak and Balinese communities primarily function as traders, providing daily necessities such as vegetables and agricultural tools, while the Samawa community serves as the main consumer group.

The economic interactions within traditional markets serve as a vital framework for understanding social interconnectedness among communities.

This interconnectedness is particularly evident in the Lundyuk Subdistrict, where diverse ethnic groups engage in economic, social, and cultural activities that reinforce their interdependence. Abas & Aziz, (2016) discuss how traditional market activities not only facilitate economic transactions but also strengthen social bonds among individuals from different backgrounds, contributing to local economic stability. The concept of community resilience is crucial in this context. Hu & Zhang, (2022)

explore the resilience of diversified clusters, emphasizing how market integration can lead to economic diversification in rural communities. Their findings suggest that such diversification enhances social resilience, especially during disruptive events like the COVID-19 pandemic. This aligns with the notion that traditional markets, by fostering diverse economic interactions, can bolster community resilience and stability. Moreover, the role of ethnic diversity in fostering cohesion within communities is highlighted by (Godfrey et al., 2022). They argue that while ethnic diversity can sometimes hinder group cohesion, it can also enhance group processes in specific contexts, suggesting a nuanced relationship between diversity and cohesion. This perspective supports the idea that the traditional market in Lunyuk Subdistrict is a microcosm of broader social dynamics, where diverse ethnic groups collaborate and contribute to a stable economic environment. Additionally, Franco-Crespo, (2023) discusses the importance of community-based companies in enhancing local economic stability and food sovereignty. By processing local products and fostering supply chains, these companies play a critical role in insulating communities from external economic shocks, further illustrating the interconnectedness of social and economic activities in traditional markets.

2) Interaction in Agricultural Activities

The agricultural sector in the Samawa community, characterized by significant land ownership by the Samawa people and labor contributions from the Sasak community, highlights a complex interdependence among ethnic groups. The Balinese community, known for their advanced agricultural technologies, plays a crucial role by providing essential tools for harvesting. This collaborative effort not only boosts agricultural productivity but also fosters inter-ethnic relationships through teamwork and mutual assistance, as noted in the research by (Graham et al., 2012). The concept of interdependence in agricultural practices is well-documented. For instance, I. Mensah et

al., (2022); J. Mensah et al., (2016) discuss how structural transformations in agriculture can positively impact related sectors, emphasizing the interconnectedness of agricultural reforms and their spillover effects on the economy. This aligns with the notion that diverse communities, such as those in Samawa, can enhance agricultural productivity through cooperative practices that leverage each group's strengths. Moreover, the interdependence of agricultural and non-agricultural sectors is further explored by Kelikume & Nwani, (2020) who provide evidence of how agricultural outputs support industrial activities. This relationship underscores the importance of collaboration among different ethnic groups in the Samawa community, as each contributes uniquely to the agricultural ecosystem. Additionally, the role of local wisdom in fostering sustainable agricultural practices is highlighted by Setyaningsih et al., (2019). Their findings suggest that local knowledge and cultural values significantly influence agricultural productivity and community cooperation, reinforcing the idea that the Samawa community's collaborative efforts are rooted in shared cultural practices. Furthermore, the concept of the Nexus framework, as discussed by Oliva et al., (2021), recognizes the interdependencies among food, water, and welfare, which are crucial for sustainable agricultural practices. This framework can be applied to understand how the collaborative efforts among the Samawa, Sasak, and Balinese communities contribute to a more resilient agricultural system.

3) Interaction in Cultural Activities

Cultural interactions are essential for fostering harmony among diverse communities. Annual events, such as cultural parades that involve various ethnic groups showcasing their traditional dances, songs, and attire, serve as a vital medium for strengthening solidarity and unity among these groups (Repke & Benet-Martínez, 2018). Participation in joint cultural events has been shown to enhance mutual respect and understanding among ethnic groups, thereby contributing to social stability

within the region emphasize that such cultural activities not only provide a platform for expressing each community's cultural identity but also reinforce existing social networks, which are crucial for maintaining social cohesion (Karomani, 2019; Vlasov, 2023). The interactions among the Sasak, Balinese, and Samawa communities in Lunyuk Subdistrict exemplify the intricate social relationships forged through economic, agricultural, and cultural activities. This collaboration fulfills daily needs while simultaneously strengthening social and cultural ties, creating a harmonious and supportive environment. The findings of Vlasov et al., (2022) support this notion by highlighting that socio-cultural factors significantly influence community dynamics, which can lead to enhanced innovation and economic development in multi-ethnic regions. Consequently, these interactions contribute to the region's social and economic sustainability, serving as a model of ethnic harmony for other communities (Gutiérrez-Carmona et al., 2021). Moreover, the concept of social harmony is not only pivotal for community interactions but also plays a critical role in addressing broader societal challenges. Demartoto & Ramdhon, (2023) discuss how social harmony can be instrumental in mitigating conflicts, particularly in multicultural contexts. This underscores the importance of fostering inclusive environments where diverse ethnic identities can coexist peacefully. The collaborative efforts among different ethnic groups, as seen in Lunyuk Subdistrict, reflect a commitment to maintaining social harmony, which is essential for the overall well-being and stability of the region (G. R. Sharma, 2023).

b. Factors Influencing Harmony in Interactions

Three key factors support harmonious interactions among the Sasak, Balinese, and Samawa communities: empathy, mutual respect, and effective communication.

- 1) Empathy enables individuals to understand and share others' feelings, playing a vital role in fostering harmony and interaction among the Sasak, Balinese, and Samawa communities. Appreciating

differences and understanding diverse perspectives can create a conducive environment for cooperation within cultural and ethnic diversity. Empathy is foundational for respecting and understanding inter-ethnic differences, achieved through dialogue and cultural exchange. Meetings and discussions among the communities enhance understanding and tolerance, promoting peaceful and harmonious coexistence.

- 2) Mutual Respect, involves recognizing and honoring others' rights and freedoms. Among the Sasak, Balinese, and Samawa communities, mutual respect is essential for maintaining harmony and building positive interactions. This includes respecting different traditions, cultures, and worldviews. By valuing diverse beliefs, languages, and customs, individuals can foster a harmonious and peaceful environment where everyone feels accepted and appreciated. Respecting cultural and ethnic diversity is critical for sustaining peace and cooperation within a pluralistic society.
 - 3) Effective Communication, is crucial for maintaining harmony and interaction within the community. It involves exchanging information and understanding between individuals or groups. Among the Sasak, Balinese, and Samawa communities, effective communication is necessary to understand cultural values, customs, and social norms. By bridging cultural differences through clear communication, the communities can adapt to each other's ways of life, creating a harmonious and understanding environment.
- c. Challenges Faced by the Sasak, Balinese, and Samawa Communities in Interacting

The primary challenges in social interaction among the three ethnic groups include differences in language, customs, and religion.

1) Language Difference

Language serves as a medium for individuals to convey their intentions and desires to others. By definition, language is a system of sound symbols used by its speakers for communication and other purposes. Thus, language becomes an essential tool for establishing effective communication between individuals. The Sasak people have their own language,

Sasak, as do the Balinese with their Balinese language and the Samawa people with the Sumbawa language. However, understanding each ethnic group's language can often be challenging, necessitating a unifying language. In this case, Bahasa Indonesia serves as the unifying language. Research conducted by Radiko Arvyanda on the "Analysis of the Impact of Language Differences in Inter-student Communication in Yogyakarta" found that students often use their regional languages to communicate with family and friends from the same area. Bahasa Indonesia, as the national language, is considered an identity for communication among students, as concluded from respondents in the study.

2) Differences in Customs Culture

Customs encompass a broad spectrum of cultural concepts, including values, norms, traditions, institutions, and customary laws practiced within specific regions. In this context, customs refer to the set of norms, values, and behaviors that a community adopts and practices as part of their identity and heritage. The Sasak, Balinese, and Samawa communities in Lunyuk Subdistrict, Sumbawa Besar, exhibit intriguing differences in their customs and cultures. The Sasak people, native to Lombok, are known for their unique traditions, particularly characterized by friendliness and politeness in their interactions. This is evident in their traditional wedding procession known as Nyongkolan (Figure 2), where participants carry wedding items in a vibrant parade (Bithara et al., 2020; Divayana et al., 2019).



Figure 1. The Nyongkolan Tradition of the Sasak People

The Balinese community, predominantly Hindu, showcases different customs marked by religious

ceremonies and traditional rituals. A key aspect of Balinese culture is the concept of Tri Hita Karana, which emphasizes harmony among humans and God (Parahyangan), humans and others (Pawongan), and humans and nature (Palemahan) (Rasmini, 2022; Redi et al., 2020). This philosophy not only guides personal conduct but also informs community practices and environmental stewardship, reinforcing the interconnectedness of social and ecological well-being (Wirahyuni et al., 2021). The implementation of Tri Hita Karana values is evident in various aspects of Balinese life, including corporate social responsibility initiatives and community engagement (Solihin & Sumawidari, 2021). The Samawa community, originating from Sumbawa, possesses its distinctive customs and culture, characterized by strong familial bonds and mutual assistance. They uphold noble values and politeness in their interactions, reflecting a commitment to community welfare and support (Ni Wayan Budi Purnama Dewi et al., 2022). The cultural practices of the Samawa people, while unique, also resonate with the broader themes of cooperation and respect found in Sasak and Balinese customs. In summary, the customs and cultures of the Sasak, Balinese, and Samawa communities in Lunyuk Subdistrict illustrate a rich tapestry of traditions that contribute to their identities. The Nyongkolan tradition of the Sasak, the Tri Hita Karana philosophy of the Balinese, and the strong familial ties of the Samawa all highlight the importance of customs in shaping social interactions and community cohesion (Perdana, 2023).

These cultural practices not only enrich the communities but also serve as a foundation for sustainable development and social harmony in the region (A. Sharma et al., 2021). The Sasak community practices Nyongkolan, a traditional wedding procession characterized by a vibrant parade where participants carry wedding items while walking to the bride's house. This lively event is an integral part of wedding celebrations, accompanied by music and traditional dances, which creates a joyous atmosphere (Renda et al., 2021). The

Nyongkolan tradition showcases the cultural identity of the Sasak people and emphasizes their communal values and social cohesion during significant life events (Edwin, 2023). In contrast, the Balinese community practices the Nyentana tradition, a marriage system where the husband moves into the wife's household and adheres to her family's customs (Figure 3). This practice is particularly significant in situations where a Balinese family lacks a male heir to continue the family lineage. The Nyentana tradition reflects a departure from the patriarchal norms prevalent in many societies, where typically, women move to their husband's home after marriage (Titisari, 2023). This unique aspect of Balinese culture underscores the flexibility and adaptability of marriage customs in response to familial needs and societal structures. The Nyentana tradition is deeply rooted in the Balinese cultural framework, which places a strong emphasis on familial ties and the continuation of heritage through women. This contrasts with the more common patrilineal systems found in other cultures, where lineage and inheritance are traced through male descendants. The practice of Nyentana not only serves practical purposes but also reinforces the importance of women in Balinese society, allowing them to maintain their familial connections and cultural practices. Overall, both the Nyongkolan and Nyentana traditions exemplify the rich cultural heritage of the Sasak and Balinese communities, highlighting their unique approaches to marriage and family life. These customs reflect the values and norms of each community and contribute to their social cohesion and identity (Edwin, 2023).



Figure 2. The Nyentana Tradition of the Balinese People

Meanwhile, the Samawa community in Sumbawa practices Nyorong, a custom performed during childbirth, weddings, and funerals. In marriage, the nyorong process represents a significant stage where the male party visits the female party to discuss wedding plans. This visit typically includes discussions on the dowry and other preparations for the upcoming wedding. Figure 4 illustrates the Nyorong tradition.

The Nyorong process involves various stages, including negotiating the dowry, which is a significant aspect of marriage in many Indonesian cultures. The dowry serves as a symbol of commitment and is often seen as a reflection of the groom's family's status and the bride's value within the community (Sukarddin & Suryaningsih, 2022). The discussions during the Nyorong visit are critical, as they set the tone for the relationship between the two families and establish expectations for the marriage. This custom illustrates the interplay between tradition and modernity, as perceptions of the Nyorong tradition have evolved over time within the Sumbawa community. Furthermore, the Nyorong tradition is indicative of broader cultural practices in Indonesia, where marriage customs often involve extensive negotiations and community involvement. Similar to the practices observed in other regions, such as the Batakese Marhata Sinamot (dowry bargaining), the Nyorong process emphasizes the importance of politeness and respect in communication during

these negotiations. This reflects a common theme across various Indonesian ethnic groups, where marriage customs serve not only to unite individuals but also to reinforce familial and community ties.



Figure 3. The Nyorong Tradition of the Samawa People

3) Religious Difference

Religion serves as a foundational aspect of life, guiding adherents in their decision-making and actions. It provides a framework for individuals and groups to achieve their life goals and navigate daily challenges. In Lunyuk Subdistrict, the coexistence of diverse religions, including Islam and Hinduism, presents both opportunities and challenges for the local community, which comprises the Sasak, Balinese, and Samawa peoples. Despite these differences in religious beliefs, the communities emphasize mutual respect and understanding, fostering harmonious interactions in their daily lives (Khomisah, 2024). The role of religion in shaping social interactions is significant, as it influences individuals' values and behaviors. For instance, Khomisah, (2024) highlights that understanding the obligations and prohibitions of religion is crucial for shaping students' personalities, which can extend to their interactions within diverse communities. Similarly, Nindra et al., (2022) discuss how a high level of religiosity can lead individuals to view their faith as a guiding principle in life, reinforcing the importance of religious values in social contexts. Moreover, the concept of harmony is deeply embedded in the cultural practices of the Sasak and Balinese communities. Sahfutra & Maharani, (2022) emphasize that societies characterized by good tolerance values can serve as models for harmonious coexistence among different religious and ethnic groups. This notion

of harmony is crucial in Lunyuk Subdistrict, where the Sasak, Balinese, and Samawa communities navigate their differences while maintaining respectful relationships. Furthermore, the integration of religious values into daily life can enhance social cohesion. Mukhtar and Butt Mukhtar Mukhtar & Butt, (2012) argue that religion acts as a unifying force, shaping attitudes and behaviors that promote social harmony. This is particularly relevant in multi-religious contexts, where shared values can bridge divides and foster collaboration among diverse groups.

4. CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of inter-ethnic interactions among the Sasak, Balinese, and Samawa communities in Lunyuk Subdistrict, emphasizing the importance of fostering harmony in multicultural rural settings. By highlighting the role of economic, agricultural, and cultural cooperation, as well as mutual respect and effective communication, this research contributes to understanding the strategies that promote social cohesion amidst cultural and religious diversity. While the findings reinforce the relevance of inter-ethnic collaboration for maintaining stability, further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of such interactions on community development and how these strategies can be adapted to other multi-ethnic regions. Without overstating its significance, this study realistically adds to the current body of knowledge by offering a model for fostering social harmony that prioritizes inclusivity and adaptability, providing a foundation for future studies to build upon in the context of multicultural societies.

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