

**Harmony Amid Diversity: Multicultural Communication in the Youth  
Organizations of KNPI Gowa Regency**

**Alumnuz Zainuddin**

Postgraduate Program UIN Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia  
*alumnuszainuddin3@gmail.com*

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**Abstract**

This research aims to understand the pattern of multicultural communication within a youth organization, namely the National Committee of Indonesian Youth (KNPI) in Gowa Regency. It is divided into two sub-problems: first, how the inter-agency relations become a pattern of multicultural communication within the youth organization KNPI Gowa Regency, and second, the consequences of multicultural communication for unity among youth organizations within KNPI Gowa Regency. This qualitative descriptive research employs a communication and phenomenology approach. Data sources are obtained directly from the Chairman, General Secretary, General Treasurer, and Youth Social Organizations (OKP) including Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (HMI), Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (PMII), Indonesian National Student Movement (GMNI), Catholic Student Association of Indonesia (PMKRI), Catholic Youth, and Chinese Youth. Data collection methods include observation, interviews, documentation, and literature review. Data processing and analysis involve three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of this research indicate that 1) Inter-agency relations form a multicultural communication pattern in the youth organization KNPI Gowa Regency, namely assimilation between communities (total communication pattern), collaborative (circular communication pattern), and dialogical communication pattern. 2) The consequences of multicultural communication for unity among youth organizations within KNPI Gowa include the creation of tolerance, meaning that the community or members of KNPI Gowa Regency always uphold an attitude of respecting and honoring differences. Additionally, the formation of solidarity among members, helping each other in different conditions to uphold togetherness.

**Keywords:** *multicultural communication, youth organization, National Committee of Indonesian Youth*

## Introduction

Communication is a human activity aimed at mutual understanding or comprehension of a message between a communicator and a communicant (Nurhadi & Kurniawan, 2017). It is usually concluded with an outcome commonly referred to as the communication effect. Social communication, related to human relationships within it, studies statements between humans that are general in nature using symbols or symbols that have meaning (Oktarina, 2017). Its essence lies in the common meaning or understanding among communicating individuals. Multicultural communication is influenced by various cultural symbols stemming from individual human characteristics as determinants of the growth, development, and cultural change of a society. To understand intercultural interactions, one must first understand how human communication works. Understanding communication means understanding what happens during the communication process, why it happens, what can happen, the consequences of what happens, and what can be done as a result (Putu, 2020).

Multicultural communication plays a crucial role in observing the values and meanings embraced by a community. The symbolic interaction perspective seeks to understand human behavior from a subject's point of view. This perspective suggests that human behavior should be seen as a process that allows individuals to shape and regulate behavior by considering the expectations of others who are their interaction partners (Uswatusolihah, 2017).

While society is united in the social realm, there remains a distance between entities. This distance must be maintained through creative communication, dialogue, and tolerance. There are other terms that conceptually appear similar to multiculturalism but are actually different, such as diversity and heterogeneity, or often referred to as "plural society." Plural society differs from cultural diversity or multiculturalism. A plural society emphasizes ethnic or tribal differences, which in turn sparks ethnocentrism and ethn-nationalism. It is highly prescriptive and primordial.

Multicultural communication involves six cultural elements that directly influence our perceptions when communicating with people from other cultures, namely (Ammaria, 2017):

1. Beliefs, values, and attitudes
2. Worldviews
3. Social organization
4. Human nature
5. Activity orientation
6. Perception of self and others

Basically, these six aspects are interconnected. They may experience the same events and agree on what is physically seen. However, they often differ in interpreting events or objects they see. Another aspect influencing societal perceptions is views on activities. This orientation is best considered as a "range" from being (who someone

is) to doing (what someone does). In a culture, there may be two tendencies toward these, but one is usually dominant.

The diversity of multicultural societies, as a national wealth, is highly vulnerable to conflict and division (Mahdayeni et al., 2019). As stated by Nasikun, the uniqueness of Indonesian society can be seen in at least two distinctive features: first, horizontally, it is marked by the existence of social units based on differences in ethnicity, religion, customs, and regional differences; second, vertically, it is characterized by significant vertical differences between upper and lower layers (Lestari, 2015).

The portrait of diversity within the organizational culture can be reflected in the relations between organizations under the umbrella organization like KNPI. This condition mirrors the anthropological life in Indonesia, which consists of various ethnicities, religions, languages, and cultures within the archipelago framework. This anthropological fact is a socio-cultural reality in Indonesia that cannot be denied. Koentjaraningrat, in his classic work titled "Masyarakat dan Kebudayaan di Indonesia" (Society and Culture in Indonesia), states that the main foundation of diversity and unity in this country lies in the existence of various ethnicities, cultures, languages, and religions, which collectively form the collective identity of the Indonesian nation (Koentjaraningrat, 2002).

Each region in Indonesia has unique multi-ethnic and multi-mental characteristics while facing its own dilemmas. On one hand, it makes Indonesia a great nation as a multicultural nation-state, but on the other hand, it poses a threat. Therefore, it is not excessive to say that the multicultural condition is like embers in husks that can easily ignite and heat up at any time. This condition is a natural one, as long as differences are recognized and experienced as something that must be approached with tolerance. These differences become a threat to harmony, and it can be a problem that needs to be solved with a tolerant attitude (Azka et al., 2023).

Concerning the vulnerability to conflicts in multicultural societies like Indonesia, conflicts can occur in various social spaces, such as youth organizations. There is a significant potential for conflicts between groups, ethnicities, religions, and tribes. One indication is the flourishing of various community organizations, professions, religions, and organizations or groups that fight and act on behalf of group interests that lead to ethnic, religious, racial, and inter-group conflicts. Not only that, routine but small conflicts that frequently occur in Makassar, conflicts between groups, clashes between students, and other horizontal conflicts. Regarding social conflicts, placing the potential for conflicts, whether latent or open, as a problem that can be minimized with various approaches, one of which is educating youth through a multicultural-based organizational communication model.

## Methods

This research is a field research, specifically descriptive qualitative. Data were obtained from informants consisting of core officials of youth organizations, including the chairman, vice chairman, secretary, and treasurer. The youth organizations (OKP) referred to include HMI, PMII, IMM, PMKRI, Catholic Youth, and Chinese Youth, where these organizations are under the umbrella of KNPI Gowa Regency. Data collection was carried out through observation and interviews with the assistance of instruments in the form of interview guidelines. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

## Discussion

Effective communication is a crucial need. With effective communication, managers can perform management functions such as planning, organizing, leading, and controlling the organization. According to Bandriyah, managers devote a significant portion of their time to communication (Badriyah, 2015).

Multicultural communication involves the interaction process of individuals or groups from a specific culture with groups from other cultures, resulting in a new culture or subculture. Over time and the transformation of multiculturalism, when all different cultures interact, it will give birth to a new culture or subculture. Thus, communication in multicultural societies will continue relentlessly to create a more advanced and progressive culture (Fitriyah et al., 2020).

There are several ways to minimize or even eliminate barriers in multicultural communication, such as understanding the uniqueness of each individual and developing cross-cultural competence to achieve effective cross-cultural communication. Jandt identifies four skills as part of cross-cultural competence: personal strength, communication skills, psychological adjustment, and cultural awareness (Hamdani, 2015).

## Inter-Institutional Relations as Multicultural Communication

The diversity of multicultural societies, on the one hand, is the nation's wealth but is also prone to conflict and division. The uniqueness of Indonesian society can be seen at least in two unique characteristics. *First*, horizontally, it is marked by the fact of social unity based on differences in ethnicity, religion, customs, and regional differences. *Second*, vertically, it is marked by differences between upper and lower layers that are quite sharp.

Appropriate communication in multicultural societies is intercultural communication that respects and acknowledges cultural differences within society. Intercultural communication will help people understand diverse cultures within the community. Managing Indonesia's diversity will be a blessing if managed properly. However, conversely, if diversity, covering differences in ethnicity, race, customs, groups, languages, and religions, is managed unfairly, it can become a disaster. Managing diversity cannot only be done by the government, so it requires the

togetherness and support of all components of the nation, based on the Pancasila values that are both a binder and the nation's identity.

Multiculturalism essentially emphasizes the process of knowledge and experience transactions used by community members to interpret different worldviews towards new cultural innovations. In multicultural cultures, each individual has the ability to interact even though their cultural backgrounds are different. The existence of Indonesia is a country built on the concept of multiculturalism, so it needs to be maintained with communication patterns to preserve its existence.

### **1. Assimilation Between Institutions (Total Communication Pattern)**

An organization always strives to bring harmonious relationships between members, leaders, and among members. In maintaining a stable and harmonious situation, a leader with communication skills is needed to have a significant impact. Communication style can motivate members with different backgrounds to work well with each other and optimize their performance.

Large organizations that accommodate many members from various youth organizations, such as the National Youth Committee of Indonesia (KNPI), have multicultural communication models that can unite and harmonize relationships between existing institutions. Large organizations like KNPI Gowa Regency have two principles: survival and development.

Survival principle, KNPI Gowa, which includes many youth organizations throughout the Gowa region, certainly has different ideologies and characteristics. KNPI Gowa must have a strong body's resistance to survive from threats that can divide organizations. The communication within must be able to calm each other among members who have different organizational backgrounds. The strength of multicultural communication between institutions within KNPI Gowa becomes a strength and defense against external threats. Members from youth organizations within KNPI Gowa must maintain good communication patterns to achieve harmony, impacting the organization's activities.

Development principle, youth organizations at the KNPI Gowa Regency level that oversee many youth organizations must have strategic steps to bind youth organizations and prioritize the vision and mission of KNPI Gowa Regency. It becomes a necessity for every organization to aspire to develop continuously. The organizational development process should not underestimate the power of communication among its members. Many cases in the member process within the organization have performance barriers; after evaluating, the main problem is communication.

Good communication between communities/institutions encourages the organization's development. Communication style is often overlooked but has an extraordinary impact. KNPI Gowa, aware that there are many cross-community/institutional entities within it, chooses a communication style that is

appropriate and measured to maintain harmony among members and suppress internal conflicts in KNPI Gowa.

Assimilation, which is the process of changing cultural behavior patterns to adapt to the majority's behavior culture. The acceptance of other community cultures is usually through assimilation. The multicultural background of youth organizations within the KNPI Gowa Regency organization can be tied through assimilation relations between institutions. Mutual acceptance and giving to each other, culturally, identically, characteristics, communities, or institutions differ. The condition regarding the background of organizations within KNPI Gowa Regency holds the assimilation of community. It means adjusting behavior or culture according to a culture that can be accepted together. This relationship is strongly encouraged by unconscious multicultural communication patterns.

It should be noted that one of the assimilation processes is two-way complete assimilation. Two-way complete assimilation can occur if two or more groups/communities with different cultures give and receive behavior or culture owned by each other. In this context, when pulled into a multicultural communication pattern, it will appear as a total communication pattern. This means that each member or between institutions communicates without any hierarchical limitations and is bound by institutional assimilation, accepting and complementing each other. Harmonious relationships between institutions are born and driven by good and internal multicultural communication patterns. This means that communication between different institutions is maintained by mutual understanding and complementing each other.

The acceptance of attitudes and behaviors brought from each organization into the environment of KNPI Gowa Regency is marked by a total cultural communication pattern. This means that through communication that is not limited by structure, all members can communicate with anyone in the organization without hesitation and reluctance, accepting each other's attitudes and behaviors. This dimension can be said to be a cultural assimilation relationship, a behavioral and attitudinal assimilation between institutions/groups nurtured by total multicultural communication patterns.

## **2. Collaborative (Circular Communication Pattern)**

Communication pattern is a relationship pattern between two or more people in the delivery and reception of messages in an appropriate manner so that the intended message can be understood (Azeharie & Khotimah, 2015). Communication patterns are established in an effort to find the best way to interact when delivering messages. Although there is no one-size-fits-all universal approach in the field of communication because information can be conveyed with different purposes.

Multicultural communication is influenced by various cultural symbols, including behavior, attitudes, language, and clothing, derived from the individual character of humans as determinants of the growth, development, and change of a group (Rizak, 2018). To understand intercultural interactions, human communication

must be understood first. Understanding communication means understanding what happens during communication, why it happens, what can happen, the consequences of what happens, and what can be done as a result.

It is essential to note that the greater the cultural differences within the same organization, the greater the potential for differences in perspectives and perceptions of human reality. In this regard, a common framework is needed above these cultural differences. How members within an institution can engage in harmonious communication within a diverse culture. Communication in this cross-cultural context can be carried out through verbal and non-verbal language, such as body language or other symbols.

Different relationships between institutions actually provide a greater impetus to communicate further. Getting to know each other, accepting differences, and filling in each other's gaps. Communication, even behavior, becomes highly guarded and harmonious, promoting effective multicultural communication. Effectiveness, in this context, means that relationships between institutions collaborate in accepting each other's values and cultural meanings. Institutions within KNPI Gowa Regency encourage communication with anyone to get to know and accept each other's cultures. Interaction between institutions emphasizes mutual feedback. The Circular Communication Pattern guides communication between groups/ethnicities to openly interact in building collaborative relationships. This, of course, impacts the mutual acceptance, enrichment, and harmonization of values and meanings between institutions within KNPI Gowa, which is the essence of multicultural communication.

Multicultural communication cannot be separated from symbolic interaction theory, a perspective to view the social reality of humans. The process of multicultural communication is not enough to be examined only from what is seen but must also be understood in terms of how symbolic activities take place, transferring or exchanging symbols that are given meaning and creating unique intercultural interactions. By using the symbolic interaction theory approach, multicultural communication plays a crucial role in observing the values and meanings adopted by the subject. Because the symbolic interaction perspective seeks to understand human behavior from the subject's point of view. This perspective suggests that human behavior should be seen as a process that allows humans to shape and regulate behavior by considering the expectations of others who become their interaction partners.

### **3. Dialogical Communication Pattern**

Dialogical communication is a communication pattern used to build effective messages in a multicultural society. The dialogical communication process does not proceed in a one-way direction but rather in mutual interaction due to differences. Groups united in the same entity, with members having different cultures, support each other through dialogical communication (Rizak, 2018).

The actualization of dialogical communication allows humans to have an open attitude toward themselves through cultural processes. The cultural process is carried

out by humans through symbolic activities. This symbolic activity is the fundamental nature of human existence. Symbolic activity is an effort to give meaning to stimuli provided through language, both verbal and non-verbal. In this case, humans, as arbiters, will give the same meaning to achieve specific goals within a social context. The process of meaning consists of three essential components: the presence of symbols representing a specific reality, the presence of a reference which is a thought about the perceived object, and the presence of a referent which is the actual object.

The dialogical communication process, in its implementation, is no longer oriented toward communication but joint communication that presents balanced transactions to create meaning and reality together. The characteristics of the dialogical communication model show honest communication processes, without pretending to respond to each other. Communication takes place by responding to each other based on different thoughts but supporting each other. Communication that occurs is not only as an object but as subjects together in creating a conducive climate without pressure from any party.

Community organizations, such as KNPI as a cross-institutional organization with cultural differences, have the potential for conflict. Identifying distinctive multicultural differences occurs through dialogical communication among members of KNPI Gowa Regency. The progress of the KNPI Gowa organization cannot be separated from the unity of ideas, thoughts, and the mutual wisdom of its members. Different cultures can accept each other because of the frequent occurrence of dialogical communication within the body of KNPI Gowa.

Dialogical communication can create an attitude of mutual understanding and openness. Differences must be communicated and informed to provide an understanding of each other's cultures so that mutual protection can occur. Different ideas, thoughts, and understanding are discussed in an attempt to find common ground, which is undoubtedly a beauty for KNPI Gowa. The realization of the effectiveness of dialogical communication in KNPI Gowa is marked by the credibility and quality of each member's communication, such as openness to each other, honesty, togetherness, always upholding harmony, intensity, and responsibility. Dialogical communication can be realized through attitudes such as (1) respecting each other as humans without distinguishing status, age, or relationship with the interlocutor; (2) respecting the ideas, thoughts, feelings, and integrity of others; (3) taking a rational stance toward various issues that arise; and (4) being a good listener before expressing agreement or disagreement.

Multicultural society is an inevitability that certainly does not focus on division. On the contrary, cultural differences in society become a form of the beauty of human existence. Dialogical communication in the midst of differences is needed as a medium towards unity in diversity. Multicultural communities living side by side, understanding each other, and being mature in seeing different backgrounds or perspectives due to dialogical communication. Dialogical communication serves as a medium of expression or conversation unique to each other, responding to each other



rationally about these differences. Responding to each other in interaction is a way to identify deeper characteristics of each other, minimizing sentiments between cultures. Different aspects are discussed to avoid accidents in each other's interactions in the future.

### **Consequences of Multicultural Communication for Unity Among Youth Organizations**

Multiculturalism is an ideology born from the diversity of cultural structures within a society, forming a multicultural society. Life in a multicultural society is vulnerable to social conflicts (Mulyadi, 2017). Therefore, multiculturalism is established as the main reference for achieving peace amidst diversity, recognizing and celebrating differences in both individual and cultural equality.

To elaborate, consider how ethnic groups like Bugis, Makassar, Batak, Minang, Betawi, Sunda, Jawa, Chinese, Bali, Ambon, Manado, Papua, or those adhering to Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Catholicism can all coexist in a social process that, on one hand, provides a space for the preservation of their local identities and particular beliefs, and, on the other hand, offers an opportunity for a social integration process.

One of the toughest challenges for a nation is to build and create harmony and unity among cultures, races, regions, tribes, and religions of fellow citizens. Peace and social well-being can be achieved when each citizen is committed to building non-provocative communication, mutual respect, love, affection, and respect for each other, by shedding all primordial identities attached to them: religion, ethnicity, race, language, region, culture, and only seeing the "humanity" side.

The task for youth and society today is how to make multiculturalism a strength that can lead the people towards national unity. Multiculturalism in Indonesian society can pose challenges in building an integrated society at both local and national levels. One issue related to multiculturalism in society is the potential for conflicts that can break unity within the community. Therefore, government strategies are needed to avoid division and anticipate broader conflicts.

#### **1. Tolerance**

Tolerance is a human attitude or behavior that follows rules, where one can appreciate and respect the behavior of others (Bakar, 2015). In the context of socio-cultural and religious tolerance, the term means attitudes and actions that prohibit discrimination against different groups or classes in society. Any religious teachings always guide humans to always respect and tolerate the diversity within society, to respect others, and maintain purity and harmony among different individuals.

Large-scale community organizations that bring together the nation's youth from various organizations and cultural backgrounds have a higher intensity of interaction. However, this interaction cannot escape from the control of interactions that must encourage mutual respect among organization members. Respecting and

valuing the differences among members becomes a principle that must be implemented in actions and speech.

Effective and efficient cross-cultural communication within large-scale youth organizations, such as KNPI Gowa, encourages the creation of peace and harmony among members. Communication always takes place within the framework of respecting and valuing differences among members, as reflected in their actions. Cross-cultural communication patterns are required as a strategic step for organizations in creating tolerant members.

The high regard for differences, acceptance of diversity, and a tolerant attitude are upheld by KNPI Gowa members. This stems from the communication patterns that preserve messages that do not offend or demean other groups. Tolerance is maintained through interactions and communications among KNPI members that emphasize a tolerant attitude.

Tolerant organization members can accept differences without resorting to violence and eliminate expressions of dislike for differences. The condition of accepting differences leads to positive social consequences and promotes open-mindedness, making it less likely to perceive other groups as wrong. The essence of tolerance is accepting differences with the aim of peaceful coexistence; allowing different groups to exist, sympathizing with each other, accepting that others also have the same rights, respecting, being willing to listen, and learning from others.

An individual's communication pattern will encourage tolerant actions toward different religions and cultures. Tolerance is practiced to respect others (morally) or as a commitment to maintaining peaceful coexistence with others (politically). Thus, the term tolerance is not just a concept or discourse; it also reflects behavior or a way of life in building relationships because everyone is different.

## **2. Shared Solidarity**

When cross-cultural communication is done correctly, it can bind the solidarity of different members. Strong unity, mutual assistance regardless of differences, becomes a special feature within KNPI. Conflicts among members are minimized because they can be anticipated through effective cross-cultural communication patterns.

Solidarity refers to a state of relationships between individuals and/or groups based on shared moral feelings and beliefs strengthened by shared emotional experiences. The concept of social solidarity is divided into two types: mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. The growth in the division of labor leads to a shift in social structure from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity. Societies marked by mechanical solidarity are united because everyone is a generalist. The bonds in this society occur because they are involved in similar activities and also have the same type of work and responsibilities.

Mechanical solidarity is based on a shared "collective consciousness" that refers to the totality of shared beliefs and commitments. It is a form of solidarity that

depends on individuals having the same qualities, beliefs, and norms. In short, its main bond is shared trust, aspirations, and moral commitments.

The most distinct indicator of mechanical solidarity is the scope and severity of repressive laws that define any behavior as evil, threatening, or violating strong collective consciousness. The punishments given show violations of morals that can threaten or damage the foundation of social order. Punishments are not based on rational considerations of the harm inflicted on society and the adjustment of punishment to the severity of the crime. Instead, the punishment reflects and expresses collective anger.

A significant characteristic of mechanical solidarity is that it is based on a high level of homogeneity in beliefs, sentiments, and so on. Such homogeneity is only possible when the division of labor is still minimal or limited. Organic solidarity is a form of solidarity that binds a complex society, a society that knows the division of labor and is united by the nature of mutual dependence. Each member plays a different role, and interdependence is seen in the relationship between biological organisms.

Maintaining the strength of organic solidarity is marked by the importance of restitutive laws rather than repressive ones. The goals of these two types of laws are very different. Repressive laws express strong collective anger, while restitutive laws function to maintain or protect the complex interdependence patterns between specialized individuals or groups in society. The punishment is more rational, adjusted to the severity of the violation, and aims to restore or protect rights.

## Conclusion

Inter-institutional relations become a pattern of multicultural communication within the youth organization KNPI Gowa Regency as an interaction among members with diverse backgrounds or cultures, yet maintaining harmony. This is due to several factors: 1) Assimilation Among Institutions. This implies that groups or individuals with different backgrounds, cultures, religions, or organizations can interact or communicate openly and with mutual respect. Members of KNPI Gowa Regency engage in assimilation, allowing for harmonious communication despite diverse backgrounds. 2) Collaborative (Circular Communication Pattern). The communication pattern that occurs encourages individuals/groups/ethnicities to mutually accept and fill each other's realities. Members of KNPI Gowa Regency understand and observe the values and meanings among groups through communication and behavior as a shared social reality that must be accepted. 3) Dialogic Communication Pattern. This communication pattern is used to build effective messages in a multicultural community within KNPI Gowa Regency. Dialogic communication processes do not proceed unilaterally but rather reciprocally due to differences. Groups within the same organization, with members from diverse cultures, support each other through dialogic communication. The consequences of multicultural communication for unity among youth organizations within KNPI

Gowa Regency include the establishment of high tolerance and the strengthening of member solidarity that prioritizes togetherness.

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