Integration of Social Identities in Interreligious-Group Relations

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Abstract. In the context of interreligious group relations, grassroots society tends to demonstrate adaptation strategies to promote harmonious social living. Based on the social identity perspective, such conditions encompass the dynamic process in which diverse religious group identities are endorsed within a coherent superordinate identity. This study explores the dynamics of integration as a strategy to maintain religious harmony. A qualitative case study was conducted in a rural community with diverse religious groups in Central Java. Data were gathered through participative observations, semi-structured interviews, casual conversations, and document analysis. We employed an abductive strategy to analyze the rich empirical materials gathered. The findings reveal the integrative construction of a common ingroup identity, that embraces the essence of unity in diversity. As a strong common ingroup identity indicates, it requires the development of a transcendent identity at the subgroup level. This process encourages a positive orientation towards others to preserve equality among groups. Of utmost importance, this integration most likely plays a pivotal role in addressing both social harmony and social tension. This study highlights that the strategy of integration is explained through the formation of an inclusive common ingroup identity, that illustrates the node of bonding and bridging for existing religious groups to live together.

Keywords: social harmony; integration; social identity; interreligious-group relations

Social harmony is a desirable condition in multi-religious societies, particularly in Indonesia. The indigenous conceptualization of social harmony has remained relatively consistent over time (Lestari et al., 2013; Suseno, 1984; Wahabi & Nurjaman, 2022), demonstrating the basic principles of maintaining connectedness and preventing conflict. In the context of interreligious group relations, there remains to be a clear consensus on what harmony implies in the context of interreligious group relations as well as how it should be managed.

In Indonesia, the government's top-down commitment focuses on ensuring freedom of religion and beliefs, mainly mainstreaming religious moderation as a norm. For instance, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has echoed some efforts to raise public awareness of religious moderation through the administrative regulation of places of worship, the development of religious literacy,

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and the empowerment of the Interreligious Harmony Organization (FKUB). Due to the proneness of religious-based conflict in Indonesia, such regulations tend to emphasize the prevention of religious conflict but are limited to sufficiently protecting religion *per se*, such as values, tradition, identity, and truth claims (Manese, 2021; Setara Institute, 2022). Bearing this in mind, a comprehensive study on interreligious relations needs to take into account psychosocial and cultural factors in facilitating peaceful and tolerant attitudes (Putra & Sandang, 2020). Besides the strategic and structural approaches mentioned above, bottom-up strategies from the local community or civil society may serve the natural reality of peaceful coexistence among diverse religions.

We have identified some previous ethnographic studies regarding religious harmony at the level of grassroots in Indonesia (Eko & Putranto, 2019; Pangkey, 2020; Safingin et al., 2014; Sinaga et al., 2019). Surprisingly, such studies reveal consistency in time-spaces and patterns of conservating their local wisdom, a high degree of intergroup contact, and relational values including respect, support, and joy for others. We assume that the spirit of social harmony is the anchor point throughout historical and ongoing interreligious relations to embrace diversity. It probably means that the community itself has the natural power to cultivate social harmony. As such, we argue the need to delve into a psychological lens to understand the identity construction as it emerged.

In extending the current research into interreligious relations, our observations of the naturalistic setting (*bottom-up*) served as the springboard to explore the social processes of everyday life. This approach allowed us to examine the significance of social identity as a conceptual connection–individual and community–under a coherent understanding (Jenkins, 2014). That identity, both religion and community, is in line with integration as an adaptive strategy to foster intergroup harmony (Dovidio et al., 2013). Therefore, we focus on the integration of social identities among interreligious group relations within the local community, with a contextual focus on Margopuran District, Central Java.

Margopuran is home to various religions and beliefs. Margopuran district has a village that has been awarded by the Ministry of Religious Affairs as *Desa Sadar Kerukunan*, a village that actively endorses interreligious harmony. The government's attention allowed us to better understand the social capital society developed to support interreligious harmony. Demographically, there is a larger proportion of Muslims, followed by Hinduism, Christianity, Catholicism, and Buddhism, as well as numerous intrareligious branches (denominations) and Javanese local beliefs. Therefore, it is not surprising that this community is known as the miniature of diversity in Indonesia.

Our initial observations in Margopuran outlined common values of solidarity, cooperation, support, and inclusivity. Several harmonious traditions have been implemented through generations, such as intergroup cooperation (*gotong-royong*) in building worship places, supporting other groups' worship while taking a role in safeguarding the environment (*ngepam*), and neighborhood social gatherings (*silaturahmi*) when celebrating religious days. Such traditions demonstrate that social harmony tends to be experienced with recognition and respect for other people's beliefs, as well as compersion in the joy of others (Lubis, 2020). In this regard, those social practices highlight at least two key points. First, socio-religious necessities are integrated to align with superordinate goals

(Rabinovich & Morton, 2011). Second, there appears to be an emphasis on relational aspects and a steadfast adherence to social values, as indicated by the way community members express concern and support for members of other religions (Rai & Fiske, 2011). Putting these two points together, the sense of community appears to demonstrate a unique characteristic that endorses the need for interdependence, and social harmony becomes a paramount tenet (Susanto et al., 2022; Suseno, 1984).

In summary, creating social harmony between groups as mentioned above, is closely associated with the cultural and ideological system that exists in the community (Hall, 2003). To understand interreligious-group relations in this community space, we employed the social identity perspective as a conceptual lens to help understand the processes of negotiation and integration underlying intergroup harmony.

The Social Identity Perspective

The social identity perspective provides explanations of how people or groups construct their social world and meet their needs for belonging, which serves as a natural strategy to survive (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hong & Khei, 2014). According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), social identity is part of people's self-concept, formed through their perceived membership in social groups, which includes their understanding of the groups' values as well as emotional significance ties to the group. In general, two basic processes of identity formation are categorization and social comparison. Categorization is a basic cognitive process concerning a person's awareness of group membership to the extent they adhere to group norms. This process is crucial since the activation of categories leads to the accentuation of intragroup similarities and intergroup differences (Hogg & Abrams, 1998).

Categorization, which often engenders the dichotomy of us versus them, can lead to intergroup bias. Such processes typically yield stereotypical perceptions about self-identification as well as ingroup and outgroup distinctions, amplifying perceived intergroup differences. When these distinctions are driven by self-enhancement motives (i.e., self-esteem), they prompt social comparisons that further accentuate intergroup differences and ingroup similarities. As a result, categorization and social comparison can occur simultaneously (Hogg & Abrams, 1998).

Social categorization is a fundamental process that underlies the personal and social self (social identification). In substance, social identification addresses beliefs, affective, attitudes, and behaviors related to group norms. This process consists of two cognitive routes, namely self-stereotyping and self-anchoring (Reimer et al., 2020). Self-stereotyping denotes the mechanism of depersonalization, as a person adjusts their personal-self to group characteristics (Turner et al., 1987). This process is particularly accentuated in intergroup contexts, especially in the presence of group threats. Therefore, self-stereotyping serves as a protective mechanism for group members' well-being when faced with group threats (Branscombe et al., 1999). On the other hand, self-anchoring involves social projections of personal attributes onto social groups. This route implies the intertwined process for both personal and social identities as indistinguishable entities. In this way, personal values may align with group values, for example, the aspirations toward harmony in many ways (Amit et al., 2010; Cadinu & Rothbart, 1996).

The distinction between the different stems of social identification has different consequences. Self-stereotyping tends to lead to intergroup bias, while self-anchoring leads to inclusiveness and tolerance of group diversity (van Veelen et al., 2016; van Veelen et al., 2013). However, both routes may lead to ingroup favoritism and provide a meaningful sense of social identity. Therefore, we took into account the content of social identification to deepen our understanding of how people construct the meaning of their collective identity.

Integration Strategies in Intergroup Relations

The present study considers the juxtapositions of religious group identity and village-community identity. Structurally, both social identities operate within a hierarchical framework in the social system. The village community (as a large and inclusive group) functions at the superordinate level, while religious group identity may serve at the subgroup level, binding with the superordinate entity. Hence, the question then arises: how do people construct understandings of their identities to allow people to coexist with other religions?

The complexity of living together in a multicultural society requires an adaptive orientation toward integration. Integration, strives as a strategy to retain group identity while focusing on maintaining positive relations with the broader society. Hence, this strategy needs commitment to accommodate the differences, along with recognizing the right for all religions to live together in harmony. Interestingly, the integration strategy requires collective commitment under specific circumstances. Such prerequisites are needed: widespread acceptance of multiculturism ideology, minimal prejudice, positive attitudes without contempt towards specific groups, and a strong sense of community bonding (Berry & Kalin, 1995; Berry, 1997). Within the social identity framework, this strategy represents an inclusive common ingroup identity (Dovidio et al., 2007).

To study interreligious relations, we need to develop the notion that the Margopuran district not only functions as a backdrop territory (comprised of villages, or kampung), but also constitutes a community bound to conduct their social life together. Villagers, who are also referred to as grassroots community members, are active agents who utilize their resources to manage internal dynamics in the village (Semedi, 2020). As a result, the villagers develop a sense of closeness and belonging to their land and also feel a sense of belonging to the social community (Capello, 2018). The element of physical proximity among interreligious neighborhoods serves as a potential space for contact, and becomes a significant space for negotiating and integrating differences through daily interactions (Dixon, 2001; Prideaux, 2019). For instance, in neighborhood spaces, there is annual cooperation among interreligious groups (Muslim and non-Muslim) to prepare and distribute the sacrificial meat in the Islamic celebration of Idul Adha. This social practice demonstrates the development of inclusiveness by welcoming other religions to participate in religious festivals. Such practice also has the potential to accommodate diversity, indeed serving the permeable space in religious nuances as the unique characteristic of the common ingroup identity they built.

Common ingroup identity, also acknowledges the significance of the spatial dimension, as we denote in terms of village identification in this study. This kind of common ingroup identity entails

a sense of inclusiveness concerning where and who belongs with us (Dixon, 2001). When a village community is treated as a large group (superordinate category), people tend to align their behaviors with group norms. The notion of norm internalization is formed through the process of interaction and meaning-making of social realities. As we studied in Indonesian culture (in particular the context of rural areas) that still possesses a deep-rooted relational and collective orientation, social norms compel society to actively engage in and adapt to daily communal activities (Hogg & Terry, 2000). As a consequence, social identity emerges and is constructed by engaging social identity representations that concern social norms or shared beliefs (Howarth, 2001; Liu, 2012; Liu & L'aszl'o, 2007). For example, in Javanese culture, the principles of *rukun* (harmony) and *hormat* (respect) occur as noble values in the community (Suseno, 1984), to support orientation towards intergroup harmony. That is, the existing group norms, ideas, and social practices that exist may become a core representation of common ingroup identity.

In terms of the superordinate category explained above, a challenge may emerge regarding coexistence with other religions. Such conditions affect intergroup relations, particularly how individuals horizontally position their religious group (ingroup) relative to other religious groups (outgroup) as meaningful features in the community unit. At the subgroup level, acknowledgement of religious group differences is needed to preserve unity. Rather than obscuring intergroup boundaries, recognizing differences serves as a greater motivation to promote social harmony (Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Eggins et al., 2002).

Acknowledgement and acceptance of intergroup differences can lead to equal status among different groups (Brewer & Miller, 1984). Moreover, equality represents the universal value of human beings. In compromising differences, the need to achieve equality status depends on the extent of increased identification with intergroup similarity, therefore allowing differences to be more readily accepted (Verkuyten, 2014). To this point, we also investigated the mechanism of crosscutting-category membership, especially in what dimensions people identify possible connections of common ground or cross-cutting categories (Crisp & Hewstone, 2007).

The implication of cross-cutting categories is the extent to which multiple identities define inclusive and exclusive group dimensions. Just as it has been considered previously, the successful integration of social-religious interests as common goals leads to highly permeable group boundaries through collective actions and cooperation. On the other hand, some dimensions of religious identity are exclusive and impermeable (i.e., worship rituals), therefore producing firm intergroup boundaries (Grigoryan, 2020; Ysseldyk et al., 2010). Regulating these boundaries can strengthen the inclusive intergroup context and also provide a dialectic space concerning openness to certain relational values like intergroup solidarity and respect towards intergroup borders (Dixon, 2001). This process is also consistent with the Common Ingroup Identity Model (CIIM), which requires accommodation and acknowledgement of intergroup differences. With the existence of multiple identities (superordinate and subgroup levels), the religious group identity can preserve its distinctiveness, while harmonious intergroup relations can be sustained through the superordinate identity (Dovidio et al., 2007; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2012).

The explanations above emphasize the importance of viewing the construction of common ingroup identity (which consists of village communities and religious groups) as the basis for understanding interreligious-group relations. Identifying the construction of such identities involves multilevel understandings of individual, group processes, and social systems that promote orientations towards social harmony. Hence, we argue that the binding of those identities simultaneously (a dual identity) involves a complex process. The process of establishing harmonious relations represents the existence of intergroup negotiations that lead toward integration and the importance of commitment towards togetherness and unity (Faturochman, 2008). In order to understand this process, our study aims to explore the dynamics of integration of the dual identity in maintaining interreligious harmony within the community.

Method

Research Site

This study was conducted in Margopuran District, Central Java. The area is located in the highlands, relying mostly on agrarian and tourism as economic icons. The statistic population in 2021 demonstrated 96% Muslims and 4% other religions and beliefs. As Islam is currently the largest proportion in this society, the nuance of Hinduism is pretty strong (658 Hindu fellows) since this area is the center of Javanese Hinduism. Moreover, the diversity of Margopuran consists of the following religions and beliefs. Based on administrative classifications, there are Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Catholicism, and Buddhism. Along with our observations, we found specific religious affiliations of intrareligious sects or denominations within Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism, and also the Javanese local beliefs. In facilitating religious rituals, there are 153 mosques, 21 prayer rooms (*mushola*), 6 churches, and 5 Hindu sacred structures (*pura*), Buddhist worship places (*cetiya*), religious organization secretariat offices, and some buildings are utilized as worship rooms for those who adhere to Javanese spiritual teachings like *Ilmu Sejati* and *Pangestu* (source: district demographic data archive). Of the nine villages in Margopuran District, there are two adjacent to each other that have the most diverse groups, namely Argasari Village and Muraya Village. The fieldwork was conducted in both of those villages.

Research Approach

We focused on the dynamics of integration to get a fine explanation of social identity construction in interreligious group relations. The everyday life setting within the community sets a preferable approach to understanding life conduct and life lessons contributed to the construction of social identity (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Hockey & James, 2003). In this manner, a case study approach enables us to understand a specific problem by paying specific attention to phenomena and producing the interpretation (Stake, 1995). A case is carefully constructed by the researcher by engaging in a series of research activities and investigations (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012). To portray interreligious relations means to meet the rich, complex, and overlapping waves from the micro-level (personal) to the

macro-level (societal), and vice versa. It was possible to find a number of cases during the study, however, in this article, we focus on the integrated formation of common ingroup identity.

Data Sources

Numerous data were gathered using participative observation, semi-structured interviews, casual conversations, identification of material objects, and documents including research reports, compilations of essays written by community members, and also institutional documents and journalistic products regarding the research site. During the fieldwork, we also participated in numerous activities, which allowed us to meet with religious fellows, religious authority figures, social authority figures, and common people.

Following the rich empirical materials gathered, in this article, we consider bringing up voices from the elderly generation to delve into the anchor representation of the collective identity constructed. The main informants consisted of 15 people (7 Muslims, 4 Christians, and 4 Hindus), ranging in age from 50 to 75 years. From the point of view of psychological development, this age range had experienced coherent identity development since numerous social identities and life experiences they had were more likely to be successfully integrated into their entire self-concept, which manifested as wisdom and religious maturity (Allport, 1960; Mitchell et al., 2021). Furthermore, the cultural texture demonstrates that the selected age group considered the structure of the hierarchical social system (ascribed social status), whereby this group is respected because of their extensive life experience as well as the important social roles they have in the village. In addition, dozens of supporting informants also participated to give a larger understanding of cultural relations they developed. Supporting informants consisted of youth (15-25 years), adults (25-50 years), group members in social gatherings, interreligious discussion forums, and residents from other villages. In general, the informants played a role in explaining their worldviews and experiences as representatives of the community.

Data Collection

Methodologically, we reflect on the importance of utilizing opportunities to understand the community and their way of living, while conducting research together with them. (Guimaraes, 2020; Hopner & Liu, 2021). In this manner, the first author (IHP) as a data collector, had to deal with ethics and emics tensions during the fieldwork. Ethically, the researcher was an outsider, not a local member of the community. Furthermore, the ethical issue concerned religious differences between informants and researcher. People easily identified the researcher as a Muslim (wearing the hijab as a clothing attribute of Muslim woman). Interestingly, even though the researcher was a newcomer and represented a certain religious group, people warmly welcomed our presence. This condition also could be overcome by adapting emic concerns. For instance, familiarity with the Javanese culture brought ease from the aspect of communication by using the Javanese language (both in the respectful level *krama* and casual level *ngoko*) or the Indonesian language. Most importantly, allocating much times to socialize with locals (in Javanese culture referred to *srawung*) became a key activity in our immersive strategy.

While taking part in communal activities, we felt an increased degree of closeness with the community, including invitations to visit the informant's house, where the interviews took place.

Some informants also invited the researcher to meet outside the house, participating in public events, for example, weekly elderly gymnastics, Independence Day celebrations (*Agustusan*), social gatherings for rotating savings (*arisan*), or just hanging out. In our encounters, the interview was dynamic (go-along interview) and it also enabled us to observe intergroup contacts in society (Kusenbach, 2003). Data was also collected through casual conversations, while eating out, watching the village football league, or when the informants were waiting for buyers in their kiosks. Given the various settings of data gathering and the sensitivity of the topic, not all participants agreed to have the interview recorded. In such circumstances, taking detailed fieldnotes was used as an alternative for documenting informantion (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Data was also collected through formal forums, for example, the periodical meetings of *Paguyuban Kerukunan Umat Beragama* (PKUB-The Interreligious Harmony Organization), and interfaith dialogue. To complement information from the field, numerous documents were accessed through permission from authors and content providers. For example, an essay titled *Merajut kebhinekaan dengan asah, asih, asuh* written by Giyono (51, Hindu). This essay contains his perspectives about interreligious harmony, which he illustrates by the metaphor of *gamelan*. For further elaboration, we have also brought this metaphor to the result section.

Analysis

As presented above, in the present study, a qualitative case study was constructed using an ethnographic-oriented strategy. This strategy provides a case focused on identity construction as a centerpiece for investigating context-bound understandings of interreligious relations. When it came to analysis, the empirical materials were displayed in the written form of interview transcripts, field notes, and related documents. These multiple sources were interconnected and complementary in nature. We treated them convergently to seek the relevant information concerning the study objective.

To produce interpretations, initial analysis was conducted by developing codes and categorization. Subsequent analysis was conducted iteratively and abductively. The abductive approach offers to merge inductive and deductive inferences (Timmermans & Tavory, 2022). This process involved creating a bricolage from numerous small pieces of data generated, which represented a system of meanings and symbols (Geertz, 1973; McAdams, 2001; Shweder, 1999), such as emics, metaphors, social practices, material objects, or historical narratives. Along the way, we utilized reflective journals containing thoughts and reflections, as well as our regular discussion.

In abductive analysis, we first determine the index case by identifying consistencies within common narratives concerning harmony from numerous sources of data. Based on the narratives found, we could identify the cultural system of intergroup harmony has been developed through generations. Therefore, identification towards common ingroup identity draws as an adaptive cognitive-motivational element. We continued to draw upon the existing data iteratively to develop themes that were related to the index case. Theory, was used as a perspective (lens) to explain the findings by improving conceptual imagination to help understand data. Engagement with the

literature assisted in understanding the case, along with interpreting promising themes and run through a constant dialogue between theory and data.

Results

The analysis generated demonstrates social identification toward community identity (superordinate) and religious-group identity (subgroups) and the interplay between them. At the superordinate level, common ingroup identity is characterized by an integration pattern, aligned with the idea of unity in diversity'. Correspondingly, this identity construction is cultivated by optimal conditions or community modalities to spread the multiculturalism ideology. At the subgroup level, acknowledgement and acceptance of diversity, differences, and equality reflect favorable beliefs about other religions, as we refer to the pattern of identity transcendence'. The relational mechanism of both levels demonstrates the integrative model of inclusive common ingroup identity.

Common Ingroup Identity: The Idea of Unity in Diversity

Common ingroup identity in the present study provides a sense of we-ness relating to belongingness (especially towards their place of residence), and the community members within it, therefore it promotes harmonious behaviors in intergroup relations. The characteristic of inclusiveness is not simply determined by categorizing in group membership, but also how each member produced a collective scheme regarding their collective identity.

To delve into the meaning of common ingroup identity from social representations, we captured how people grasp the ideology of unity in diversity or multiculturalism. For example, Giyono (51), a Hindu religious authority figure and traditional authority figure (*pemangku adat*) expressed, Here, what is meant by harmony, is that even though there are differences in faith, we are still one. Similar to Wati (50), a Muslim woman who also follows *Ilmu Sejati* spiritual teachings, Here, we are all one, whether you are Hindu, Christian, Islam, we are all one. Similar articulations from everyone we met emphasize the strong sense of unity which simultaneously accentuates the acknowledgement and acceptance of differences. These common responses indicate shared meaning frames in positive narratives about their common identity as socially constructed. For the last example, Sularso (66, Islam) expressed a great sense of pride regarding social harmony in his village, similar to other informants when talking about their coexistence, *"In Muraya village, there are all religions, and all activities become one. There are all groups of religion and beliefs. There is a pura, church, worship place for Buddha. Harmony is also well maintained here; we keep togetherness in gotong royong (cooperations). There are no insults. Everyone just follows their beliefs. If there is religious celebration, everyone supports each other. When Muslims have celebrations, other religions support us by taking care of security. When it is Hindu's religious day, other religions also do the same. We all take care of one another."*

In making further sense of this collective scheme, social representations concerning the idea of unity and recognition towards differences show the essence of social harmony. While explaining about their experiences, some informants articulated their ideas by using metaphors, for example buildings

(consisting of various construction materials, such as stones, cement, bricks, and sand) or *gamelan* (a traditional Javanese ensemble, see figure 1). One of informants, Giyono (51, Hindu) explained that the *gamelan* metaphor suggests that although players (*pengrawit*) working on different parts, they need to play together as a whole unit. Playing *gamelan* does not only show acknowledgement of differences, but also acknowledgement that each distinct group plays a key role in creating unity. Therefore, when the different sections of *gamelan* play in unison, a beautiful harmony can be produced. The informants also explained that just like playing *gamela*n, our behaviors need to adhere to specific rules, especially when working in a team. In everyday life, this manner manifests in social norms that need to be adhered to, especially the excellence to maintain harmony.

Optimal conditions to establish social representations of common ingroup identity. It is evident that the consistency of schemas regarding common ingroup identity indicates that social learning was an important process in constructing a unified worldview of unity in diversity. As a superordinate identity, we identified that such consensus was facilitated under optimal conditions. These conditions are: the extent of attachments, support from authority figures, and legitimacy of historical narratives.

Initially, kinship remains a sense of communal attachment that strengthens a sense of unity. Kinship refers to familial and broader social connections. In familial terms, we were fascinated that many people are thickly attached to blood-relatives or clans, living in the same village, and many families engaged in multireligious families. In fact, we also identified that thirteen informants in this study have multireligious families. For example, Saputri (72), decided to choose Christianity as her religion when she was a teenager. Her (late) parents engaged in interreligious marriage (Islam and Hindu), and permitted their children to pursue their own beliefs. For Saputri, coexistence with diverse religions is cultivated within her home (field notes, 1 September 2023, in casual conversation with Saputri, her sister, and brother-in-law). Therefore, the significance of such family conditions remains interreligious intimacy and intergenerational transmission of harmony.

Beyond genealogical ties, the idea of kinship has a wider net through a strong sense of brotherhood in the community, which is often locally articulated as *semanak-semedulur*. In both Argasari and Muraya, communal orientations remain strong, allowing each member to easily establish a common identity and superordinate goals through collective interests and responsibilities, like managing community organizations, participating in local ceremonies or celebrations (*hajatan*), and other communal activities. In order to uphold the community bond, social norms serve as social glue' to encourage people to engage in contact without distinguishing between religions. Here, the nature of permeable relations embraces the positive characteristics of common ingroup identity, particularly through implementations of the norm *gotong royong* (cooperation).

In both Argasari and Muraya, implementations of *gotong-royong* can be observed in social-religious situations. As we mentioned earlier in the introduction, a number of social-religious interests have merged to become community interests, such as interreligious cooperations in supporting rituals, ceremonies, religious celebrations, or social gatherings. In the previous section, Sularso (66, Islam) also mentioned the tradition of *ngepam* whereby community members of different religions are responsible for ensuring that religious celebrations are free from disturbance and threats.

This practice has been passed down through generations to support other religions who are celebrating their special religious day. Such shared rituals may serve as resources in forming narratives of unity. The presence of this tradition reinforced the idea that religion does not restrict the creation of harmonious and interdependent social relations.

The second optimal condition is support from authority figures (or community leaders), for instance, the village governments, traditional authority figures, cultural figures, religious figures or influential elderly. Those figures are the respected people, referred to as *sesepuh* (the elderly) and *pinisepuh* (people with high social positions in village). Distinctively, we arrested a strong discourse that places the village chief (*lurah*) as an important element of common ingroup identity.

With regard to the condition, a thorough investigation was conducted in the Muraya village. Although Islam is the majority religion in this village, the village chief (*Pak Lurah*) of Muraya is Hindu, and he has led the village for three consecutive periods. Based on our observations, such social figures have strong influences in forming the consensus of common ingroup identity through shared reality or socialization. For example, when we came to a series of communal activities like gratitude ceremonies (*bersih dusun* and *kenduri*) and the traditional *wayang kulit* puppet show in the Jiwan sub-village, Muraya, the village chief brought the metaphor of *gamelan* in his opening speech in front of the crowd (field notes, August 20, 2022, see figure 1). As noted earlier concerning the metaphor, the village chief demonstrated epistemic and relational motives to induce people to grasp the importance of diversity and harmony. Using this approach, the leaders can promote the values of harmony, which align with the people's aspirations. Below, Sarwanto (40, Hindu) mentioned the importance of the role of village governments in instilling values of care and helping as important values of common ingroup identity. He remembered a message that was imprinted in his head, *"The village governments through the periodical meetings of neighborhood association. Sometimes, Pak Lurah (the village chief) comes, or Pak Bayan (the hamlet chief) comes. They mostly give us messages like, Because we live as a community, we should take care of each other. Don't segregate religions in helping each other. Your neighbors are the most accessible people who will help you when you are in difficulties. Then, should we depend on other people outside this community? That was what Pak Lurah said."*

Figure 1
Gamelan, a Material Culture to Produce a Metaphor (Source: Researcher's Documentation, 20 August 2022)

Note. This picture was taken before the ceremony began. Unexpectedly, this gamelan brought us to understand the shared reality efforts. The village chief used this object as an allure to socialize the values of unity in diversity

Third, the meaning of common ingroup identity is closely derived from the legitimacy of historical narratives. People believe that harmony, as a core value in their community, cannot be separated from the roles of forefathers. In this regard, we identified the historical dimension by accessing people's collective memories through mnemonics in both verbal and physical symbols. Such historical information can be obtained from physical objects, for example, places of worship. Places of worship are considered the icon' of tolerance since historical narratives explain about interreligious collaboration in their constructions. In Argasari village office area, there are three places of worship standing side by side: a mosque, a church, and a *pura* (Hindu temple), which were constructed around the 1980s. People produce their interpretations of these material objects as symbols of *unity*, positive communication, and collaboration among religious groups. In line with Argasari, in Muraya Village, the historical narrative of *unity* is also relevant to places of worship. Telling the story about a *pura* that was constructed in 1979, some elders yearned about their collective past and aspirations for social harmony. The pura was built along with interreligious cooperation and collaborations, hence, the community members agreed to name the *pura Tunggal Ika* as a symbol of unity.

Historical narratives suggest that cognitive schemes regarding common ingroup identity can be conceived as a system that has been passed down through generations and has been long established in the past. Those material objects and historical narratives evoked admiration towards the previous village chief (formerly referred to as *demang*), who supported the idea of unity and commanded the practices of *gotong-royong*, including mandatory dues paid by each family to buy construction materials

to build places of worship. With the legitimacy of history, people assume social harmony has been passed down through generations. Ancestors, or predecessors, were considered to have established a system of cultural harmony. Therefore, the claims of these historical aspects function to strengthen aspirations to maintain common ingroup identity.

Identity Transcendence: Acknowledgement of Intergroup Equality

When common ingroup identity contains schemas for the acknowledgement of harmony and motives for maintaining unity, then how do groups construct a religious group identity in bridging intergroup relations? At the subgroup level, there are spaces for negotiation of how a person views their own religious group (ingroup) and other religious groups (outgroup) to form an acknowledgement of intergroup equality.

Acknowledgement of equality refers to acceptance of the idea that religious groups have the right to engage in the village square and observe their religious practices. Equality status was interpreted as an attitude toward life to refrain from feeling a sense of superiority over others or derogating other groups since all humans have equal status (*sakpada-pada*). This process shows an orientation toward identity transcendence (this term is adapted from (Hammack, 2006). Identity transcendence in the context of religious identity refers to increased inclusiveness. In other words, people who have a positive self-concept towards their religious identity tend to give acceptance to other religious groups. The most common perspective delivered by informants in evaluating the group identity is that all religions teach about benevolence. By extracting the benevolent characteristics of religions, this view supports the notion of equal status. Below, mechanisms of differentiation and recategorization explain the acceptance towards other religions in maintaining equality.

Category differentiation and social norms to respect boundaries. Category differentiation is a simple effect produced by the identification of intergroup similarities and intergroup distinctiveness. This process shows an awareness towards exclusive boundaries in religious spaces. Interestingly, many informants articulated the metaphor of *tujuannya satu, jalannya beda* which can be translated as one destination yet many roads to reach it. Similar to the concept of perennial philosophy (Kuswanjono, 1997), the informants positioned their religion as a means to reach God. This belief demonstrates that individuals consider that whatever beliefs we have, we have the indistinguishable essence. However, it must be noted that the articulation of the metaphor was common among informants who have multireligious family backgrounds. This showed that negotiation of religious differences was strong in the family space and then generalized to groups. As an example, Sridodo (51, Islam) illustrated his worldview through an analogy, "*About differences, I don't have a problem. Here's an analogy, our destination is Yogya, and some people go there through Makis, some pass Karangsari, and others pass Jamus, but we are all headed for the same place. We eventually reach the place and that is what is important. It's up to the higher entity above to judge. For us, we don't have much of a problem. The issue is when we are judged by the higher entity above. That's what I think. For us as Muslims, we need to make sure we pray five times a day, and as Christians, go ahead and attend church on Sundays; please do so. That's what I think.*"

He continued, "*It's like we are all heading to Yogya, but some go in that direction and some pass Makis.*

But we are all heading to Yogya. It's quite simple, isn't it? But then, if you ask the question, Why are you going in that direction? It can create conflict."

In addition to the spiritual dimension that underlies the understanding of religious status, the development of this metaphor describes the mechanisms of managing perceptions to acknowledge differences. It also denotes the idea that all religions have the same transcendental common ground. This schema helps to dissolve right-wrong dualism or intergroup bias. Psychologically, this belief supports a situation where religious differences do not lead to the tension. As emphasized by Sridodo, he felt the importance of commitment to his religion, respect for others, and not showing religious favoritism to justify the 'way' of other religions. With these understandings, people demonstrate precedence in showing respect for others and not interfering with the worship rituals of other religious groups. The attitudes toward refraining from discussing exclusive religious truths in the public space demonstrated this.

Recategorization as a means to reduce tension. In reality, the adaptation of religious group identities is also affected by past conflicts. Since the late 19th century, the community has experienced social changes in the nature of the religious groups, particularly with the entry of new sectarian groups (intrareligious subgroups). Since the social situation changed, people felt different nuances. Religious favoritism became salient in the public sphere and more prevalent in the 2000s. One instance of intergroup tensions was the rising of stereotypical narratives against religious rituals- that acculturate local customs (*adat*), particularly referring to Hinduism and traditional Islam. These narratives were linked to disagreements and accusations from newcomers (Islamic puritanism), against certain long-standing customs that were perceived as *musyrik* (associating partners with God). From the locals' perspectives, such attitudes were viewed as deviating from the norms of respect for different religious groups. As a consequence, this tension created a dichotomy between traditionalism (those who were supportive of traditional customs) and puritanism (those who were against traditional customs). This tension led to an increase in prejudices.

The change in situations and the emergence of tensions also led to social threats towards customs and political interests, which were viewed as jeopardizing community unity. On the other hand, informants assessed the extent to which sectarian groups from outside the community could enter and adhere to the social norms and common ingroup identity that had been established. This situation actually led individuals to engage in cross-categorization. For example, Giyono (51, Hindu) reflected his ambivalence in assessing the entry of new sectarian groups into the community and their effect on the community. He confided, *"When talking about that group (Islamic puritanism), I feel quite ambivalent. I feel ambivalent about how to judge them. I mean, we know that a new sectarian group has entered our community. So, should I judge them based on their group or as human'? That was difficult. We cannot simply judge that a particular group cannot be accepted. The issue is, if we were talking about humanity, as long as the person can integrate and socialize with others, we will be fine."*

The process of cross-cutting categorization showed a common ground in the dimension of ingroup community. We run in that everyday contact facilitates positive evaluations of new religious sectarian members. Despite incriminating previous conflicts, these groups could still be viewed

in a positive light, therefore making their exclusion from the community less likely. One of the important parameters was an individual's social competence in integrating with the community (as we mentioned previously about the local culture of srawung). It turns out that newcomers demonstrate their positive attitude by actively participating in activities that focus on meeting community interests as well as acting kindly to others during everyday interactions. From Giyono's reflection, it demonstrated that when a religious group cannot meet criteria, the impression attached is no longer based on the group-category, but on individual attitudes and behaviors that align with community values (superordinate values).

Recategorization became an important process in reducing tension. Even though complete acceptance of a group was unlikely, the findings reveal that recategorization was reinforced by conditional preferences to avoid conflict, particularly in people's understanding about open conflict. Religious conflict has not occurred. Hopefully, it will not occur. That would be devastating if it ever occurred, said Sridodo. Other informants also articulated their preferences through local philosophies, for example, *rukun agawe santoso, crah agawe bubrah*, which can be translated as maintaining harmony will lead to peace while conflict will lead to the breaking of ties between us (focus group discussion, 15 December, 2022).

In summary, both differentiation and recategorization show the effect of cross-cutting categories in evaluating other groups. Although it is affected by different circumstances, both processes show an orientation towards group acceptance in the formation of a common ingroup identity.

Discussion

This study explores the dynamics of integration of social identities as a basic construction for understanding harmonious relations in a diverse religious community. Integration of social identities comprises a strategy of managing community identity and religious group identity, both of them serve as two coherent elements in maintaining social harmony. Overall, we have demonstrated two major compositions in integration. First, at the superordinate level. This level shows social representations of common ingroup identity, in line with ideas toward unity and acknowledgement of diversity. Second, at the subgroup level. This level shows that the adaptation of identity transcendence is marked by the acknowledgement of equality toward other religious groups. Both findings have relevance to the concepts of inclusive collective identity (multiple identities) and cross-cutting categories (Crisp & Hewstone, 2007; Crisp et al., 2006; Faturochman, 2008).

From our investigations toward social representations of collective schemas, the current discussion commences by highlighting a local conceptualization of common ingroup identity, namely the idea of unity in diversity (which is also represented in the Indonesian well-known slogan, *bhinneka tunggal ika*). This schema reflects the importance of maintaining harmony and respect as a moral compass in relational life, particularly among Javanese community (Suseno, 1984). Drawing from the theoretical perspective, the idea of unity has the meaning of harmony itself, which contains characteristics of openness (permeability) and interdependence. By observing the identity

construction, we can understand how people regulate their intergroup relations is reinforced by unity motives (Rai & Fiske, 2011). This is expressed by a tendency to care for others, interdependence orientations, collective responsibilities, and integrity to maintain their common identity, including threats and conflict. Furthermore, acknowledgement of diversity contains efforts to preserve differences and distinctiveness of religious groups in the community (mutual differentiation) (Brewer & Miller, 1984). Acknowledgement of group differences becomes an important element to reinforce the superordinate identity, therefore, it also acknowledges the impermeable spaces (i.e. exclusive religious dimensions) that compromises cross-cutting categories (Crisp & Hewstone, 2007).

Aligned with the elaborations above, we evaluated that identity transcendence shows a unique pattern at the subgroup level by making it easier for people from different religious groups to see themselves as equal. The equality status compromises differences and boundaries. More importantly, this formation supports the construction of a common ingroup identity see also (Hammack, 2006). Therefore, the mechanism of integration actually shows a strategy for maintaining an inclusive social identity that accommodates the existence of diverse religious groups. A visualization of integration can be seen in Figure 2. The figure shows the framework of common ingroup identity which is supported by the pattern of identity transcendence (bi-dimensional). This formation also explains integrated spaces for permeable (inclusive dimensions) and impermeable (exclusive dimensions of religions) contact, as marked by dashes and closed lines. Some optimal conditions facilitate the establishment of this formation.

Figure 2
Visualization of Integration in Common Ingroup Identity Model
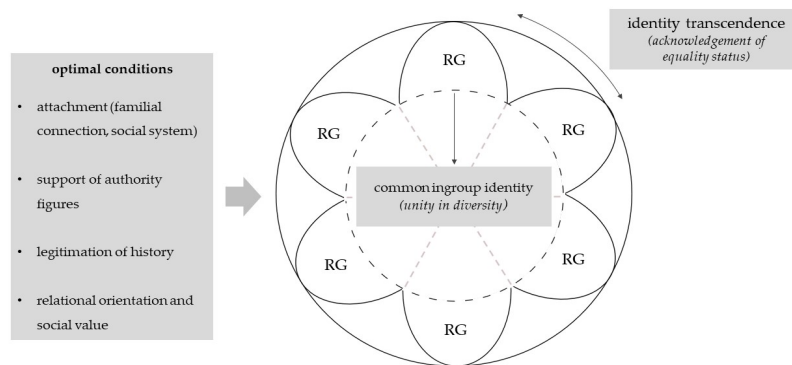
Note. RG is an abbreviation for Religious Group

The Role of Optimal Conditions

In the present study, the context of the community shows a number of social modalities that can be identified as optimal conditions. These optimal conditions function to facilitate how community

members interpret their social identities and demonstrate how to live harmoniously. For example, the attachment to familial connection and mutual dependence on the social system play as strong features in establishing common ingroup identity and facilitating positive intergroup contact in their everyday life (Allport, 1955; David & Bar-Tal, 2009). Moreover, the context of villages is located at the hillside, binding with the strong communal orientations and shared knowledge that circulates within their village (Adisubroto, 1996). The existence of macro features in this context shows agentive efforts to develop supportive environments to spread multiculturalism ideology along with their everyday interactions. As a result, the present study contributes to developing a social representation approach to investigating social identity.

The proposition of a collectivist culture shows the strong orientation of we-ness. It is not surprising that when we attempt to inductively explain the concept of unity, we see that group representations work like an entity of networks. These networks are mutually attached and emphasize relational orientations and social values (Yuki, 2011). This can be observed in how the community establish the consensus on their common ingroup identity schemas and actions (Hopkins & Reicher, 2011). The group processes in this culture show characteristics that require strong motivation to maintain social harmony and mutual relations. Therefore, group members tend to attend good relations in both vertical and horizontal sense to adapt with how they place themselves in the network (Yuki & Takemura, 2014). In addition, this also includes identifying intergroup boundaries at specific levels. We will continue the next discussion by specifying the negotiation spaces in efforts to understand how the community manage their networks.

Differentiation and Recategorization: Adaptation towards Social Harmony and Tension

The process that occurs at the subgroup level (horizontal) shows the dynamic of negotiations for preserving equality status and acceptance towards other religious-groups (see Figure 3). Both social harmony and tension are two elements that are certain to be present vis-à-vis in maintaining harmonious relations. Oftentimes, harmony and tension (conflict) are viewed as two contradictory situations, either good versus bad or ideal versus threatening. Tension in upholding harmonious relations, however, cannot be avoided, and may even be beneficial in supporting social changes (Saguy et al., 2010).

Figure 3
The Dual Mechanism to Maintain Equality Status and Acceptance towards Outgroups
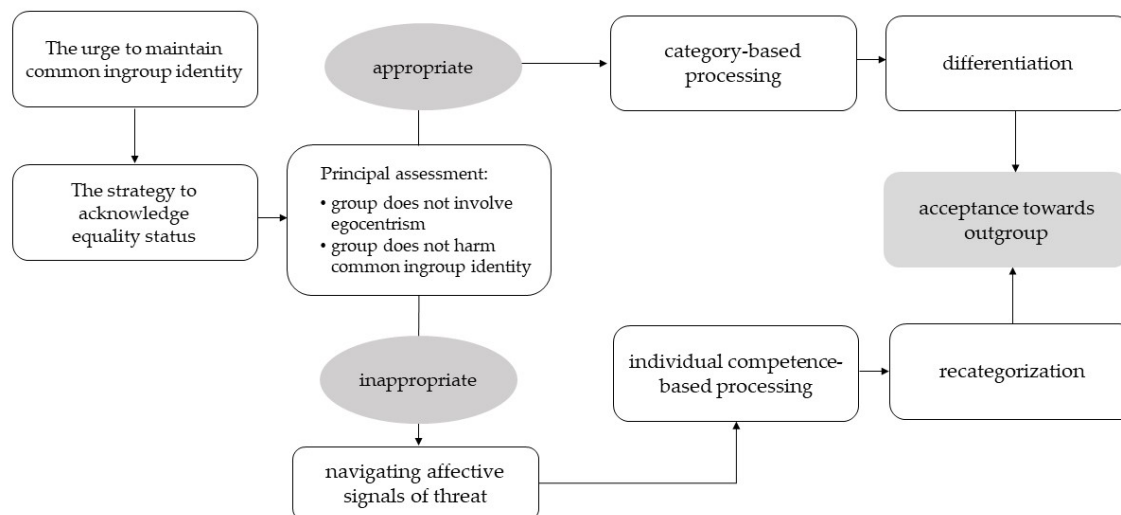
In relation to the emphasis on interreligious harmony, we need to underline that social harmony needs to be maintained over time (Suseno, 1984). Naturally, endorsing the fundamental principle of treating other groups equally is necessary to achieve this situation (Allport, 1955; Kende et al., 2018). In making evaluations towards other groups, group members demonstrate the mechanism of cross-cutting categories that refer to the common concern regarding respect for others. The process of evaluation involves the assessment of two principles, including ego involvement and threats towards unity. The vigilance (especially towards newcomers) also relates to the past experience of tension. Insulting other religions is considered as egocentrism and dehumanism. Hence, in the context of religious group identity, both parameters become important since religions have a strong sensitivity regarding belief systems (Mavor & Ysseldyk, 2020; Ysseldyk et al., 2010). Threats towards common ingroup identity also have the large potential to create conflict. Therefore, orientation towards those evaluations also reflects a unique motivation to maintain intergroup relations and avoid disintegration or segregation.

The consequences of cross-cutting categories in different situations produce differentiation and recategorization. These mechanisms are relevant to the concept of impression formation (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990), which explains a continuum of evaluations based on categories and/or individual attributes. Convergence and divergence patterns occurring simultaneously produce the simple effect of differentiation. For example, in the cognitive scheme of *tujuannya satu, jalannya berbeda* (one destination, yet different ways), a person develops acknowledgement of differences among different religious group, while simultaneously accommodating acceptance towards differences. This

differentiation is considered the ideal form of acknowledging boundaries and preventing tension. Furthermore, when a target group cannot meet these criteria, the evaluation is linked to individual attributes that project important values from the superordinate identity, namely the willingness to engage in contact. Such outgroup positive attitudes help reduce a sense of ambivalence and perception of threat. This process leads to recategorization, which serves as an alternative to group acceptance to navigate intergroup tensions (Cunningham, 2004).

Based on both mechanisms of group acceptance, the findings from this study reveal that the minimum parameter needed to maintain the attachment of its members is the willingness to engage in contact. The willingness to engage in contact (contact-seeking, or in Javanese culture referred to as *srawung*) reflects adherence to social norms and a standard evaluation of warmth and competence to engage with the community (Fiske. et al., 2002; Kauff et al., 2020). As a norm, sarwung also functions as an indicator of social integration (Paolini et al., 2018). With the social norm to engage in contact, it can be concluded that people easily accept the kind of relations that can prioritize the moral of caring and familyhood.

Overall, the present study contributes to developing a CIIM (Dovidio et al., 2013; Dovidio et al., 2007). While previous literature showed that the formation of the dual identity reflects the strategy of integration, this study reveals that integration itself dynamically works together at bidimensional levels of superordinate and subgroup. The findings of the study also reveal that the community has an anchor point in their orientations towards social harmony, primarily in the pattern of identity transcendence. In addition, the dynamic process that occurs also shows that integration cannot be separated from situations that are oftentimes considered conflicting. For example, tension and harmony, the exclusive and inclusive dimensions in religion, permeable and impermeable spaces, when engaging in intergroup contact. Therefore, bottom-up strategies that reflect the integration orientation of social identity create functions to manage intergroup harmony among religious groups in different situations.

We evaluate that the exploration of the topic concerning interreligious-group relations is complex. This study has several limitations. The present study tends to focus on the process of integration at the community and intergroup levels. In line with the finding that subgroup identity (religious groups) is a social identity that has a strong character in social life, further research also needs to identify intragroup processes among religious groups, especially the identification of minority or majority perspectives in maintaining a common ingroup identity. In addition, contextual and situational factors always affect the explanation of social identification. The current findings also indicate that integration strategies in the context of relationships are projected from the integration of social identities into the self-concept of individuals. Future research should pay attention to this intrapersonal process, primarily on how community identity integration and religion can become integrated elements of an individual's life development (Amiot et al., 2007).

Furthermore, this study is limited to collecting data from the elderly. Generational factors and social status in the community affect how informants construct their worldviews, particularly with the experience of social-religious change in society. Future research should investigate intergenerational

relations, including how the transmission of values of harmony affects the construction of social identity among the youth and new residents.

Conclusion

The present study reveals that the integration of social identities is a multicultural community adaptation strategy to maintain interreligious harmony. We address that this study contributes to the extension of the CIIM by explaining the integrated connection between common ingroup identity and identity transcendence. This model means that the identity construction shows positive orientations towards coexistence and religious diversity. So far, the issue has still become a problem for religious harmony in general. In practice, our study reveals the underlying process of social learning through optimal conditions. Our study also supports that although the nature of tension is somehow inevitable, the social norm of intergroup contact and the willingness to engage in contact (*srawung*) demonstrate the psycho-cultural dimension that explains how people cultivate integration.

In the methodological aspect, the present study uses a qualitative case study approach that was conducted through fieldwork. This approach allows us to understand the reality of local life and numerous cultural components, for example, traditions, history, political systems of the grassroots, and group values, as well as the nature of relational ethics that improves data collection. This approach also shows that exploration of the community landscape also becomes an important tool in studying social identity.

Recommendation

We have stated that the present study is context-bound. In this study, integration emerges from the identity construction of elders, and also refers to specific characteristics of community identification. To develop further understandings in various groups and communities, future research needs to consider the contexts of generation and religious groups involved, as well as the space and place. We hope that broader identifications in various contexts help to characterize the patterns of interreligious relations in Indonesia.

Declaration

Author Contribution

IHP contributed to the conceptualization of the research, data collection, analysis and write-up. F contributed to supervising the research, guiding the theoretical framework, reviewing and editing the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interests in the production of the manuscript.

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