

Strengthening Social Integration within Cultural and Ethnic Diversity: Lesson from Indonesia

Syarif Muhidin Abdurahman, Ph.D^{1*} Wan Ibrahim Wan Ahmad, Ph.D²

1. School of Applied Psychology, Social Work and Policy, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia
2. School of Applied Psychology, Social Work and Policy, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

*E-mail of the corresponding author: syarifmuhidin@uum.edu.my

Abstract

Cultural and ethnic diversity have been closely associated with the continuous conflict and antagonism in a pluralistic society. This phenomenon reflects very much the pluralistic society of Indonesia as a nation. Cultural and ethnic diversity are part and partial of the daily life of the Indonesian community. In the past, cultural and ethnic diversity have created some social conflicts and other symptoms of antagonism in Indonesia which have become national issues and problems that need to be resolved. Indonesia is a multi-ethnic country. Indonesia has four main ethnic groups, namely Melanesians, the Proto-Austronesians, the Polynesians and the Micronesians, which are divided again into 300 sub-ethnic groups with each group, has their own language, art, tradition and custom. 250 local dialects are spoken. The objective of this paper is to highlight some positive and negative aspects of these cultural and ethnic diversities, as well as to identify some important elements which formed social integration in Indonesia as a pluralistic society. To meet these objectives, the present paper uses a secondary analysis to review some of the documentary from relevant sources. Some of these documentaries are taken from the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, Republic of Indonesia, and other related sources. Secondary analysis is a technique of data collection where the researcher collects information that was collected and analyzed by other researchers for their own purposes. From the various sources, the paper found that there are three main themes that have been considered to be important efforts in developing social integration in Indonesia, include implementing *Bahasa Indonesia* as the only national language, introducing one state motto that is *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*, and one State Philosophy that is *Pancasila*. Indonesia has a long history of cultural and ethnic diversity. The result of the present paper acknowledges that cultural and ethnic diversity can construct many positive results. Collaboration and disagreement are normal in a pluralistic society. Having differences and conflicts are healthy. They can create new ideas, supporting mutual understanding for all parties towards a very constructive social development of the nation. It can strengthening social relation and integration, and helps to find out solutions more effectively toward problem-solving. It is a real challenge to manage cultural and ethnic diversity. This paper discusses how cultural and ethnic diversity can be viewed as positive aspects in building a nation with a strong national cultural identity for Indonesia. However, managing cultural and ethnic diversity should be seen as an endless effort.

Keywords: cultural diversity, social integration, pluralistic society, ethnic diversity, national identity

1. Introduction

As some experts said, multiculturalism will bring positive and negative impacts on the daily life of people. But the most important is how to perceive it and how to live within it. Some people perceive multiculturalism as a problem which always brings about conflicts and disintegrations, so that the nationality should be developed on the basis of mono culturalism. This perspective almost jeopardized Indonesia as a country of centralism and authorization in the past. Some others perceive multiculturalism from the positive way of thinking as a trend to be aware of the diversity and to recognize the right of every ethnic group. This present paper is to highlight some positive aspects of this cultural and ethnic diversity.

2. Objectives

The purpose of this paper is to discuss lessons from Indonesia on strengthening social integration within cultural and ethnic diversity. More specifically the objectives of this paper are trying to:

- discuss the negative impacts of pluralistic society of Indonesia
- discuss the positive impacts cultural diversity of Indonesia as a pluralistic society

- identify some important elements which formed social integration in Indonesia.

3. Literature Review

Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world. It consists of five main islands namely Sumatera, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Papua, with about 1 7508 islands and islets, some of which about 6 000 are inhabited (Asagiri, 2004). The name of Indonesia is composed of two Greek words: *Indos* means India and *Nesos* means Islands. Indonesia is located on the strategic crossroad between two oceans, the Pacific and Indian Ocean and a bridge between two continents, Asia and Australia.

Asagiri (2004) also stated that the diversity of cultures and ethnic groups is a dominant characteristic in the formation of Indonesia as a state of unified nation. It has a long historical root, where in the era of pre-independence these archipelagoes were known as “separated and diverse community” under the power of various kingdoms both Hindu and Islam. This separated diversity had brought the inspiration among young educated people to integrate all the scattered islands into one nation. This spirit were declared at the 2nd Indonesian Young Congress held on 28 October 1928 namely as “Sumpah Pemuda” as “One Nation”, “One Motherland” and “One Language” which is “Indonesia” (Asagiri, 2004).

As “pluralistic” society (the terms used firstly by Furnival, 1939) will bring about the strengths and the weaknesses as well. The strengths will bring the spirit of unity and feeling of commonness which formulate the nation solidarity and action against the negative aspects of diversity. This kind of nation spirit enabled the Indonesian people to maintain and manage the diversity as a strengtheners for mutual-helped.

On the other side, the diversity and the pluralistic society will be the potential of conflicts in which the different sub-cultures will bring them inability to develop “common consciousness” on the basic values (van den Berghe, 1981). Moreover Indonesian people as an open community will be influenced by the negative aspects from outside, and this in turn will threaten its national culture (Hamengku Buwono, 2007).

Indonesia is a plural society. Plural society is a society which consists of two or more elements living by their own without associate each other within a political united (Furnival, 1939; Mustafa, 2014). The main characteristics of pluralistic society are no common demand on political, social, and economic aspects felt by the whole elements of the community (van den Berghe, 1981). The impact of these phenomena are the loyalty of the people as a whole is low, less homogeneity on culture and do not have strong foundation to understand each other.

Furthermore, van den Berghe (1981) stated that pluralistic society will have: 1) segmentation on sub-culture; 2) social structure divided into non-complemented institution; 3) do not develop consensus between members of society toward basic values; 4) relatively prone to conflicts; 5) develop social integration on the basis of compulsion; and 6) political domination of one group over another.

In this case, the mechanic and organic solidarity (Emile Durkheim, 1961) will difficult to be developed, because the groupings of the people are based on the temporary interest. That is why a pluralistic society will create potential conflicts such as ideological conflict and political conflict (Dahrendorf, 1959). The first one related to the system of values belong to each grouping of people and the second one related to the conflict on the division of power and limited resources. Social integration will be developed if the majority of people share the basic ideological values and the structure of government includes political process which accepted by the whole community.

From the perspective of conflict theory, the phenomena of conflict are inherent to every community but in reality the system of community are still survive and be running normally. It is because all the interests and demands of the people are represented in institutionalized mechanism which produces accepted compromises. According to Dahrendorf (1959), conflict can be avoided if the “imperative coordinated association” (ICA) which represented in community organization can take a very important role and function in the community. Through ICA, the relation of power became accepted, recognized, and legitimated.

Cultural and ethnic diversity is the social reality of Indonesia until nowadays whether someone like it or do not like it. Nevertheless, Indonesia has tied up through a social system which always creating continual state of conflict. Conflict is created whenever the interest of ethnic groups is disturbed. But in social reality, the conflict is a dynamic process and in turn, it will create some new interests and compromises. Thus, conflicts will in turn, produce social change. From the perspective of conflict theory, conflict cannot be abolished, but can be eliminated and controlled or managed, so that latent conflict cannot be manifested in real phenomena in the form of violence and anarchism (Muhidin, 2013).

To summarize all the perspectives and theoretical frameworks as mentioned above; it can be concluded that cultural and ethnic diversity does not merely consider being the main sources of community conflict. In the case of Indonesia, the phenomena of conflict much more related to the imbalances of power and the legitimated institutions and organizations which unable to fulfill the interests and aspirations of the majority of people. Diversity and plurality are natural in human life. In relation to the social reality of Indonesia, imbalances in

many aspects of life include disparity in income and economic resources between income groups, imbalances in progress and prosperity between regions (such as villages and cities) and imbalances between modern sector and traditional sector will be the long lasting causes of real conflicts (Muhidin, 2013).

Indonesia has already stepped ahead to the era of strongly recognized and supported the decentralization of culture and developed local wisdom and knowledge. It means that local culture or sub-culture should be developed side by side with the need to build up national culture as national identity (Muhidin, 2012). Every nation in the world has a local and cultural diversity which can be tied up and integrated into the national identity. Japan, for instance, has the cultural identity which include “Bushido” (moral of Samurai) and teaches the values of honesty, sacrifice, work hard and discipline, all of these will represented in the personality of every Japanese people (Muhidin, 2012).

4. Materials and Method

This paper is basically a descriptive analysis based on secondary resources. It uses a secondary analysis to review some of the documentary from relevant sources collected by other researchers and writers for their own purposes. Some of these documentaries or information was taken from the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, Republic of Indonesia and other resources include relevant articles, books and research findings. Secondary analysis is a technique of data collection where the researcher collects information that was collected and analyzed by other researchers for their own purposes. Data and information collected are analyzed through a thematic approach. The paper found that there are three main themes that have been considered to be important efforts in developing social integration in Indonesia, include implementing *Bahasa Indonesia* as the only national language, introducing one state motto that is Unity in Diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*), and one State Philosophy that is *Pancasila* (Five Principle of State Philosophy).

5. Results and Discussion

As mentioned earlier, the aim of this paper is to identify: 1) the phenomena of negative and positive impacts of cultural and ethnic diversity of Indonesia as pluralistic society, and 2) some important elements which formed social integration in Indonesia as a pluralistic society. From the various resources, the paper found that there are many elements identified as negative and positive impact of cultural and ethnic diversity. The study also found that there are three main elements that have been considered to be major effort in developing social integration, include (1) *Bahasa Indonesia* as the only language used in formal communication, (2) introducing one state motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) and (3) one nation philosophy that is *Pancasila* (Five Principles of State Philosophy).

5.1 The Negative Impacts

Two elements to be identified as negative impact of cultural and ethnic diversity include: 1) conflict, and (2) the tendency to be disintegrated. In the context of Indonesia, conflict is being considered as a part of daily life of Indonesian people since independence in 1945. Rebellion and separatism movement both latent and manifest still exists until today. Conflict between ethnic groups; between the followers of certain religion; between members of villagers, and even between students at all levels, are always happening. It seems Indonesia likes to solve all differences and other forms of conflict through violence. Some people believed it as the “culture of conflict” (Howard, 1993).

Looking from the other side, conflict itself has some positive impacts. Conflict in a society will produce change (Macionis, 2008). Conflict has created the need to develop social solidarity and mutual dependence between all groups of people and regions within the whole country. Since many conflicts had been resolved, then collective awareness and action became more developed, for instance, in the form of mutual-helped and mutual understanding.

5.2 The Positive Impacts

Most of Indonesian people believe that the diversity in culture, race, ethnic and religion as a main character of Indonesian community. It is given by God and it has long historical rooted. Spirit of patriotism, feeling of commonness and belongingness have defeated the differences between the segments of people. Most people realized that the diversity in culture and ethnic groups as a strength and an enrichment of Indonesia as a pluralistic society. Moreover, Indonesian people are supported by positive values such as *gotong royong* (mutual-helped), *musyawarah* and *mufakat* (decision making through consensus) as local wisdom. Indonesia is not only rich in terms of natural resources, but also rich in various subcultures, languages and local traditional customs. These phenomena should be encouraged and developed in order to maintain the united of Indonesian state.

5.3 Elements of Social Integration

There are some elements to be recognized as very strong forms affecting social integration of Indonesia, namely: 1) *Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian national language); 2) *Pancasila* (Five principles of Indonesian state); 3) *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity).

Bahasa Indonesia

Bahasa Indonesia did not exist yet until the year of 1928. Through the 2nd Indonesian Youth Congress on October 28, 1928, *Bahasa Indonesia* was the first time declared as a *lingua franca* to be recognized as national and formal language of Indonesia. But it doesn't mean that local languages should not be the subject of teaching at schools. It seems *Bahasa Indonesia* and local languages are developing side by side. *Bahasa Indonesia* obviously is important and has been used as an element of social integration in Indonesia as a pluralistic society because it is able to be learned and applied by the majority of Indonesian people and therefore it has been considered as "language of unity". Even though Indonesia has hundreds of local languages and dialects, the formal language of communication between the people is *Bahasa Indonesia* as a national language. Although *Bahasa Indonesia* has been more and more developed with the influences of both local and foreign languages it still is used as a mean of communication between different ethnic groups. There are worries for some people that some local languages will no more to be used in everyday life of modern Indonesian family.

Pancasila (Five principles of Indonesian state)

Pancasila pronounced Panchaseela consists of two Sanskrit words; "Panca" means five and "sila" means "principle". It comprises five inseparable and interrelated principles:

- Believe in the one and only God
- Just and civilized humanity
- The unity of Indonesia
- Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberation amongst representatives
- Social justice for whole of the people of Indonesia

Pancasila is being considered not only as a philosophy of the state but also as a foundation of the state to be applied in every aspect of government's management and political issues. It is not allowed to all political parties having philosophy, vision and mission which are the opposite of *Pancasila* as state philosophy. In the history of Indonesia every political and social movements which have tried to change *Pancasila* were not succeed. Moreover, *Pancasila* has been considered as "the way of life" of every Indonesian people. To socialize *Pancasila* as a way of life is a challenge for the government, even though every Indonesian people believe that *Pancasila* is the right philosophy for the government and can be accepted by all different groups.

Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity)

Indonesia has been a nation that has a diversity of cultures and ethnic groups which was separated in diverse communities before independence. *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* has been the right answer for Indonesia to build up "togetherness" within hundreds of differences. It has considered as a national motto for Indonesia. This national motto enabled people of different subcultures and ethnic groups feel living in the same boat, in terms of seeking the commonness and recognizing the differences. All the people of Indonesia accept this motto (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*) as a mean to integrate all the differences between subcultures and ethnic groups. The values behind *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* as well as *Pancasila* are crucial elements to develop social integration in Indonesia as a pluralistic society.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, every nation has the key factors to be considered as having strengths and weaknesses. In the context of Indonesia, the key factors to the social integration do not lies on the natural resources or technology but more on the diversity of culture, supported by values behind the (1) *Bahasa Indonesia*, (2) *Pancasila*, as well as (3) *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. All of which constitute the basic values and philosophy to form the social integration of Indonesia. All of these values were considered to be the key factors to integrate the cultural and ethnic diversity in Indonesia. To strength social integration as a social reality the government and all the people of Indonesia should manage all these three values properly.

References

- Asagiri, A. (2004). *Indonesia an official handbook*. Jakarta: Ministry of Communication and Informatics, Republic of Indonesia.
- Dahrendorf, R. (1959). *Class and class conflict in industrial society*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Durkheim, E. (1961). *Moral Education: A study in the theory and application of the sociology of education*. New York: Free Press.
- Fisher, S., et al. (2000). *Working with conflict, skill and strategies for action*. London: 2nd Books Ltd.
- Furnival, Z. S. (1939). *Nederland India: A study of plural economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Garna, Y. K. (1993). *Perubahan sosial di Indonesia: Tradisi, akomodasi dan modernisasi*. Bandung: Program Pascasarjana Unpad.
- Howard, M.R. (1993). *The culture of conflict: Interpretations and interests in comparative perspective*. London: Yale University Press.
- Hamengku, Buwono X (2007). *Merajut kembali ke-Indonesia-an kita*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia.
- Macionis, J. J. (2008). *Sociology (Twelfth edition)*. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Mustafa Ishak, M. (2014). *The politics of Bangsa Malaysia: Nation-building in a multiethnic society*. Kuala Lumpur: Legasi Press Sdn. Bhd.
- Syarif, M. (2012). Tinjauan sosiologi terhadap konflik sosial dan anarkisme. Paper presented at Seminar & Dialog Publik, Bandung: Universitas Langlangbuana.
- Syarif, M. (2013). Keberagaman budaya sebagai perekat integrasi. *Journal Kybernology, Indonesia Journal for the Science of Government* Volume II, Edisi Kedua. Bandung: Universitas Langlangbuana.