

A Schematic Framework for the Construction of an Ethnorelativism-Based Social Harmony Model in the Local Wisdom of *Memarek*

by:

I Wayan Ardhi Wirawan¹, Pawan Kumar², I Wayan Sutama³,

I Putu Sarjana⁴, Ni Luh Gede Hadriani⁵

^{1,3}*Institut Agama Hindu Negeri Gde Pudja Mataram, ²Central Sanskrit University New Delhi,*

⁴*Universitas Hindu Indonesia Denpasar, ⁵Institut Agama Hindu Negeri Mpu Kuturan Singaraja*

Corresponding e-mail: ardhiwirawan@iahn-gdepudja.ac.id

Abstract

Keywords :

Intercultural

Communication;

Social Harmony;

Diffusion of

Innovation;

Ethnorelativism;

Social Capital

This article presents the findings of a study aimed at identifying the systematic process of constructing a social harmony model based on ethnorelativism within the local wisdom of *memarek*, involving the Sasak-Muslim and Balinese-Hindu communities in Selelos Village. The study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive-interpretative method based on interview, observation, and documentation data. The findings reveal that the initial historical encounter between the two communities was characterized by social distance due to ethnic and religious differences, as well as the absence of mutual trust. However, the Balinese community's agricultural expertise became the entry point for the diffusion of innovation, facilitating knowledge exchange, cooperation, and intensive communication. This process followed the stages of innovation, communication, adoption, and confirmation, as described in Everett M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory. The study also demonstrates that sustained contact, shared goals, cooperation, and institutional support strengthened interethnic relations, consistent with Gordon W. Allport's Contact Theory. Furthermore, agricultural skills evolved from cultural capital into social capital, reinforcing networks of trust and solidarity between the two communities. Continuous interaction transformed the communities' orientation from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism, leading to social integration characterized by mutual respect, participation in customary traditions, and the establishment of sustainable social harmony in Selelos Village.

Abstrak

Kata Kunci :
Komunikasi
Antarbudaya;
Harmoni Sosial;
Difusi Inovasi;
Etnorelativisme;
Modal Sosial

Artikel ini merupakan hasil penelitian dengan tujuan untuk menemukan alur sistematika konstruksi model harmoni sosial berbasis etnorelativisme dalam kearifan lokal memarek yang melibatkan masyarakat Sasak-Islam dan Bali-Hindu di Desa Selelos. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif-interpretatif yang bertumpu pada data wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perjumpaan historis kedua kelompok pada awalnya diwarnai oleh jarak sosial akibat perbedaan etnis, agama, dan belum terbangunnya rasa saling percaya. Namun, keterampilan masyarakat Bali dalam mengolah lahan pertanian menjadi pintu masuk terjadinya difusi inovasi yang mendorong pertukaran pengetahuan, kerja sama, dan komunikasi yang intensif. Proses tersebut berlangsung melalui tahapan inovasi, komunikasi, adopsi, dan konfirmasi sebagaimana dijelaskan dalam Teori Difusi Inovasi Everett M. Rogers. Temuan penelitian juga memperlihatkan bahwa kontak yang berkelanjutan, tujuan bersama, kerja sama, dan dukungan institusional memperkuat hubungan antaretnis sebagaimana dijelaskan dalam Teori Kontak Gordon W. Allport. Selanjutnya, keterampilan pertanian sebagai modal budaya berkembang menjadi modal sosial yang memperkuat jaringan kepercayaan dan solidaritas antarkelompok. Interaksi yang berlangsung secara terus-menerus mendorong perubahan orientasi masyarakat dari etnosentrisme menuju etnorelativisme, sehingga tercipta integrasi sosial yang ditandai oleh saling menghargai, keterlibatan dalam tradisi adat, dan terbentuknya harmoni sosial yang berkelanjutan di Desa Selelos.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a multicultural nation characterized by ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity. This diversity constitutes a national asset while simultaneously presenting challenges in fostering a harmonious society. Differences in social identity can give rise to prejudice, stereotypes, and conflict if not managed through effective communication. Conversely, when managed constructively, diversity can serve as social capital that strengthens community cohesion and supports sustainable development. In a multicultural context, intercultural communication

plays a vital role in bridging differences in values, norms, and cultural practices among groups. Through ongoing communication, communities have the opportunity to foster mutual understanding, build trust, and create spaces for collaboration. In this regard, communication functions not merely as a process of conveying messages but also as a mechanism for constructing the shared meanings that underpin social life (Sudiartawan & Utama, 2022). The island of Lombok is one region in Indonesia that exhibits interesting dynamics of inter-ethnic relations. The presence of the Balinese Hindu community amidst the predominantly Sasak Muslim population has shaped a space for social interaction that has evolved over the course of history. Although the two groups possess distinct religious, cultural, and traditional backgrounds, their enduring relationship demonstrates a capacity for peaceful coexistence and mutual respect. One area that exemplifies this phenomenon is Selelos Village in North Lombok Regency. This village serves as a site of historical encounter between the Balinese and Sasak community's groups initially separated by social distance due to a lack of mutual familiarity and trust. Over time, however, their relationship evolved into more intensive interaction, fostering cooperation across various aspects of life (Sutama et al., 2025). The historical encounter between the Balinese and Sasak communities in Selelos Village is inextricably linked to economic activities within the agricultural sector.

The arrival of the Balinese people in the past was driven by the aim of opening up agricultural land as a means of livelihood. This activity not only generated economic change through the utilization of previously underproductive land but also created a space for interaction that brought the two ethnic groups together in their daily lives. Sharing the same profession as farmers served as an effective medium for strengthening inter-ethnic relations. Through the processes of land clearing, cultivation, irrigation management, and the collaborative resolution of agricultural challenges, the Balinese and Sasak communities forged increasingly close ties (Sutama et al., 2025). The exchange of experiences and knowledge regarding farming techniques fostered mutual trust, interdependence, and a gradually growing sense of solidarity. This phenomenon demonstrates that agricultural activity functions not merely as an economic pursuit but also as a space for intercultural communication, enabling the exchange of values, experiences, and social practices (Sumertha, 2021). These interactions fostered cross-ethnic cooperation, transforming relationships that were initially distant into ones characterized by greater inclusivity and harmony.

This transformation in relationships can be understood through the lens of Everett M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory, which posits that the spread of innovation unfolds through stages

of innovation, communication, adoption, and confirmation. In the context of Selelos Village, the Balinese community's expertise in land cultivation constituted an innovation adopted by the Sasak community through continuous interaction. The success of this innovation not only boosted agricultural productivity but also strengthened social bonds between the groups. Furthermore, the inter-ethnic dynamics in Selelos Village illustrate the relevance of Gordon W. Allport's Contact Theory. Sustained interaction, shared goals of improving well-being, cooperation in farming activities, and government support through land provision created conditions that reduced prejudice and fostered social acceptance between the groups.

These factors formed a crucial foundation for sustainable social integration. Moreover, the evolving social relationships demonstrate that the agricultural skills possessed by the Balinese community served not only as economic capital but also evolved into cultural capital and, subsequently, social capital concepts articulated by Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1991). Through networks of cooperation, trust, and social recognition, the two groups established a mutually beneficial relationship. Their ongoing interactions also illustrate the process of social meaning formation as described by Georg Simmel and George Herbert Mead and the development of an ethnorelative attitude, as proposed by Milton J. Bennett (Bennett, 2017).

Given these circumstances, the relationship between the Balinese and Sasak communities in Selelos Village presents a compelling subject for study, as it demonstrates that social harmony does not emerge spontaneously but rather through a long-term process involving communication, knowledge exchange, economic cooperation, and cultural adaptation (Sutama et al., 2025a). This historical experience serves as a significant example of how a multi-ethnic community can transform diversity into a social strength that reinforces communal cohesion. Consequently, this study aims to analyze the formation of social harmony between the Balinese Hindu and Sasak Muslim communities in Selelos Village through the lens of intercultural communication. The research focuses on the historical encounters between the two groups, the diffusion of agricultural land management innovations, and the shift in social orientation from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism (Bennett, 1986). The social ties between the two ethnic communities are rooted in their shared observance of customary traditions, one of which is *memarek*. The *memarek* tradition serves as a crucial medium for fostering social harmony among multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities (Wirawan & Widana, 2020). The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to

the field of intercultural communication studies and offer practical recommendations for strengthening social harmony within Indonesia's multicultural society.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive-interpretative design to gain an in-depth understanding of the process through which social harmony has been established between the Balinese-Hindu and Sasak-Muslim communities in Selelos Village. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to explore the meanings, lived experiences, and dynamics of social interaction that emerge within the context of intercultural communication. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research seeks to explore and understand the meanings that individuals or groups attribute to social phenomena, making it particularly appropriate for examining interethnic relationships shaped by historical and cultural processes. The research was conducted in Selelos Village, North Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. The site was selected purposively because it represents a multiethnic community characterized by harmonious relations between the Balinese and Sasak ethnic groups. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, including traditional leaders, religious leaders, community leaders, village officials, and members of both the Balinese and Sasak communities who possessed extensive knowledge of the historical encounters and the development of social relations within the village. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis to obtain comprehensive information on patterns of social interaction, the diffusion of agricultural knowledge, and the formation of social harmony. The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and member checking to enhance the credibility, consistency, and accuracy of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from multiple informants, while methodological triangulation was conducted by cross-checking evidence derived from observations, interviews, and documentary sources. Furthermore, member checking was undertaken by asking participants to review the researcher's interpretations to ensure that the findings accurately reflected their experiences and perspectives. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of (Miles et al., 2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. Data analysis was conducted simultaneously throughout the research process to identify patterns and themes explaining the formation of social harmony between the

Balinese and Sasak communities. The findings were subsequently interpreted through the perspectives of Everett M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory, Gordon W. Allport's Contact Theory, Pierre Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory, Georg Simmel's Theory of Social Interaction, George Herbert Mead's Symbolic Interactionism, and Milton J. Bennett's Ethnorelativism Theory (Bennett, 2017) to provide a comprehensive understanding of the transformation of interethnic relations in Selelos Village.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The schematic framework for constructing an ethnorelativism based model of social harmony, centered on the implementation of the *memarek* tradition as a local wisdom, follows a trajectory initiated by several key moments. *First*, the historical encounter between the local Sasak people and Balinese migrants specifically, the interaction between multi-ethnic and interfaith communities in the Selelos region. *Second*, the diffusion of innovation regarding agricultural land cultivation skills. *Third*, the dismantling of ethnocentric barriers in favor of ethnorelativism, which in its accumulation lies in the implementation of the *memarek* tradition, as a medium for building social harmony across ethnicities and multi-religions.

Historical Encounters between the Sasak-Muslim and Balinese-Hindu Communities

The Balinese-Hindu community, as a migrant group in the historical development of Selelos Village, encountered the indigenous inhabitants of Lombok Island, namely the Sasak people, who predominantly practiced Islam. The encounter between these two ethnoreligious communities did not immediately result in harmonious coexistence; rather, it was initially characterized by social tension and mutual distance (Sutama et al., 2024). The Balinese-Hindu migrants arrived from Bali with the primary objective of acquiring agricultural land as a means of sustaining their livelihoods. They were determined not only to cultivate farmland but also to establish permanent settlements in Selelos. Initially, their arrival was not warmly welcomed by the indigenous Sasak community, which had inhabited the area for generations. This situation was largely attributed to the absence of emotional and social contact between the two groups, as illustrated in the following interview excerpt with Amaq Mangku Sudirman:

"When the Balinese first arrived in Selelos, they settled in areas that had been allocated by the government for agricultural development. At that time, there was very little close interaction between the Balinese migrants and the local people. This was probably because neither group truly understood the other's character, so the relationship was not as positive as it is today. The Balinese brought with them agricultural skills and applied them in

cultivating the land. Through their diligence, they successfully developed productive farmland. Their success was later shared with the indigenous Sasak community, which gradually brought our relationship much closer."

The interview demonstrates that the migration of the Balinese community to Selelos occurred through a relatively structured historical process. The statement that "they settled in areas allocated by the government for agricultural development" indicates that the migration was not a spontaneous movement or the result of social conflict but rather one facilitated by government policy. Consequently, the establishment of the Balinese community in Selelos possessed administrative legitimacy and did not trigger direct territorial competition with the indigenous Sasak population. The interview also reflects the existence of social distance, a common phenomenon during the early stages of interaction between communities differing in ethnicity and religion. This distance emerged not from hostility but from the limited understanding each group had of the other's values, cultural norms, and social practices.

From the perspective of intercultural communication, the encounter between the Balinese and Sasak communities illustrates that social harmony was constructed through continuous communication and interaction rather than through immediate integration (Sumada & Wirawan, 2023). Initial interactions were limited but gradually evolved into closer relationships as both communities engaged in shared activities in their daily lives. In this context, the most effective medium of communication was not formal dialogue but collaborative agricultural practices. Thus, agriculture functioned as an important arena for intercultural communication, enabling members of both communities to establish meaningful social relationships.

The historical encounter between the Balinese and Sasak communities was influenced not only by population mobility or political circumstances but also by their shared occupation as farmers. Agriculture became the common ground that brought the two ethnic groups together within the same social and economic environment. Their shared livelihood encouraged continuous interaction through land clearing, rice cultivation, crop maintenance, irrigation management, and the utilization of natural resources. Consequently, farming served as the initial medium through which social relationships between the Balinese and Sasak communities were strengthened.

Within their agrarian way of life, both communities faced similar challenges, including environmental conditions, seasonal changes, and the need to improve agricultural productivity. These shared challenges fostered cooperative relationships in which they exchanged knowledge regarding cultivation techniques, seed selection, cropping patterns, and irrigation management.

Repeated interaction in agricultural activities gradually established norms of mutual assistance and practical knowledge sharing. As a result, relationships that were initially driven by economic necessity developed into stronger and more enduring social bonds.

Historical contact through agricultural activities also created opportunities for intercultural exchange. By working together, the Balinese and Sasak communities became familiar with one another's language, customs, values, and social traditions. Frequent interaction fostered mutual respect and encouraged the acceptance of cultural differences as an integral part of communal life. The resulting process of acculturation occurred naturally without eliminating the cultural identities of either group, making their relationship adaptive rather than assimilative.

Beyond serving as a means of cultural exchange, the farming profession also generated reciprocal interdependence. Successful agricultural production depended on cooperation in labor distribution, water management, and the resolution of various production-related challenges. This interdependence strengthened mutual trust, solidarity, and collective responsibility for sustaining agrarian livelihoods. In this context, agriculture functioned not merely as an economic activity but also as a social institution that reinforced interethnic relations.

The historical relationship between the Balinese and Sasak communities, grounded in their shared profession as farmers, constituted an essential foundation for the development of social harmony in Selelos Village. Their common livelihood created sustainable opportunities for interaction, strengthened communication, and encouraged mutually beneficial cooperation. Over time, these relationships evolved beyond economic collaboration into enduring social bonds characterized by trust, tolerance, and respect for cultural diversity. Accordingly, farming may be understood as a significant historical factor contributing to the social integration of the Balinese and Sasak ethnic communities while simultaneously serving as a form of social capital that continues to sustain harmonious community life in Selelos Village.

Diffusion of Innovation in Agricultural Land Cultivation Skills

The agricultural expertise possessed by the Balinese community, particularly their land cultivation skills, which were subsequently transferred to the indigenous Sasak community, demonstrates the role of the Balinese as agents of innovation who introduced more advanced agricultural cultivation techniques. This phenomenon illustrates the process of diffusion of innovation, namely the dissemination of agricultural knowledge, skills, and technology from the migrant community to the local population. Through continuous interaction and knowledge

sharing, the Balinese community contributed not only to improvements in agricultural productivity but also to the development of local farming capacity and the strengthening of interethnic cooperation.

From the perspective of Everett M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory, this process reflects several stages of innovation diffusion, including the introduction of innovation, communication, adoption, implementation, and confirmation. These stages are evident in the historical interactions between the Balinese and Sasak communities, in which agricultural knowledge was gradually communicated, accepted, and integrated into local farming practices. The diffusion process not only facilitated the transfer of technical expertise but also fostered mutual trust, collaboration, and social integration between the two ethnic communities. The stages of this innovation diffusion process are illustrated in the following figure.

Figure 4.1. Implementation of Everett M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory in the Historical Encounter between the Sasak and Balinese Ethnic Communities

Stages of Innovation Diffusion	Diffusion Evidence from the Text
Innovation	Agricultural knowledge and farming skills introduced by the Balinese community.
Communication	Interaction and knowledge exchange through agricultural activities.
Adoption	The Sasak community learned and adopted the agricultural techniques introduced by the Balinese.
Confirmation	The relationship between the two communities became increasingly close as they experienced the benefits of cooperation and agricultural innovation.

Source: Adapted from Everett M. Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations* Theory.

The image above illustrates how economic innovation—specifically through advancements in agriculture—serves as a gateway to more harmonious social relations. This framework aligns with the stages of the Diffusion of Innovations theory formulated by Everett M. Rogers, specifically regarding the elements of innovation, communication, adoption, and confirmation. First, the "innovation" aspect is evidenced by the dry-land farming skills possessed by the Balinese people, which they utilized to boost their agricultural yields. Second, the success of the Balinese in cultivating the land driven by their expertise was shared with the Sasak community, thereby fostering interaction; both groups engaged with one another to achieve a shared goal: increasing agricultural productivity to support their daily livelihoods. Third, the "adoption" phase involved the transfer of these farming skills from the Balinese to the Sasak, serving as a model of skill

adoption between distinct social groups. Fourth, "confirmation" relates to the tangible benefits experienced by the Sasak people after acquiring these farming techniques from the Balinese, which significantly improved their household economies. Concurrently, a closer social bond developed between the two ethnic groups.

These phenomena imply a shift in how the presence of the Balinese in Selelos Village was perceived over time. The Sasak ethnic group—initially holding a firm, ethnocentric stance regarding their identity—gradually shifted toward an ethnorelative perspective following contact with the Balinese and the exchange of agricultural cultivation experiences. Everett M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory provides a clear explanation for this transition from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism, framing it through a diffusion model centered on proficiency in dry-land farming. The underlying logic is clear: proficiency in dry-land farming serves as a bridge for forging emotional bonds among these multi-ethnic communities.

Aligning with this perspective and drawing upon Gordon W. Allport's Contact Theory (1954), this narrative demonstrates how key conditions for positive intergroup contact are met through several supporting factors: (1) sustained interaction, as both groups live and work in the same area; (2) shared goals, specifically agricultural development and improved welfare; (3) cooperation, evidenced by the sharing of farming experiences and techniques; and (4) institutional support, reflected in the government's provision of land for Balinese communities to establish farms. These four factors help reduce prejudice and foster social acceptance.

First, sustained interaction between the Balinese and Sasak ethnic groups in Selelos Village emerges from daily life within a shared social space. These ethnic groups not only live side-by-side but also work together across various sectors, including agriculture, trade, and community activities. Frequent contact fosters a dynamic relationship in which communication, cooperation, and interdependence develop naturally. Through this process, each group gains insight into the other's values, norms, and cultural customs, thereby cultivating mutual respect and an appreciation for differences.

This sustained interaction forms the foundation of social harmony in Selelos Village. Through shared participation in customary and religious activities, mutual assistance (*gotong royong*), and the resolution of social issues, the Balinese and Sasak communities develop a shared sense of belonging. These ongoing relationships also facilitate cultural exchange without compromising the distinct identity of either ethnic group. In this regard, sustained interaction not

only strengthens social cohesion but also serves as vital social capital for fostering a peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable multi-ethnic community life in Selelos Village.

Secondly, the shared goal of developing agricultural land and improving well-being serves as a key factor strengthening the relationship between the Balinese and Sasak ethnic groups in Selelos Village. Since first settling in the area, both groups have recognized that successful natural resource management cannot be achieved individually but requires sustained cooperation. Their shared interest in boosting agricultural productivity has fostered intensive communication, the exchange of experiences, and collective effort in land cultivation, irrigation management, and the utilization of environmental resources. This common objective has gradually bridged the social divide that might otherwise have arisen from their differing cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

In practice, this cooperation extends beyond merely increasing agricultural yields; it also fosters mutually beneficial social ties. The Balinese and Sasak communities engage in various forms of collaboration such as **gotong royong** (mutual cooperation) in land clearing, the exchange of farming knowledge, and mutual assistance in overcoming production obstacles or adverse environmental conditions. Interactions rooted in these shared interests have cultivated mutual trust, solidarity, and a collective sense of responsibility for the sustainability of agricultural resources. Thus, economic activity serves as an effective medium for reinforcing inter-ethnic social integration in Selelos Village.

Furthermore, the shared goal of improving well-being has evolved into a foundation for a harmonious and inclusive community life. Agricultural success is viewed not merely as the achievement of a single ethnic group, but as a triumph for the entire Selelos community, benefiting their shared existence. This demonstrates that economic interests can act as a social glue transcending ethnic identity boundaries, fostering relationships grounded in mutual respect, cooperation, and positive interdependence. Consequently, the shared objective of developing the agricultural sector and enhancing community welfare constitutes vital social capital for maintaining harmonious relations between the Balinese and Sasak groups and for sustainably strengthening the social resilience of the Selelos community. Third, the cooperation between the Balinese and Sasak ethnic groups in Selelos Village is tangibly reflected in the process of sharing experiences and farming techniques passed down through generations. Both ethnic groups utilize daily interactions to exchange knowledge regarding land cultivation patterns, seed selection, irrigation systems, and strategies for coping with seasonal changes. This informal learning process

not only enhances the community's capacity to manage the agricultural sector but also strengthens social ties built on mutual trust and interdependence. Consequently, agricultural activities serve as a productive meeting ground and a medium for fostering inter-ethnic solidarity.

This experience-sharing process demonstrates that differing cultural backgrounds are no barrier to effective collaboration. The Balinese bring experience in land management and irrigation systems developed within their agricultural traditions, while the Sasak contribute local knowledge regarding soil characteristics, climatic conditions, and farming practices suited to the Selelos environment. This exchange of knowledge fosters a complementary adaptation process, resulting in farming techniques that are more effective and appropriate for local conditions. Such collaboration reflects open communication, mutual respect for each group's experience, and a willingness to learn from one another to achieve better outcomes.

The success of this cooperation in sharing experiences and farming techniques yields impacts that are not merely economic but also social and cultural. Increased agricultural productivity is accompanied by a growing sense of togetherness, collective responsibility, and the awareness that the village's development success stems from the contributions of the entire community, regardless of ethnic differences. The relationships forged through this cooperation create social capital that strengthens community cohesion and serves as a foundation for harmonious living in Selelos Village. In tandem with this, the practice of sharing agricultural knowledge can be understood as a form of collaborative communication that fosters social integration between the Balinese and Sasak ethnic groups while supporting sustainable community development.

Fourth, institutional support is a key factor fostering harmonious relations between the Balinese and Sasak ethnic groups in Selelos Village. This support is evident in government policies that provide land for the Balinese community to establish and develop the agricultural sector within the village. These policies aim not only to provide opportunities for a decent livelihood but also to serve as a strategy for the productive use of land resources. Through this support, the government acts as a facilitator, creating conditions conducive to a more prosperous and inclusive community life.

The government's provision of land offers the Balinese community space to adapt to a new social and economic environment. In managing the land, the Balinese do not work in isolation; instead, they establish cooperative relationships with the Sasak community, who are already familiar with the characteristics of the Selelos area. This interaction fosters an exchange of

knowledge regarding farming techniques, natural resource management, and work patterns suited to local conditions. Thus, the land provision policy yields not only economic benefits but also serves as a medium bringing the two ethnic groups together in mutually beneficial activities.

Furthermore, this institutional support legitimizes the presence of the Balinese community as an integral part of Selelos Village. Recognition manifested through access to agricultural land fosters a sense of security, belonging, and shared responsibility for maintaining the village's social sustainability. This fosters mutual trust, as each group gains relatively equal opportunities to participate in the village's economic development. Consequently, inter-ethnic relations evolve based on mutual respect, interdependence, and a willingness to collaborate toward shared prosperity.

A social development perspective confirms that government-provided institutional support serves as a vital asset in fostering the integration of the multi-ethnic community in Selelos Village. These policies demonstrate the strategic role of formal institutions in mitigating potential conflict, expanding access to resources, and creating opportunities for inter-group collaboration. When public policies ensure equitable access and foster the participation of all residents, the relationship between the Balinese and Sasak ethnic groups evolves into one that is harmonious, productive, and sustainable. Consequently, institutional support—specifically through the provision of agricultural land—not only contributes to improved community well-being but also strengthens social cohesion and the stability of communal life in Selelos Village.

Dissolving the Barriers of Ethnocentrism Toward Ethno-relativism

The emotional bond forged between the Sasak and Balinese ethnic communities facilitated by the diffusion of agricultural land-management innovations acts as a mediator in breaking down ethnocentric barriers and fostering an ethnorelativistic outlook. This phenomenon implies that the emotional connection between these groups stems from intensive interaction during the process of sharing agricultural innovations. The exchange of knowledge regarding farming techniques, irrigation management, land utilization, and productivity strategies has transformed the relationship from one driven solely by economic interests into a social bond grounded in mutual trust, respect, and interdependence. The innovation diffusion process enables both groups to serve as both sources and recipients of knowledge, creating a two-way communication flow that strengthens their emotional closeness. This closeness bridges cultural differences and erodes the

tendency to view one's own group as superior, as agricultural success is recognized as the product of inter-ethnic collaboration.

From the perspective of intergroup relations, the emotional bond formed through innovation diffusion serves as a mediator in shifting from ethnocentrism toward ethnorelativism. As Sasak and Balinese communities achieve shared success through agricultural cooperation, they begin to adopt a more open perspective regarding the values, knowledge, and cultural practices of the other group. Differences are no longer viewed as divisive barriers but rather as sources of learning and social enrichment. Thus, the process of innovation diffusion not only brings about technical changes in agricultural management but also transforms the communities' social orientation shifting from an ethnocentric stance that centers on one's own culture to an ethnorelativistic attitude that acknowledges, respects, and embraces cultural diversity as the foundation for sustainable social harmony. Regarding the phenomenon mentioned above, I Dewa Alit highlights the evolution of the relationship between the Balinese and Sasak ethnic groups moving from initial distance to growing closeness over time as recounted in the following interview excerpt:

"When our elders (*penglingsir*) first arrived in Selelos Village, they experienced a sense of distance from the local inhabitants. This likely stemmed from a perception that they intended to take control of the area, whereas their actual goal was simply to earn a living. As it happened, they possessed agricultural skills, and the government provided opportunities to cultivate the local land, so they decided to try their luck at farming. Their farming expertise contributed greatly to their success; they achieved excellent harvests that were sufficient to meet their families' needs. Once the locals realized the Balinese possessed agricultural skills, interactions began with the aim of developing those skills collaboratively. This engagement in land cultivation fostered an increasingly close relationship between the Balinese and the village's indigenous population."

The interview findings indicate that during the initial phase of the Balinese community's arrival in Selelos Village, their relationship with the indigenous Sasak people was characterized by social distance. This distance arose from local concerns that the newcomers might attempt to dominate the territory they already inhabited. However, these perceptions gradually shifted as the Sasak people came to understand that the Balinese community's primary objective was to earn a livelihood through agriculture, rather than to dominate the territory or the local social order. Government policies granting the Balinese access to cultivate agricultural land also played a crucial role in legitimizing their presence. Thus, the initial adaptation process was shaped not only by inter-ethnic interaction but also by institutional support, which created the space for more open social relationships to develop.

Furthermore, the interview revealed that the Balinese community's agricultural land management skills were a primary factor in transforming inter-ethnic relations from a state of distance to one of growing closeness. Their success in achieving bountiful harvests sparked interest among the Sasak people in learning the Balinese community's farming techniques and expertise. This knowledge-sharing process fostered intensive interaction, collaborative land management, and a mutually beneficial exchange of experiences. From an intercultural communication perspective, this process demonstrates that the diffusion of agricultural knowledge and innovation acts as a vehicle for trust-building, capable of reducing prejudice and dissolving ethnic boundaries. Consequently, the economic success achieved through agricultural collaboration not only improved community welfare but also laid the foundation for harmonious relations, mutual respect, and the development of an ethnorelative outlook between the Balinese and Sasak communities in Selelos Village.

Reinforcing the phenomenon described above, the role of agricultural land management skills in bridging the relationship between the Sasak and Balinese ethnic groups was acknowledged by Sudirman (an informant) in the following interview excerpt:

"According to the accounts of our elders, the Balinese people who came here initially arrived to clear land for agriculture. At first, the relationship between the newcomers and the indigenous population was not particularly close. Our elders recounted that a man named Made Sari, accompanied by a group of others, came to clear the land for farming. Conditions back then were vastly different from today; the land was overgrown with thickets, littered with large boulders, and the roads were narrow. Following the arrival of the Balinese, previously unproductive land was cleared and cultivated with profitable crops. They were incredibly industrious and possessed great farming skills."

The Balinese people's agricultural skills served as a bridge connecting them with the local indigenous population; the mutual exchange of agricultural knowledge fostered social interaction and relationship-building, eventually extending to participation in customary traditions. This narrative indicates that the arrival of the Balinese community in Selelos Village was initially driven by economic motives specifically, the desire to cultivate land as a means of livelihood. Relations with the indigenous community were initially distant, as neither group yet shared social closeness or mutual trust. However, the Balinese community's skill in transforming previously unproductive land into valuable assets benefited the local population. These findings demonstrate that the technical proficiency possessed by the Balinese community served as a resource that facilitated the formation of social ties with locals. From Pierre Bourdieu's perspective, these farming skills can be understood as a form of "cultural capital" that was subsequently converted into "social

capital" through the establishment of networks, trust, and inter-group cooperation (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu (1986) explains that social capital consists of the aggregate of actual or potential resources acquired by individuals or groups through enduring networks of relationships. Consequently, social capital is not formed instantaneously but is built through continuous interaction, ultimately generating recognition, legitimacy, and social trust. In the context of Selelos Village, the Balinese community's agricultural expertise not only yielded economic benefits but also served as a resource that strengthened their social standing within the local community structure.

This process aligns with the ideas of Georg Simmel, who positioned social interaction as a fundamental element in the formation of social life (Simmel, 1950). Relationships that initially consisted merely of cooperation in agricultural activities evolved into increasingly intensive social bonds through the exchange of knowledge, daily communication, and engagement in various shared activities. The intensity of these interactions gradually reduced social distance and fostered intergroup solidarity. From Milton J. Bennett's perspective, this shift reflects the process of ethnorelativism the progression of individuals or groups from an ethnocentric orientation toward an appreciation of cultural diversity, wherein every culture is viewed as having equal value (Bennett, 1993). In this context, the local community began to appreciate the work ethic and agricultural skills of the Balinese people, while the Balinese adapted to the norms, values, and traditions of the Selelos community. Furthermore, according to George Herbert Mead, social meaning is constructed through a continuous process of symbolic interaction (Mead, 1934). The exchange of knowledge, agricultural cooperation, and Balinese participation in customary traditions serve as social symbols that generate a sense of togetherness, acceptance, and collective identity. As further elaborated by Blumer (1969), such meanings are formed through a process of shared interpretation within social interaction. Thus, the participation of the Balinese in customary traditions reflects not only cultural engagement but also symbolizes their acceptance as part of the Selelos village community. These findings demonstrate that social integration emerges from a combination of social capital, interaction intensity, appreciation for cultural diversity, and the creation of shared meanings that sustain social harmony within a multicultural society.

The shift in societal orientation from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism marked a pivotal moment in strengthening inter-ethnic relations between the Sasak-Muslim and Balinese-Hindu communities in Selelos Village. During the initial stages of their encounter, differences in ethnic,

religious, and cultural identities created social distance, limiting the scope of interaction. However, through sustained communication, agricultural cooperation, and shared life experiences, both groups began to view these differences not as barriers, but as complementary assets. This shift in perspective reflects the development of ethnorelativism, as defined by Milton J. Bennett, which is the capacity to understand, appreciate, and accept cultural diversity as a natural aspect of communal life. This transition subsequently established a psychological and social foundation for the growth of trust, solidarity, and a commitment to building a harmonious community.

This transformation is tangibly manifested in the *memarek* tradition, which serves as a space for cultural encounter, bringing together people of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds in a spirit of togetherness. The *memarek* tradition functions not merely as a local cultural practice but also as a medium for intercultural communication that reinforces values such as mutual cooperation, mutual respect, tolerance, and collective responsibility. Through their shared participation in every stage of the tradition, the Balinese-Hindu and Sasak-Muslim communities cultivate a mutual understanding regarding the importance of peaceful coexistence, without compromising their respective cultural identities or beliefs. Thus, *memarek* serves as both a symbol and a social mechanism that translates ethnorelativism into daily practice, playing a strategic role in strengthening social harmony, community cohesion, and inter-ethnic and inter-religious integration in Selelos Village.

CONCLUSION

The historic encounter between the Balinese Hindu and Sasak Muslim communities in Selelos Village demonstrates that social harmony is not formed instantly but rather through a gradual and continuous process of interaction. Initially, relations between the two groups were marked by social distance stemming from ethnic and religious differences and a lack of mutual trust. However, a shared orientation toward earning a livelihood through agriculture opened channels for communication, enabling cooperation, the exchange of experiences, and the forging of closer social ties. Agricultural activities served as an effective medium for intercultural communication, bringing the two groups together and fostering mutual respect, interdependence, and trust.

The study also reveals that the Balinese community's expertise in land cultivation constituted an innovation that was diffused to the Sasak community through processes of communication,

adoption, and confirmation. This diffusion of innovation not only enhanced the communities' economic capacity but also strengthened social capital—manifested in cooperative networks, trust, and inter-ethnic solidarity. The success of this process was underpinned by sustained interaction, shared goals of improving well-being, intensive cooperation, and institutional support from the government through the provision of agricultural land. These factors formed a crucial foundation for reducing prejudice and strengthening social integration between the Balinese and Sasak communities.

Theoretically, this study affirms that social harmony in Selelos Village is the result of a synergy between the diffusion of innovation, the formation of social capital, the intensity of social interaction, and the communities' shift in orientation from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. The involvement of both groups in agricultural activities and social traditions fostered shared meanings that strengthened their collective identity as a single community. Thus, the experience of the Balinese and Sasak communities in Selelos Village offers an empirical model demonstrating that intercultural communication, supported by economic cooperation, respect for diversity, and inclusive policies can serve as a foundation for sustainable social harmony within a multicultural society. The accumulation of these social relationships fosters a sense of togetherness in the observance of customary traditions, such as *memarek*. The *memarek* tradition plays a crucial role in realizing social harmony among a multi-ethnic and multi-religious community.

REFERENCES

- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The Nature of Prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Bennett, M. J. (1993). *Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity*. Dalam R. M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the Intercultural Experience* (2nd ed.). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). *The Forms of Capital*. Dalam J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (hlm. 241–258). New York: Greenwood Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of Innovations* (5th ed.). New York: Free Press.

- Simmel, G. (1950). *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Diterjemahkan dan diedit oleh Kurt H. Wolff. New York: Free Press.
- Bennett, M. J. (1986). A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10(2). [https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(86\)90005-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(86)90005-2)
- Bennett, M. J. (2017). Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. In *The International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783665.ieicc0182>
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power*. Polity Press Google Scholar.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3 ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Sudiartawan, I. W., & Sutarna, I. W. (2022). Komunikasi budaya dalam tradisi ngelowong masyarakat sasak wetu telu di lombok. *Samvada : Jurnal Riset Komunikasi, Media, dan Public Relation*, 1(2), 75–86. <https://doi.org/10.53977/jsv.v1i2.762>
- Sumada, I. K., & Wirawan, I. W. A. (2023). The Implementation Of Ritual Communication In The Perspective Of Religious Tolerance At The Sarasuta Holy Place. *Widya Sandhi Jurnal Kajian Agama Sosial dan Budaya*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.53977/ws.v14i1.868>
- Sumertha, i wayan. (2021). Pura Taman Lingsar, Dalam Membangun Kohesi Sosial Antara Islam Wetu Telu Etnis Sasak Dengan Komunitas Hindu Etnis Bali Di Lombok. *Widiya Sandhi: Insitut Agama Hindu Negri Gde Pudja Mataram*.
- Sutarna, I. W., Hastjarjo, S., & Demartoto, A. (2024). Bridging Cultural Heritage and Intercultural Literacy Development Based on the Local Wisdom Values of Wetu Telu in Lombok. *4th International Conference of HUMANITIES and Social Science*.
- Sutarna, I. W., Pawito, P., Hastjarjo, S., & Demartoto, A. (2025a). Adat tapsila representation of the transformation of communication, information, and education of local wisdom wetu telu in efforts for environmental conservation in North Lombok, Indonesia. *E3S Web of Conferences*, 605, 03018. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202560503018>
- Sutarna, I. W., Pawito, P., Hastjarjo, S., & Demartoto, A. (2025b). Conflict Management in Multicultural Teams: Optimizing Intercultural Communication Based on Wetu Telu Local Wisdom Values. *Journal of Social and Political Sciences*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1991.08.01.564>
- Sutarna, I. W., Pawito, P., Hastjarjo, S., & Demartoto, A. (2025c). Digital Literacy Competence in Intercultural Interaction in the Dayan Gunung Community, North Lombok, Indonesia. *Jurnal Communio : Jurnal Jurusan Ilmu Komunikasi*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.35508/jikom.v14i1.9561>
- Wirawan, I. W. A., & Widana, I. N. M. (2020). Construction of a multicultural civilization in memarek tradition. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 4.