

Research Article

Creating Harmony in Multi-Ethnic and Religious Community: Evidence from the Transmigration Land of Raharja Village, Indonesia

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Abstract: This study analyzed the efforts of the Balinese and Gorontalo ethnic in creating harmony in transmigration lands. This case study research involved students of the State Islamic University of Sultan Amai Gorontalo through an integrated social work lecture program. Data collection was carried out ethnographically through interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Meanwhile, data analysis was through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The researchers found two strategic aspects carried out by Balinese and Gorontalo ethnic groups in Raharja village to create harmony, namely distributing roles in village governance in a balanced way, and opening tolerance of local culture, especially in labeling settlements and youth organizations. With such efforts, local cultural symbols link harmoniously without anyone being disturbed.

Keywords: Creating harmony, Multi-ethnic and religious, Community, Transmigration land, Distributing role, Shared identity.

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INTRODUCTION

Transmigration areas in Indonesia become an alarming socio-cultural arena. It is reasonable because the transmigration program is an arena that brings together different ethnicities and religions. With the meeting of people from different ethnicities and religions, according to Nuh (2011), conflicts can occur both social disputes based on faith. That is where tolerance between religious and ethnic communities gets a test. Every plural community is challenged to always survive in any condition. There is no other choice but to live in harmony. But what Sairin (2006) underlines is that harmony which must be developed is not artificial or verbal-harmony harmony, but authentic, dynamic, realistic harmony, which is a reflection of religious teachings. This harmony is based on the awareness that even though they are of different religions, they have an awareness of the responsibility and calling to fight for welfare equally.

Apart from that, multi-ethnic Indonesia is a relatively safe country because of the functioning of religious moderation (Syafi'i, 2020). To anticipate conflicts in transmigration areas, the government provided a briefing. Prospective residents of transmigrants are not only equipped with life skills but also at the same time values of solidarity and tolerance. The government emphasizes working for welfare as

well as happiness in the future. The government also stressed that the purpose of the transmigration program is to integrate ethnicity, religion, race, and class into one (Nuh, 2011). These messages have permeated and become values shared by transmigrants. Those values are their pattern in their new place.

Gorontalo Province is an area with a relatively small population. Since 1980 Gorontalo Province has been the target of the transmigration of the people of Java and Bali (Tobialo, 2020). Transmigrants from the two densely populated areas arrived, filling the new settlements, combined with local transmigrants. The process of integration and religious tolerance began. As a result, for around 40 years, tolerance among religious communities in the transmigration area in Gorontalo has been relatively well managed. This condition is relevant to the view of Nuh (2011) that the potential for conflict between religious communities and between ethnic groups in this area is relatively small, most disputes are individual rather than communal. Meanwhile, the potential for integration in this area is enormous. The main factor is the existence of a dominant culture that supports the realization of harmony.

One of the areas in Gorontalo Province that are very popular in religious tolerance is Banuroja village in Pohuwato regency. There met several ethnic groups,

namely Bali, Nusa Tenggara, Gorontalo, and Java. The community is very heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity, language, culture, and religion. The heterogeneity of Banuroja village people has instead become an element that reinforces harmony between them. No apparent arrogance of adherents of a particular religion, invisible excessive militancy, no intrigue to negate each other, shows the existence of peace that is built up (Faisal, 2019). In addition to Banuroja village, several areas have specificity in creating harmony between religious communities in Gorontalo Province. One of them is Raharja village in Wonosari district of Boalemo regency.

Raharja village looks like the little Bali in Gorontalo Province. Distinctive features that appear prominent are the gates of the Balinese carved village as welcoming guests. *Penjor* that stands curved in almost every Balinese house, *Bedugul* temple, place of cremation, fence of Balinese carved houses, and residents' yard decorated with flowers and plants fruit. Raharja village is inhabited by two different religious and ethnic groups, with a composition of 35% Balinese Hindus and 65% of Gorontalo Muslims. Although there are fewer Hindus, they have four temples, while Muslims only have one mosque. The two ethnicities with different religions have long lived side by side. They hold the same status, that is both transmigrants since 1980. Both ethnic groups are both farmers, namely rice farmers and field farmers in the village, with an area of 525 hectares. Raharja village is a suburb, a distance of 46 kilometers from the district center. While the distance to the provincial capital is 106 kilometers, even though it is on edge, access roads in Raharja village are good and smooth, penetrating agricultural land, making it easier for farmers to access markets.

Initially, Raharja village was a hamlet in Bongo Dua village of Paguyaman district. It was divided since 2003 as a village. It is divided into three hamlets, namely Mekarsari, Karanganyar, and Mootilango hamlets. Since becoming an independent village, Raharja village has received full attention from the government through the National Program of Community Empowerment (*PNPM Mandiri*). *PNPM Mandiri* pioneered the farming business, providing agricultural technical assistance in the form of tractors, superior seeds, and others. *PNPM Mandiri* also built educational institutions ranging from kindergartens, elementary schools, and junior high schools. In 2018, Raharja village received an injection of funds amounting to Indonesian Rupiah (IDR) two billion, while in 2019, it was IDR 8.5 billion from the central government (Tobialo, 2020).

The total population in 2019 was 789 people or 215 family heads, with details of 408 men, 381 women. Viewed from the level of education, human resources in Raharja village are still relatively low. There are only

six people with a university degree. 15 people graduated from high school, and 18 were attending college. The rest is elementary and junior high school graduates. Everyday Raharja villagers generally work as farmers, as many as 180 people, as many as 100 farm laborers. The rest are craftsmen, transport drivers, and civil servants (Sumarta, 2020). At the beginning of their arrival in Boalemo regency, the Gorontalo ethnic is an ethnic group that has a lot of land in Raharja village because of the majority. However, there is a culture of Gorontalo farmers, which makes them even more marginalized. The culture of selling land when they need cash. It is an opportunity for Balinese to buy and control the land. So that the original composition of the Gorontalo ethnic land was broad, now it is almost balanced (Sumarta, 2020).

The life of two different ethnic groups in the transmigration area does not become a barrier to living in harmony. Religious and ethnic differences, according to Naim (2015), are not obstacles to living in harmony. Life is increasingly abundant in color because each party can respect and appreciate one another. The opinion is relevant to the view of Misrawi (2010) that tolerance that is well managed will be an essential capital for building national harmony—challenging to do development if conflicts often occur in the community. The existence of tolerance is one of the prerequisites for making this earth heaven on earth. This study examined the Balinese and Gorontalo ethnic life in creating harmony in the transmigration land of Raharja village concerning the distribution of the role of the community in village governance and the construction of shared identity through local cultural tolerance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The researchers conducted a literature review related to the theme of harmony between Balinese Hindus and followers of other religions and the existence of Balinese ethnicity in transmigration areas. Kholidi (2018) explained that local culture and religion were able to form a harmonious Lingsar society of West Lombok. It was created through many spaces of religious nuances of tolerance and spaces of tolerance of local cultural nuances. These spaces provide the most significant contribution to forming a harmonious society. He reasoned that these spaces became a meeting point for members of the community from various backgrounds such as social status, ethnicity, religion, ideology, and politics. Also, the value of local wisdom can function as social norms that have a strong influence on regulating people's attitudes and behavior.

Maknun (2018) explains that one exciting form of Hindu-Muslim harmony to be photographed in Bali is what happened in *Saren Budakeling Bebandem Karangasem* village. Maknun reveals the character values in the oral tradition of the Saren village history, which are the basis of religious harmony. The oral

tradition of village history unites the kinship established by the characters in the story, between local Hindus and immigrant Muslims who are the ancestors of the people there. Besides, there is an interconnection of these oral traditions with character values, that this story contains many character values that strengthen the brotherhood foundations of its citizens, which are manifested in daily life.

Other studies on Hindu-Muslim harmony, conducted by Mahadi (2013), describes that harmony is intertwined through various social activities such as cooperation, farmer groups, savings and credit loans, wedding parties, death tragedies, and different national holidays. Besides, harmony in the community is built because they respect each other, give each other tolerance, and do not allude to religious issues in people's lives. All of that supports the building of harmony between religions in Talang Benuang village of the Seluma Regency. Subagya (2016) also describes the harmony of Hindus and Muslims through religious activities in Keramas village, which can be seen during religious holidays. During Nyepi celebrations, Muslims take part in parading *ogoh-ogoh* and donating drinks and food. The day after that, when Hindus practice *Brata Penyepian*, Muslims always maintain calm and uphold tolerance. At the time of the *Ngembak Geni*, Muslims visit the homes of Hindus. It is also done during the *Galungan* and *Kuningan* holidays. Meanwhile, the attitude of tolerance shown by Hindus towards Muslims is to attend religious events, such as *Isra Mi'raj* and *Maulid* of the Prophet Muhammad, and stay in touch with Muslim houses during *Eid al-Fitr*.

Activities that show Hindu and Muslim harmony are also described by Nasih and Agung (2011). There are four activities carried out by Muslims and Hindus in Malang Raya from generation to generation, which cause them to live in harmony, namely village, state, religious, and local cultural preservation activities. Research conducted by Roth (2011) in the transmigration area focuses on the *subak* value system as a harmonious social capital. *Subak* is an irrigation system based on local wisdom, which is not only implemented for the Balinese people in a domicile manner. However, *Subak* is a knowledge system that is always passed down to the next generation. It can be transferred to other areas as long as there is an agricultural activity with irrigation as a source of water. The Balinese ethnic beliefs of the Hindu religion are the primary basis for adherents to adapt, including the place of residence and the natural conditions of the place of residence.

Siburian (2017) describes the implementation of multiculturalism values in transmigrant communities. Leaders from each community and religion group understand the differences, so they encourage each group to live together. The villagers of Kerta Buana do not understand the concept of multiculturalism. They

are not aware that the values of multiculturalism have already been applied in their daily lives. Research conducted by Faisal (2019) describes aspects that harmonize inter-ethnic in Banuroja village of the Pohuwato regency of Gorontalo Province. These aspects are education and youth affairs, settlement and tradition, works, village government institutions, and other elements such as figures or prominent religious elites. The parts that drive integration on one side are a space for triggering conflict on the other side. According to Faisal, the Banuroja people have succeeded in showing that harmony is not merely passive coexistence. It is not an artificial harmony. Living in diversity, in the context of Banuroja, is truly actualized by active co-existence in intimate friendships, dissolving into the solemnity of each rite without denouncing the other rituals.

The explanation given by Faisal has been confirmed beforehand by Wahab (2015) that the Gorontalo people are multi-ethnic and multi-religious. However, social relations take place well. Wahab did not find any issues that disturbed inter-religious harmony in Banuroja village, such as the case of the spread of religion. Even mosques, churches and temples stand side by side. Besides, the position of places of worship is also close to the *Salafiyah Safi'iyah* Islamic Boarding School led by K.H. Gufron Nawawi.

Previous studies have shown many aspects that are used by different ethnic groups in maintaining harmony, namely religious, educational, *subak* traditions in agriculture, the oral tradition of village history, local culture, and village governance. In terms of joint involvement in village governance, the plural community in Banuroja village has shown a symbol of togetherness in naming the village. However, previous research did not specify how it applies to manage village governance by two or more different ethnicities. Nor does it touch on aspects of local wisdom that are grounded to build a shared identity. It is the concern of researchers in Raharja village that is managed jointly by two different ethnic groups, namely Balinese and Gorontalo.

RESEARCH METHODS

A qualitative approach held this research with a case study and ethnography method. The case study method intended to make the research more focused (Surakhmad, 1982). This research case study was the harmony between Hinduism and Muslims in the area of transmigration. Meanwhile, ethnographic methods were employed to understand the Bali and Gorontalo community's views on the construction of harmony among them (Spradley 2007). An essential part of ethnographic research is writing descriptive notes (Jaccard and Jacob, 2010). At this stage, the researchers involved nine students of the State Islamic University of Sultan Amai Gorontalo who were carrying out community service through an integrated social work

lecture program in Raharja village. The students collected data and wrote diaries during community service activities. From these notes, the researchers interpreted the meanings behind the Balinese and Gorontalo social reality.

The collected data were mostly primary data obtained through in-depth interviews and passive participation (Sugiyono 2009; Moleong 2007). Students helped it in the location of the integrated social work lecture program of State Islamic University of Sultan Amai Gorontalo in 2020. Informants, as the source of qualitative data, were selected through snowball techniques. The researchers first interviewed the key actors (village headman and village secretary), then asked them to mention other actors whom they perceived to have some understanding of the research problems. Thus, the number of informants was snowballing (Sugiyono, 2009). To support the qualitative data, the researchers also collected some secondary data, namely previous research in Gorontalo and other communities related to harmony among religious and ethnic. The researchers then analyzed the data through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Raharja village community, in reality, are people of different religions and ethnicities, but they strengthen equality. They have the same status, namely transmigrants and farming. Departing from this equality of status, they found harmony, but not enough to maintain harmony in differences. There are two approaches that researchers found carried out by Balinese and Gorontalo ethnic groups in transmigration areas, namely distributing roles in village governance and constructing shared identity through local cultural tolerance.

Distributing Roles in Village Governance

The community leaders in Raharja village take care of associative social interactions. They do not provide space for dissociative social interactions. The associative social interaction is cooperation in various fields of life, both in social, cultural, religious, and government life. In socio-cultural and religious life, many are carried out by different ethnic and religious communities. Such as in social life, community service, cooperation in building houses, cultivating land, etcetera. In religious life, interreligious believers help one another in preparing for the celebration of holidays and inviting each other in ceremonial events.

The governance aspect becomes a tolerance room that brings together two ethnic groups. Two ethnic groups in Raharja village are distributed equally. They are aware; if the dominant ethnic group only fills the management of government, the service will be partial. The distribution of roles in village governance has proved to be more comfortable in making fair,

impartial decisions in both decision making and policy implementation. Research conducted by Nasih and Agung (2011) also found the creation of harmony through village and state activities. Faisal (2019) mentioned that one aspect of supporting harmony is the aspect of village government institutions. This aspect must be one of the projects in maintaining harmony. With a budget of IDR one billion for one village, it can be managed together and distributed equally for the common welfare.

For the people of Raharja village, this effort was carried out by filling the government structure in a balanced way. Village officials, filled by some Gorontalo ethnic, and some filled by Balinese ethnic. They are starting from the highest government in the village to the head of the village. At present the village head is from Gorontalo ethnic, the village secretary is from Balinese ethnic. Chair and deputy chairman of the village representative body of Balinese ethnic and three Gorontalo ethnic members. As is usual, the election of village heads by the whole community, while the election of the village secretary and the chair of the village representative body by community representatives from three hamlets. The village officials' positions below appear to be dominated by certain ethnic groups. Still, in general, they are balanced. The six chiefs of affairs planning, administration, and public relations, finance, government, welfare, and services are all Gorontalo. Meanwhile, the hamlet heads are occupied by Balinese ethnic (one of the hamlet heads in the transition process).

This distribution of roles in government is effective in warding off conflict. Whatever the reason, the dominance of power by one ethnic or religion in a multicultural society will ignite a commotion to disputes that disrupt the harmony of life together. Through this pattern, the Raharja village community can realize its ideals for a prosperous life.

Constructing Shared Identity through Local Cultural Tolerance

Two ethnic groups in Raharja village do not come with empty heads and hearts. They bring their local cultural values from the area of origin. The Balinese ethnic are very creative in constructing their local culture as the Gorontalo ethnic is very rich in its local wisdom. In transmigration areas, the two cultures greet each other, processed in such a way as to stay alive and give direction to life. The encounter of cultural values is a necessity, it does not clash but instead gives birth to a new identity.

One example of the activity in constructing a shared identity is seen in youth organizations. Giving the name of the youth group is adjusted to the existence of the management that embraces two ethnic groups. The youth leader is from Gorontalo ethnic group while the deputy is from Balinese ethnic. Naming is given a

philosophical content that attaches it. The choice of name is "*Global*," an acronym from Gorontalo - Bali. Extraordinary creativity in caring for harmony. The transmigrant community in Banuroja village has exemplified this pattern. The name of Banuroja village is an acronym for "Bali-Nusa Tenggara-Gorontalo-Java." This pattern is very appropriate, especially for youth groups. Youth groups are groups that are vulnerable to conflict. Young souls are still volatile and explosive. With symbols like this, in reality, it is increasingly establishing harmony among young people in both different ethnicities and religions. It is what is called Kholidi (2018), presenting a space of tolerance nuanced local culture.

The construction of shared identity also adopts the values of the local wisdom of each ethnic group. In practice, it is seen in the naming of three hamlets in Raharja village, namely *Mekarsari*, *Karanganyar*, and *Mootilango* hamlets. The naming of these three hamlets contains profound philosophical values based on local culture. *Mekarsari* was adopted from the name of a Balinese dialect. According to Raudloh (2007), there are several Balinese ethnic dialects, one of which is the *Mekarsari* dialect. It also confirms that the ethnic Balinese in Raharja village predominantly use the *Mekarsari* dialect.

Karanganyar hamlet is taken from the name of a Regency in Central Java. There are no Central Javanese ethnicities found in this village. But if explored more in-depth, Karanganyar has a spiritual closeness with Bali because the main temple in Bali is in Karanganyar regency. As Alfri (2015) wrote, Bali may be an island with a thousand temples, but who would have thought if the parent of the temple there would instead be in the land of Java, precisely in Karanganyar regency of Central Java Province. It is the temple of *Pemacekan* or better known as *Pasek* temple, a Hindu style temple standing at the foot of Mount *Lawu*. According to Balinese history, this temple is the mother of other *Pasek* temples in Bali. Based on history, the Balinese Hindu community has ancestors from Java, precisely during the heyday of the *Majapahit* kingdom. From this, it can be seen that the naming of the *Karanganyar* hamlet in Raharja village is not just a name without a philosophical meaning, in this hamlet stands the largest temple among the four temples in Raharja village.

Meanwhile, the name of the hamlet of Mootilango is taken from Gorontalo, which means "enlightening." The basic word is "*tilango*" which means light (Tobialo, 2020). *Mootilango* and *tilango* for Gorontalo ethnic are widely used to name a formal or informal region or organization. *Mootilango* became the name of a district in Gorontalo regency and became the name of several villages and hamlets in this area. *Mootilango* (brilliant) is a bright dream of living in the future, as is the hope that is placed on the name of the village of *Raharja* (prosperous). It is what is called

Nasih and Agung (2011) as a harmonizing local cultural preservation activity.

Given the composition of the population based on ethnicity, the *Mekarsari* hamlet majority of the population is Balinese ethnic. It is also the reason for naming the village to adopt the name of a popular dialect in Bali, the *Mekarsari* dialect. Gorontalo ethnic minorities there do not feel disturbed. In contrast to the Mootilango hamlet, the majority of the population is Gorontalo ethnic. It is also the reason why this hamlet is named after Gorontalo's cultural identity. Even this naming does not interfere with the Balinese ethnic minority living there. Meanwhile, the composition of the population in Karanganyar is balanced. If seen from the existence of the largest temple in this hamlet, the majority of the people should be Balinese ethnic. But in another part, the only mosque belonging to Gorontalo ethnic group is in Karanganyar hamlet. It is what balances the composition of the population in this hamlet, especially since the village administration center of Raharja is in Karanganyar hamlet.

There is a meeting of local wisdom values that are grounded in the life of the Raharja village community. The wisdom values brought by the Balinese are not rejected, while the local wisdom values of Gorontalo continue to grow and blossom. Even though the Gorontalo ethnic is the majority, in naming a hamlet, it is not necessary to force two hamlets to be given names that describe Gorontalo local wisdom. This aspect was discovered by Faisal (2019) as an aspect that harmonizes the people of Banuroja village, namely the elements of settlement and tradition. In Raharja village, residential areas are labeled with the nuances of local culture from the ethnic homeland; this local culture is accepted and becomes a shared identity.

These facts confirm that understanding and awareness of tolerance can grow naturally, but must be treated. Efforts are needed, both conceptually and practically, to make tolerance an inseparable part of everyday life (Naim, 2015). It is what is maintained by the Raharja village community in creating harmony. They are not only aware of the importance of tolerance, but at the same time also make ongoing efforts in all lines of life in the name of harmony. These efforts are not only carried out in village government institutions but at the same time linking the values of local wisdom in the public sphere. There is active involvement between the two ethnic groups in creating harmony, exactly as Shihab (1997) has stated that pluralism does not only refer to the reality of pluralism. Pluralism requires active involvement in this plurality. In this context, a pluralist is required to interact positively in a plural environment. In other words, each religion or ethnicity is required not only to recognize the existence and rights of other religions or ethnicities but also to engage in efforts to understand differences and similarities to achieve harmony in diversity. The active

involvement of the leaders in Raharja village was well established through the dialogue that was developed. The distribution of roles in village governance is a soothing dialogue space for both parties.

CONCLUSION

A space for tolerance between ethnic groups and religious communities can naturally be created. However, the harmony created typically needs to be emphasized with real efforts. With these efforts, increasingly reduce the possibility of conflicts that nuanced ethnic, religious, and racial. The Balinese and Gorontalo ethnic groups in the Raharja village distribute roles in village governance. They also open space of tolerance, nuanced local culture to build a shared identity. The area formed is an arena for meeting members of the public from various backgrounds. From this encounter, culture-based symbols were created. The symbols that are born are peacefully accommodated without anyone ethnic group being disturbed. In that context, the symbolic closeness of the two ethnicities and religions, in the social level of the life of its adherents, turns out to explain about the close relations between ethnic groups in Raharja village. Balinese and Gorontalo ethnic in Raharja village have a spirit of harmony that is not only symbolic but also present at the level of praxis.

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