

Understanding Conflict between Ethnic Groups on the Border of Timor Leste and Indonesia from a Subjective Culture Innovation Viewpoint

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Timor Island has several sub-ethnic groups, each with its territory, history of origin and mother tongue. The subjective culture of each ethnic group is the root of stereotype-filled ethnic expression, prejudice, ethnocentrism, and discrimination. Qualitative research with an ethnographic approach involves 60 informants on Timor. Data is obtained via observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation with content analysis techniques. The result found subjective cultural attribution tends to encourage close-minded thinking, suspicion, and jealousy, and mythical and egocentric beliefs. The association of ethnic groups' subjective cultural relations is influenced by in-group and out-group self-esteem. The satisfaction of in-group-out-group self-esteem needs is not immediately expressed because of fear of the mythic-magical threat and *Kakaluk*. It is reduced to a secure physical self that is towards the Lower Order of Needs Level. Therefore, the intervention model of subjective culture innovation must be physiological and focus on efforts to fulfil secure in-group and out-group self.

Key words: *Attitude, conflict, ethnic group, ethnography study, subjective culture.*

Introduction

The Government of East Nusa Tenggara (ENT) Province stated that in 2016, 39,633 new citizens from East Timor lived in the East Nusa Tenggara Province (Monk and De Fretes, 2012, Rodger and Steel, 2016). The new people use language to create unity within society,

specifically Portuguese and Tetun (Greksakova, 2018, Greksáková, 2015). Newly Indonesian citizens previously migrated from several major cities in East Timor with their native languages (Ward and Braudt, 2015, Henick, 2014). Those from Bobonaro district speak Tetun, Wailaun, and Kemak; Liquisa speak Tokodede and Mambae; Baucau and Lospalos speak Tinomako; Ermera speak Makasae; Oecution, Manuhutu, Kovalima/Suai, Aileu, Ainaro, Dili speak in Dawan language while Maliana and Mambai District speak the same (Gomes et al., 2017, Greksakova, 2018). These migrants now speak Indonesian and Tetun in their daily interactions as a way of acclimating with the country, while the mother tongue is only used within the family.

Tepfenhart (2013) argues that ethnic conflict is not the result of diversity. Poverty and fear for the future provide a fertile ground for ethnic conflict. Conflict often occurs between the migrants and the residents due to different cultural backgrounds (Hashmi and Sajid, 2017), especially when assessing others based on in-group subjective culture. The attitudes of judgment resulted in stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination, hostility, and conflict, all of which threatened security and peace - even threatening the integration of the nation proposed by the Republic of Indonesia Unitary State (Hadis, 2002).

The concept of in-group assessment refers to groups ignoring the size and presence of another, which often creates hostility or dissension. The conflict between ethnic groups occurs when the need for security and comfort in living together is not obtained adequately. People want recognition of self-esteem and positive social identities from outside groups.

Discriminatory behaviour is a reflection of treating out-group members differently from the fellow in-group. It can be because of religion, gender, ethnicity, and a myriad of other social differences (Westwood et al., 2018). Judgment usually occurs on account of a conflict of interest. Assessment orientation is centred on personal or group interests (Taylor et al., 2009).

Based on the description, the following research thesis can be formulated. In essence, the hostility and conflict between ethnic groups, including discrimination, injustice, categorisation, and stereotyping, are an expression of interest for local citizens and new residents to meet the needs of self-esteem and social identity (Muluk and Budiarti, 2007). Ethnic self-interest is derived from cognitive and motivational processes within individuals (Bolsen and Leeper, 2013), so attitudes like judgment are based on comparisons of in-group and out-group membership. Because of this, different subjective cultures determine the attitudes of prejudice that trigger hostility and intergroup ethnic conflict (Guimond et al., 2013, Fisher, 2016). It disturbs the sense of peace and friendship in living together as a multi-ethnic society in the province of ENT.

Research objectives include identifying the subjective cultures of local ethnic groups and new residents from East Timor that are scattered throughout the region of ENT Province. The study also aims to identify the expressions of subjective cultures manifesting stereotypes and hostility towards other ethnic groups in the ENT Province. Other studies have mapped out subjective cultures that propagate judgment and discrimination, then build and conduct an applied intervention model to tackle hostility.

Theory of Social Identity from Tajfel and Turner (1973)

Symptoms of integration and disintegration of a nation began with evaluation, where comparison and distinction were made between ethnic groups according to the size of subjective and heuristic in-group-out-groups (Assa, 2005), majority-minorities, nationalists and religious, Muslim and non-Muslims, residents and newcomers. Judgment leads to comparison and differentiation, which creates in-group and out-group categorisation and discrimination.

Community Theory consists of social categories of power relations and status between one social category to another. Social categorisation is believed to be a psychological process that organises the social environment into sets (Christanti, 2003), such as similar identity characteristics related to actions, intentions, and behaviour. Otherwise, gender, nationality, race, class, occupation and religion are all connected with the same power and status (Enoch, 2006). Social identity theory, according to Tajfel and Turner, states that prejudice and discrimination are often a source of intergroup conflict triggered by social categorisation (Trepte and Loy, 2017). The results of the categorisation process encourage feelings of superiority within the in-group and inferiority of out-groups. The subjective and heuristic assessment impacts superior in-group ethnocentrism and inferior out-group phenomena.

Typological Theory of Motivational Values from Schwartz (1994)

Value is a basic and universal human need. With value, individuals have a basis for consideration in doing something. They are considered positive and applied in varying situations, such as work, family and friend environments, and relationships. It is a belief related to how to behave to reach a final goal. Values exceed specific situations; directing selective attitudes towards individual behaviour and events and arranged according to the degree of importance. 56 motivational values can be grouped into 10 categories, which are further divided into two dimensions. The first dimension is an openness to change vs. conservatism and the second is self-transcendent vs. self-enhancement. It can, therefore, be assumed that prejudice and social disputes among ethnic groups are caused by differences in motivational values between groups of local residents and new migrants (Sarwono, 2002).

Theory of Subjective Culture from Triandis (1972)

The Subjective Culture theory states that most of the conflicts between groups occur because of differences influenced by ethnic customs. The subjective culture intended by Triandis includes 12 elements where stereotypes are central, categorisation being the most important. Elements also include evaluation, elementary cognitive structure and association, beliefs, attitudes, stereotypes, expectations, norms, ideals, roles, tasks, and values. The rank of importance according to Triandis (1972) are (1) categorisation (2) evaluation (3) association and elementary cognitive structure (4) beliefs (5) attitudes (6) stereotypes (7) expectations (8) norms (9) ideals (10) roles (11) tasks (12) values. The twelve elements of subjective culture are stated as mediators between situations and individual responses.

Method

The subject of the research is the village community where new residents from East Timorese reside. They are scattered in villages throughout the island of Timor. Several informants are considered to be able to represent different ethnic groups, including community or religious leaders, cultural figures, leaders of youth organisations, security figures, community members; both local and new residents. The research was conducted in several villages: along the border between East Timor. This study involved 60 informants from 10 villages in the districts on Timor Island.

The research was carried out with an ethnomethodology approach which studies how people know, understand and give meaning to the lives of social and cultural ethnic identities as well as physical environmental ones, in each place of residence (Trace, 2016, Turowetz et al., 2016, Liberman, 2013). To get information about the learning experience of each ethnic group, in-depth interviews, observation and spontaneous dialogue are needed.

Case study techniques are needed to examine the social, psychological, economic, and physiological symptoms of community members, and their daily activities in relation to cases of ethnic group disputes that have occurred in the community between new and existing residents (Yin, 2017). Data from interviews, spontaneous observations, and case studies are expected to produce data profiles with a single pattern. Ethnography is known as a method of a field study where researchers act as people who learn about the culture. Researchers are required to master both the concepts and techniques of obtaining objective data, usually by entering the community they are studying. Through entry, the community ethnography can produce a description of cultural reality according to the views and appreciation of the community itself (Sulasman and Gumilar, 2013).

In this case, scientific research begins to examine the relationship between language and communication, culture and even social interaction. This tightly interconnected relationship determines a simple and scientific approach (Gasi, 2004). Because of this, an easy approach to these observations, coupled with cross-cultural psychology, for example, is known as ethnographic communication (Sarlito, 1999). The role of communication style in a group is important to find out how different cultures use language. In communication the interaction of an ethnic group could be observed by (1) the communication pattern used by a group (2) means that all communication activities exist for the group (3) when and where group members use all of these activities (4) how the communication practices create a community and (5) the diversity of codes, symbols and artifacts used by a group (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009).

Results and Discussion

Stereotype

Residents in Silawan Village were initially shocked to face the exodus of East Timorese who came in large numbers with 150 homemade weapons. They feel anxious that their village will become insecure, but even so, continue to help the refugees: providing temporary shelter, food ingredients and taking care of the sick. Also, residents work together to patrol and safeguard the security system from dawn tonight. New residents do not feel doubt, let alone anxiety at the location of the settlement. Other than that, it could also be because of similarities in customs, language, and religion. In the context of traditions, religions, and dialects of Tetun however, locals make an effort to distinguish themselves from the refugees of East Timor.

Later, the attitude of the locals changed. They began to feel jealous of the attention and assistance flowing from NGOs; both local and international, as well as aid from Central and Regional Governments to the new residents. The assistance excluded the locals, resulting in the region becoming a settlement for the migrants. It then intensified feelings of jealousy and avoidance of the migrants. On the one hand, housing assistance from the government is prioritised for families living together in one house. They are facilitated to credit banks because they have guarantees including land titles, whereas new residents do not due to lack of guarantee. The local land is not allowed to carry out certification, because there is concern that new residents will sell land to other parties if they move or return to East Timor. So far there are still 50 families who do not have housing and live in a joint home of 36 m². The average 36m² house is built on 25x40m land, usually inhabited by 3-4 families (Testimony from Ferdi Monez Bili from Silawan village).

New residents also have difficulty obtaining land-based farming permits owned by longtime residents. They are not even allowed to install electric poles for lighting needs beyond the roofs of residents' houses. Assistance from local NGOs was not permitted to enter the village (case in Kenebibi village).

In terms of livelihood, the migrants have more fighting power because, in addition to farming and raising livestock, they also help in construction projects, mining and collecting tamarind for sale. A small percentage also sells gasoline to villages in Indonesia and villages and East Timor. Residents have become accustomed to the way they live without any effort to progress, resulting in the new Belu residents living better off economically. Implicitly, these attitudes express the residents' attitudes of jealousy, feelings of dissatisfaction, and isolating themselves from the new citizens.

Categorisation

In daily life, it is recognised that the migrants experience a safe and secure life in the province of ENT after the exodus from East Timor. A sense of freedom from all kinds of threats of violence, murder, and looting is experienced and they feel more able to create a sustainable income, finding food and raising livestock, developing a social life, and participating in societal events and organisations. They can feel harmony, safety, and peace. Living as a family can also be experienced in Indonesia simply because of the similarities in the history of traditions, religions and languages, namely Tetun and Indonesian (Sarwono, 2006). Residents are willing to give a piece of land to the migrants without compensation or force. Therefore, there is no mutual suspicion, disapproval, jealousy or disappointment between new and longtime residents.

It is only since the new residents found it difficult to get a job, send their children to school, or cultivate farmland that problems began to emerge. They admit that domestic issues are often prevalent, such as marital issues between husband and wife or arguing between parents and children, or young people who are members of different martial arts organisations. The root of the problem is almost always feeling offended. For martial arts organisations, fights often occur only to defend the good name of the organisation in which both new and local residents are involved.

In the village, cases of slaughtered livestock are settled by the traditional Village Peace Judge or HPD. HPD includes elements of the village government apparatus, indigenous people, religious leaders and the Community Guidance Board (Babinsa) as well as the Police. Apart from helping to oversee the rules and policies of the village government, it also helps formulate provisions governing the costs of resolving disputes. Moreover, it takes care of dispute resolution between parties in the village. The amount of money as a fine is set

differently for the community and village level. After the outcome is agreed, it is followed by an act of making peace between parties by slaughtering an animal for the banquet at the Village Office. The costs for this settlement are expensive, which serves as a deterrent for the village people.

These conditions provide opportunities for both new and existing residents to organise joint activities and social services, such as building places of worship or constructing water tanks and wells. There is also an activity to collect money in the form of *arisan* (collecting money in rotation to help other inside-group members, usually held monthly) between residents or family for marriages and schools. The joint activities are carried out to build a brotherhood, with mutual help and respect in the words of *hotaek/haefolin-malu/haekfaek-malu* or *haek malu* among villagers.

Evaluation

As a result of living free from the threat of fear, new and longtime residents can work hard to support themselves and their families. They also revive each other in the community, sincerely and voluntarily accepting the presence of one another. New residents are struggling to build simple houses on land pledged by the locals or struggle to contribute the time, energy and materials needed for housing development. In short, from the beginning of arrival until now, they understand the weaknesses and abilities of each.

Confidence

In the old location, the migrants experience famines and live in loneliness due to lack of family visits. The new location, however, permits them to have family and joy; they believe God will protect them from life's shortcomings and suffering. This belief has encouraged them to work together to build places for prayer and simple devotions such as; Mary's Cave in the village. With the Cave of Mary, the new and local citizens can devote and ask for God's protection through the prayer of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They also believe that ancestral spirits would always protect and prevent them from evil. These beliefs are expressed through traditional rituals in the house. They also believe in the strength of *Kakaluk* (a Tetun word used in Belu to mention something/someone with magic power) and other strengths that can protect them and free them from danger. The culture of family gathering *tuku badut* is seen as something that can overcome difficulties in customary affairs; ranging from marriage to death. They hold local beliefs that to avoid famine, they must work diligently.

Attitude

Alcohol is a ritual object that is still needed in the new migrant community. In traditional rituals, there are rites giving drink to ancestral spirits, consuming alcohol during traditional parties or rituals (not until drunk). Alcoholic beverages consumed at this moment are usually local types called "*tuak*" or "*sopi*" which are tapped from *nira/tuak* (kind of palm trees). They invite each other during customary marriages and other parties and attend traditional and social events to appreciate family invitations. Besides that, it is because of the belief in the relationship of the ancestral brotherhood of Timor, therefore, drinking or not is not a measure of determining family closeness.

Even though local customs are relatively the same, they still recognise the bride piece of marriage customs being slightly different. *Mahar* or custom bride pieces are determined based on the marriage system adopted; the matriarch marriage system (married in) or the patriarch marriage system (married out). The local ethnic group Tetun and Dawan use a marriage system in which a woman joins the male tribe. In contrast, the traditional marriage system that is non-Tetun and Dawan uses an outward marriage system, where a man must enter the wife's family. Although different, both still accept and recognise cultural assets that need to be respected by all local ethnic groups.

For example, the custom of the South Belu residents applies the traditional marriage system where the men are required to leave their tribes to enter the women's family (Faturchman and Sadli, 2003). In this context, men are servants of the wives' families. It means that both the patriarchal and matriarchal marriage system can be excluded from the list of causes for conflict. There is also no gender issue as a man who marries (according to the matriarchal tradition and *wehali*) is required to follow a woman. Women are valued and given the right to guard the house "*umanaen*". Or what is called *umanaen manekfou* requires that *oanlaen* (son-in-law) takeover activity in the kitchen and not to serve the people in front as women usually do in Eastern traditions.

Hope

All residents who inhabit the border region hope to live a safe, peaceful and prosperous life. Working to help themselves and others is a form of goodness that should be fought for. With a sense of security and peace, each citizen is free to take part in social activities and village development, such as environmental cleanliness, construction of public facilities, family welfare education, volleyball matches, death and marriage customs, arisan activities with 'tuku badut', and other social gatherings in the village.

Norm

The marriage system that applies in the indigenous community of Belu *Vialaran* is different from the indigenous community of Belu authority and *wehalik*. *Wewiku* and *wehalik* hold matriarchal marriage systems, whereas the indigenous community of Belu *Vialaran* holds patriarchy. In marriage, both the local community and the new residents hold strong customs, resulting in choosing marriage mates between themselves rather than intermarrying between local people and new people. Conversely, if there are different pairs of ethnic origins, then the marriage system of Belu *Vialaran* is applied: women must follow their husbands and live with the male's family. The position of the head of the family is in the hands of men unlike the traditional marriage system of local indigenous peoples in Malacca. In other words, both new and local villagers are strong in defending local customary traditions and not in conflict with their differences. This teaching is as concise as the figurative language "where the earth is held up on the sky".

In connection with domestic life, conflict often occurs, due to reasons such as work opportunities. However, many men who left for work did not return to Silawan, instead remarrying overseas (Rees et al., 2018, Wigglesworth, 2012). As a result, frequent cheating and cohabiting occur between couples who lose a husband or wife. Facing these cases, the village government cooperated with the church to take care of official civil marriages. In daily life, new and longtime residents experience the same practices, with no differentiation between the indigenous and newcomers. They feel that they are Timorese because they come from the same island, with the same or similar traditions, religion, and language. In relation to the harvest, it is brought to the church for offerings, a thanksgiving sign for the blessing. Even then, it is not mandatory but is traditionally recommended that customs prohibit the consumption of farm crops if they have not yet provided parts for charity. It is considered important because there are both religious and customary consequences for those who violate this custom. As a result, the customary norms, values, and beliefs of the Timorese people tend to feel prohibited rather than allowed to follow their guidelines to living, leading to feelings of anxiousness and fear.

Roles and Tasks

The tribal chief has the position of head of the community, with the task of solving issues within the society. They also help perform traditional rituals, either for the construction of houses, solving the peace between conflicting citizens, feeding *naibei* and *amanai*, freeing residents from floods and getting *kakaluk*. The tribal chief or customary leader also organises rituals to improve and establish harmonisation of relations with *naibei* and *amanai* (white crocodiles).

The role of the Customary Chair is to maintain harmonious relationships with the universe, ancestors and others as well as Allah the Creator. The village peace judge determines the form of punishment for conflicting parties. The duty of the customary leader is to help the village head maintain, preserve, protect and supervise the community, and advise village leaders in making policies regarding community development based on local customs.

The customary chair is expected to be directly involved in building a sense of security and comfort. They invite and encourage community members to concern themselves in matters of work; like a skilled labourer looking to buy and sell firewood, digging wells and collecting wood. They motivate the community to fill their lives with beneficial activities so that people are free from social problems such as cheating, gossip, suspicion, envy, anger, and other negative attitudes.

Value

A popular and well-understood phrase in Belu is "work like a servant, eat like a king". It is taught as a guideline for human life at work. The meaning of the metaphor is a matter of putting value in hard work and simplicity as well as honesty and sincerity. People want to eat and live well, joyfully and prosperously, so must be strong and diligent in working hard and smart. If kings and kingdoms are strong and diligent at work, food is available in sufficient quantities for the royal family and royal people. The role of servants is shown in routine tasks such as serving tirelessly with limited time to think about rights, their only obligation being to serve. The honor and happiness of a servant in life are that they dedicate themselves wholly to serve the king. The value of honesty, sincerity, responsibility and the simplicity of life is symbolised through the role of a servant's, and it is off their backs that a palace is always flourishing.

Another traditional metaphor repeated throughout the society is "where the earth is stepped on, the sky is seen". It expresses the importance of obeying the norms of local customary traditions (Schwartz, 1994).

In Timorese beliefs, three natural elements are thought to be of major value and considered the foundations of society: water, stone, and trees. That is why the Timorese rapidly hold local customary teachings as beings who are devoted to the goodness of life and oriented towards a relationship with nature, time, and society, both now and in the future. This spirit is based on the unity of living together with residents who are bound by indigenous communities.

The forest must be protected because the place must have a spring that comes out of a large rock to direct magical mythic; anything opposed to this will only bring disaster. Timorese

believe that their ancestors were the result of a marriage between humans and white crocodiles. Because of that, the tree is needed in the spring as it is the residence of ancestral spirits who manifest themselves in the form of white crocodiles.

According to the story, their grandfather, *Naibei*, went into the sea looking for fish and met a female white crocodile. Grandpa *Naibei* then transformed into a male crocodile and married a white crocodile from the sea. They gave birth to several babies, those who looked towards the sea would remain crocodiles while those who looked ashore would become humans. Because of that, it is believed that Timorese believe in the importance of respecting animals, and it is prohibited to kill or harm crocodiles due to ancestral ties.

Conclusions

Subjective differences influence attitudes such as judging, stereotyping and discriminating between ethnic groups in culture. The expression of the subjective culture of each ethnic group is materialised in the form of stereotypical attributions, including people that are isolated, fearful, suspicious, jealous, and irritable, like to be safe, and believe in the mythical and egocentric. The stereotypical attribution of ethnic groups relates to the need for self-esteem in the membership of locals as an in-group and new residents' membership as an out-group.

Prejudice and social conflict can occur in social interactions and intergroup relations between new and longtime residents. Symptoms of stereotypes, prejudices and social conflicts can be used as indications of social interaction (Islami, 2007, Jaspars and Warnaen, 1982).

The phenomenon of ethnocentrism comes from an ethnic group's basic need to establish a social identity, each member positioning themselves to boost the power of the group. Social comparisons can lead to positive personal attributions that are more diligent, open, honest and sincere, with little to no prejudice and discrimination against other ethnic groups. On the other hand, the new residents are the out-group who feel that insecurity is more secure as an out-group citizen (Hati, 2005). The result is that they feel safe and comfortable to fulfill the needs of out-group self-esteem.

Based on the description above, it was concluded that the interaction and relations between ethnic groups on the border region of ENT province hoard potential conflict. It is ensured that the fulfillment of self-esteem for Indonesian citizens receive genuine attention, otherwise, the potential for ethnic group conflict will hinder the integration of the nation of the Unity of the Republic of Indonesia (Lubis, 1992). Therefore, a solution to respond to potential conflict is focused on fulfilling the basic needs of each group of people. These results add to a different



understanding of the various causes of conflict (Mohammadzadeh, 2016), especially in Indonesia.

To meet the needs of both in-group and out-group self-esteem, it is necessary to design models of ethnic in-group subjective innovation intervention approaches for people who have reduced the fulfilment of needs. The way to fulfil the need for in-group and out-group security is through meeting the basics of the Lower Order Of Needs Level (Maslow, 1972). Therefore, the inter-ethnic Subjective Culture intervention model in the ENT border region is carried out through an array of social activities that empower the community through joint ventures and social gathering.

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