NEGOTIATING IDENTITY AND RESILIENCE: Communicative Practices in The Multicultural Context of Kerta Buana Hindu Communities, Kutai Kartanegara

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Abstract

This study examines the communicative practices of the Hindu community in Kerta Buana Village, Kutai Kartanegara Regency, and how these practices contribute to the negotiation of identity and the development of socio-cultural resilience within a Muslim-majority society. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation involving religious leaders, youth, and community representatives. The analysis, grounded in Identity Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey, 2017), reveals that interfaith relations in Kerta Buana are characterised by accommodative communication, mutual respect, and adaptive negotiation that preserve harmony and inclusivity. The Hindu community demonstrates resilience through the regeneration of traditional values, participation in interfaith collaboration, and adaptation to dominant cultural norms without compromising their religious authenticity. The findings conclude that identity negotiation among minority communities can foster inclusive integration rather than assimilation. It is recommended that local governments and interfaith institutions, such as the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB), continue to support and institutionalise intercultural dialogue to strengthen community cohesion and protect minority cultural sustainability in multicultural settings.

A. INTRODUCTION

Kerta Buana Village, Tenggarong Seberang Subdistrict, Kutai Kartanegara Regency, East Kalimantan Province, is an environment that demographically and culturally reflects the complexity of multicultural life in Indonesia. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2024, the total population is around 5,625, of which around 1,969 people (±35%) adhere to Hinduism, particularly Balinese culture, while the rest come from other religions and ethnic groups (BPS, 2024). Although Hinduism is the majority religion in the village, at the Kutai Kartanegara regency level, Islam still dominates, with Muslims making up more than 90% of the population (BPS, 2024).

The Hindu community in Kutai Kartanegara, as a demographic minority, faces real challenges in cultural negotiations and public policy, as well as challenges due to differences in rituals and religion between Hinduism and the majority religion. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) as of June 2024, of the total population of approximately 741,950 in Kutai Kartanegara Regency, 685,315 (± 92.37%) are Muslim, while Hindus number only around 2,523 or ± 0.34%.

Equal treatment of religious minorities is sometimes hampered by administrative requirements, for example in the establishment of places of worship. Although the Kutai Kartanegara Regency Government claims to have expanded the areas where it is permissible to meet the requirements for the number of religious adherents to establish places of worship, this policy has not been formally accommodated in the Joint Regulation of 2 Ministers (No. 8 and 9 of 2006) concerning places of worship.

Cultural conflicts do not always erupt into physical violence, but often manifest as symbolic and social tensions. For example, the existence of the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) in Kukar is expected to act as a mediator or facilitator in resolving minor conflicts related to the use of space, ritual noise, and the construction of minority religious facilities. The FKUB serves as a formal channel of communication between religious groups. However, despite the existence of such forums, minority communities still experience demoralising access or administrative barriers when faced with a majority environment that

sometimes does not understand or provide sufficient symbolic space (for example, in terms of environmental aesthetics or religious celebrations).

One example of this in Indonesia is the Shia community in Karang Gayam, Sampang, Madura, which was attacked by the Sunni majority group on 26 August 2012. This conflict led to the displacement of hundreds of Shia residents and continues to cause problems of repatriation and reconciliation. A study by Noorhaidi Hasan (2013) in Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies shows that the conflict was triggered by religious identity, local politics, and the state's weak protection of minorities. Then there was the conflict between Muslims and Christians in Poso, which occurred in several waves, resulting in thousands of casualties and mass displacement. McRae's (2013) study explains that this conflict is not only about religion, but also about the struggle for local political power, economic inequality, and the mobilisation of majority-minority identities.

The cases raised in this study also show that this inequality is not only a matter of daily cultural practices, but also has implications for public policy and government services. This needs to be noted given the very small number of Buddhists, who make up only ± 0.03% of the total population (around 239 people according to BPS data for 2024) compared to the majority religion. It is very difficult for such a small group to influence local policies, which are usually tailored to the majority.

Hindu cultural traditions such as the Nyepi celebration, the Ogoh-Ogoh parade, and traditional ceremonies such as Joget Bumbung, Ngaben, and Jegog are routinely carried out in Kerta Buana and are an important part of the social life and collective identity of this village community. The uniqueness of Kerta Buana is also reinforced by the authentic observance of the "Catur Brata Penyepian" during Nyepi, as well as the support and tolerance of non-Hindu residents in ensuring that the celebrations run smoothly.

In this context, there is an urgent need to understand how the Hindu community in Kerta Buana not only maintains its cultural identity in the face of the dominance of the majority religion, but also builds socio-cultural resilience so that its traditions and religious practices remain sustainable amid the tide of change (globalisation, migration, interfaith interaction). Conflicting values, social pressures,

possible stereotypes, and adaptation challenges (economic, demographic, educational) are part of the dynamics of their lives.

This phenomenon becomes even more complex when placed in the context of globalisation, where migration flows, technological developments, media, and geopolitical dynamics accelerate the intensity of intercultural encounters. Globalisation has created a "shrinking world community", where socio-cultural distances are becoming closer and interactions between individuals across identities are increasingly inevitable (Collier, 2005). This situation requires local communities, including Hindus in Kerta Buana, to not only maintain their cultural identity but also develop accommodative communication strategies that enable harmonious coexistence with other groups.

Therefore, this study aims to answer the following core question: how do Hindus in Kerta Buana Village use communication practices (verbal, symbolic, and public) to negotiate their identity and maintain cultural resilience in a pluralistic, Muslim-majority society? The objectives of the study include describing daily and ritual communication strategies, analysing the forms of identity negotiation that emerge, and identifying elements of socio-cultural resilience (such as social capital, interfaith networks, sustainable traditional practices) that support the continuity of Hindu culture in Kerta Buana.

B. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study model to gain an in-depth understanding of the communication practices, identity negotiations, and resilience strategies of the Hindu community in Kerta Buana Village, Tenggarong Seberang Subdistrict, Kutai Kartanegara Regency. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meanings, experiences, and strategies used by minority communities in a multicultural context. The research was conducted in Kerta Buana Village, Kutai Kartanegara, East Kalimantan, from September to October 2025. This location was chosen because of the uniqueness of the Hindu community living side by side with the Muslim majority community in one village area.

Research informants were selected purposively, considering their involvement in religious, social, and cross-cultural communication activities. The

main informants included: (1) Hindu religious leaders (temple priests, banjar leaders), (2) Hindu youth active in traditional activities, and (3) representatives of the village government or community organisations. The number of informants was estimated at 20 to 25 people until data saturation was achieved. Data collection techniques used in-depth interviews using an interview guide to explore the experiences, communication strategies, and challenges faced by the Hindu community. Participatory observation uses an observation guide for religious and cultural activities (e.g., Nyepi, ogoh-ogoh, traditional ceremonies) and daily interactions in the village environment, as well as documentation in the form of village archives, traditional organisation records, and local media coverage.

The data was analysed using thematic analysis techniques, which included data reduction, categorisation, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Source triangulation (religious leaders, youth, village government, majority community) and technique triangulation (interviews, observation, documentation) were carried out to increase validity. Each informant was given an explanation of the research objectives and their right to maintain confidentiality of their identity. Informed consent was obtained before interviews and documentation were conducted. With this approach, this study was able to comprehensively explain the communication strategies, forms of identity negotiation, and resilience practices of the Hindu Kerta Buana community in the multicultural context of Kutai Kartanegara.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Communication Practices in the Multicultural Context of Kerta Buana

The daily life of the Hindu community in Kerta Buana Village, Tenggarong Seberang Subdistrict, shows a tangible form of interfaith communication practices based on values of tolerance and mutual respect. The majority of informants emphasised that relations between the Hindu and Muslim communities in this region are good, even forming an integral part of social and cultural routines. According to IKBY (Head of the Temple, aged 25–33),

> *"We strive to respect differences and understand each other to maintain harmony."*

This statement indicates that the basic principle of interfaith communication in Kerta Buana is rooted in respect for differences and a collective awareness of

the importance of social harmony. A similar sentiment was expressed by NLRD (a Hindu female figure and housewife, aged 25–33), who explained that daily life is very good,

> *"Our daily activities are based on mutual care and respect."*

Meanwhile, LCD (a housewife, aged 25–33) described how interfaith relations in her neighbourhood are built through active participation in social activities:

> *"Being part of the organising committee during the 17th of August celebrations in a predominantly Muslim neighbourhood made us feel accepted and equal."*

This form of communication demonstrates a *reciprocal* process of social learning between religious communities. Practices such as pausing for a moment during the call to prayer, participating in other religious communities' events, and working together in village activities are concrete examples of *interreligious communication*.

As stated by IKAS (Private Employee, 34–39 years old), who said:

> *"We greet each other when we meet and respect their religious activities."*

This statement shows how non-verbal communication such as greetings, smiles, and participation in joint activities can be a symbolic means of strengthening social cohesion.

From this data, it can be concluded that the communication practices of the Hindu community in Kerta Buana not only function as a means of exchanging messages, but also as a mechanism for reproducing social values that maintain the stability of interfaith relations.

Negotiating Identity in Multicultural Dynamics

Hindu religious identity in Kerta Buana is deeply understood by its adherents as a personal and social guideline for life. However, this identity is not rigid; it is negotiated through social interaction with the local Muslim community, which is the majority group.

As stated by KY (Daily Member of PHDI, >50 years old), he said:

"The meaning of Hindu religious and cultural identity for me is to preserve the culture itself."

This view shows that religious identity is not only interpreted as a spiritual aspect, but also includes the preservation of Hindu religious cultural heritage.

Meanwhile, IPCY (civil servant, 40–50 years old) emphasised that Hindu teachings are as follows:

"a reflection in daily life,

This implicitly illustrates how religious values are integrated into the social behaviour of the community. Religious identity does not isolate them from other communities, but rather strengthens their position as part of the village community.

In the context of identity negotiation, several informants mentioned the challenges faced by the Hindu community, including changing times, social pressure, and potential bias against cultural differences. IGB (25–33 years old) stated that:

"the culture that is practised tends to be incompatible with current conditions,"

This indicates an awareness of modernisation that can erode traditional practices.

However, a form of negotiation emerged through intergenerational dialogue and social adaptation. NKS (female figure, 25–33 years old) explained that:

"We still maintain Balinese customs, but we adapt them to life here. For example, in terms of clothing or ceremony times, we adapt so as not to disturb other residents."

From the results of these interviews, it appears that the Hindu religious identity in Kerta Buana is fluid and contextual. The Hindu community is able to maintain the core values of their teachings while adapting to the social norms of the surrounding Muslim community. This negotiation confirms that diversity is not merely passive coexistence, but an active process of maintaining identity without causing social conflict.

Social and Cultural Resilience of the Hindu Community

The social resilience of the Hindu community in Kerta Buana is built on their ability to maintain their teachings, traditions, and social harmony amid the dynamics of a multicultural society. This resilience is evident in their practices of adaptation, interfaith solidarity, and preservation of local wisdom values.

IKBY (Head of the Temple, 25–33 years old) stated that the main challenges faced are as follows:

"adjusting schedules so that Hindu and Muslim activities do not conflict with each other."

However, these challenges are overcome through open communication and cross-group coordination. In line with this, IPCY (Civil Servant, 40–50 years old) added that solutions are reached through discussion, stating the following:

"Discussions, especially with the younger generation, to learn to understand differences."

Resilience is also built through cross-cultural and religious participation. KY (PHDI, >50 years old) explained that they strengthen each other, with informants stating as follows:

"Always communicating and strengthening each other in every activity."

This is in line with what LCD (25–33 years old) said, emphasising the importance of neutrality, even though he is Hindu. Lasmi stated that:

"Remaining neutral without siding with any one group."

Informants also explicitly described forms of long-term adaptation. IKAS (aged 34–39) cited "tolerance" as the most important form of adaptation for community sustainability, while IKBI added that

"building Hinduism with culture and fostering interfaith cooperation are the keys to coexistence."

Several informants also highlighted the important role of families and the younger generation in maintaining the values of tolerance. IGS (over 50 years old) emphasised that

"From as early as kindergarten, increase religious materials that teach them about good character and manners."

These findings show that the social and cultural resilience of the Hindu Kerta Buana community lies not only in the strength of customs or religious institutions, but also in *the adaptive capacity* of the community to build communication across social boundaries. This resilience affirms the concept of *cultural resilience*, namely the ability of a community to maintain its identity while adapting to changes in the social environment.

The results of the study show that the social life of Hindus in Kerta Buana Village takes place within a relatively harmonious framework of multicultural communication. Relationships with the Muslim majority community are built through intense social interactions, such as mutual cooperation, village activities, and collaboration in the fields of education and religion. The form of communication that is established is not only transactional but also relational communication that emphasises mutual understanding, empathy, and respect for differences in values.

From the perspective of *Identity Negotiation Theory* (INT), these communication practices reflect a process of identity adaptation carried out through symbolic interaction (Ting-Toomey, 2017). Individuals from the Hindu minority community strive to present an identity that is socially acceptable to the majority community without losing the authenticity of their cultural values. This is in line with Chen's (2010 in Yunita et al., 2022) view that effective intercultural communication occurs when individuals are able to manage their self-identity awareness and adapt it to the surrounding socio-cultural context.

In Kerta Buana, interfaith communication is not seen as a form of assimilation, but as an expression of mutual respect that allows the community to maintain social harmony. This open communication process also demonstrates local wisdom values such as mutual cooperation and tolerance, which function as *social glue* in a multicultural social system (Pertiwi & Faturochman, 2023). Thus, the communication practices that have developed in Kerta Buana can be categorised as a form of accommodative communication that supports social stability and reduces the potential for horizontal conflict between religions.

This phenomenon also demonstrates the relevance of identity theory, which emphasises that identity is never formed outside of representation but is always attached to social and discursive practices. Hindu religious identity in Kerta Buana is intertwined with the creation of tradition and tradition itself, which is not static but rather *"ever-changing commonality"* (Hall, 1996). In this context, identity is not only understood as *"returning to one's roots"* but is more accurately interpreted as a process of reconciliation with historical journeys, multicultural conditions, and experiences of social interaction with the surrounding Muslim community.

Identity negotiation is a key process in the formation of social relations among Hindu communities in the midst of a Muslim majority. Based on the data collected, it was found that the Hindus of Kerta Buana actively negotiate their identity through the management of symbols, language, and social behaviour. For example, adjusting the schedule of religious activities so as not to coincide with major celebrations of other religions demonstrates a form of symbolic awareness that shows respect for the dominant norms.

Ting-Toomey (2017) and Hou (2023) explain that identity is dynamic and is always negotiated in a social context. In multicultural situations such as Kerta Buana, Hindus face social pressures that demand harmony between personal and social identities. Purnama (2022) mentions that this process gives rise to two identity orientations: maintaining self-authenticity and conforming to the social expectations of the majority. The results of this study show that the Hindu community is able to balance both by strengthening internal religious symbols within the family and temple, while displaying an inclusive attitude in the public-sphere.

This identity negotiation demonstrates a bicultural identity orientation, in which individuals have the ability to operate effectively in two different cultural value systems (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Afriza et al., 2021). The conscious and repetitive negotiation process strengthens the social legitimacy of the Hindu community in the eyes of the majority society, so that their identity is not merely a minority label, but a social position that is recognised and accepted in the local social order. Analysis of field data shows that the social and cultural resilience of the Hindu community in Kerta Buana is built on three main pillars: cultural value regeneration, cross-community social participation, and adaptation

to social change. All three demonstrate the community's ability to maintain its existence in a pluralistic social environment.

First, *cultural resilience* is demonstrated through efforts to preserve religious traditions and involve younger generations in traditional ceremonies. Traditions are not only preserved as rituals, but also as a medium for internalising spiritual and moral values. Second, *social* resilience is evident in the active involvement of Hindus in interfaith community activities such as the PKK, Karang Taruna, and village organisations. This involvement strengthens social networks and reduces barriers between religions. Third, *adaptive resilience* manifests itself in the ability to adapt to dominant social norms without losing religious identity.

These findings support INT's argument that a successful identity negotiation process will result in stable social relations and strengthen trust between groups (Ting-Toomey, 2017). Srikandi et al. (2021) also emphasise that successfully maintaining a balance between personal and social identity is a key indicator in building the resilience of minority communities. Thus, the resilience of the Hindu community in Kerta Buana stems not only from internal cultural strength, but also from its capacity for continuous cross-cultural communication and adaptation

D. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the communication practices of the Hindu community in Kerta Buana Village, Kutai Kartanegara, are a concrete form of identity negotiation and the formation of socio-cultural resilience in a multicultural context. As a minority group living side by side with the Muslim majority, the Hindu community has succeeded in constructing adaptive, accommodative communication patterns based on mutual respect. Cross-cultural communication is not merely a means of exchanging messages, but also a symbolic instrument for maintaining religious identity and building social legitimacy in the public sphere.

Within the framework of Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) (Ting-Toomey, 2017), the communication process demonstrates the ability of individuals and groups to dynamically negotiate the meaning of identity. The Hindu Kerta Buana community does not isolate itself from its social environment but displays a balanced adaptation strategy between cultural authenticity and social acceptance. This negotiation is evident in social practices such as adjusting worship times,

interfaith participation, and regenerating traditional values through family education and religious activities. Thus, communication functions as a symbolic space where identity is negotiated, articulated, and mutually agreed upon within a heterogeneous social structure.

The social and cultural resilience of the Hindu community in Kerta Buana is formed from the collective ability to maintain the continuity of spiritual and cultural values, while adapting to social dynamics surrounded by the dominance of local Islamic values. This resilience is not only reactive to social pressures, but also proactive in creating interfaith social bridges through active participation, interfaith dialogue, and the involvement of younger generations in preserving traditions. Conceptually, this study broadens the understanding of how identity negotiation in a minority context is not solely oriented towards assimilation, but rather results in a form of inclusive social integration. Hindu identity in Kerta Buana is not an identity constrained by religious boundaries, but rather an open and communicative identity that builds stable social relations without losing its cultural roots.

The implications of this research show that cross-cultural communication practices can be a strategic means of strengthening social cohesion in multicultural regions such as Kutai Kartanegara. Amidst the tide of cultural homogenisation and the increasing potential for identity conflicts, the communication model practised by the Hindu community of Kerta Buana provides important lessons about the importance of reflective awareness, equal identity negotiation, and cultural resilience built on a foundation of dialogue and respect for differences.

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