



Local wisdom and strengthening social integration in multiethnic society post-aceh conflict

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Abstract

The Aceh conflict resulted in ethnic polarization, trauma, and integration problems. Langsa tended to be safer during the Aceh conflict because of the existence of a multiethnic community. This article describes the phenomenon of social integration through local wisdom in the post-conflict Acehese multicultural community in Langsa. The research argues that the local wisdom of multiethnic communities can build social integration in the post-conflict Aceh community. To prove it, the researcher conducted an ethnographic investigation with observations and local wisdom of multiethnic communities-practices that strengthen social integration. Data were collected inductively and interpreted by interviewing seven cross-ethnic community leaders plus conducting focus group discussions (FGD) involving four key informants from the adult class and seven youth representatives to provide comprehensive explanations. The data collected were then classified, presented, and conclusions drawn. The research findings showed that local wisdom can encourage cooperation, solidarity, and tolerance to create a post-conflict multiethnic society to live in peace. Local wisdom has succeeded in encouraging the recognition of the fundamental similarities between ethnic groups and eroding differences. Local wisdom can strengthen social resilience and succeed in organically preventing social disasters in post-conflict Acehese society.

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Introduction

The Aceh conflict that occurred in 1998–2005 hurt the social life of the community. The conflict affected many aspects of human life; economic, social, and values; because it dramatically influenced people's thoughts and behavior. At present, Aceh is at peace after the signing of the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 15 August 2005 (Aspinall, 2009). However, after 15 years of peace in Aceh, there are still seeds of conflict among the people. Post-Aceh conflict has left residues that can disrupt peaceful conditions. The forms of post-conflict residue include trauma (Ansori, 2015; Grayman et al., 2009), ethnocentrism (Nurrahmi, 2018), social polarization based on ethnicity (Schulze, 2006), and integration problems (Wahyudi, 2018). Conflict also breaks ties between generations and disrupts the inheritance of values (Abdullah, 2018). Neglecting conflict residues will disrupt peaceful values that have been built up in the future.

Langsa during the Aceh conflict tended to be safer than the surrounding areas (Davies, 2006). Langsa became a destination for refugees from various regions such as Central Aceh, North Aceh, and Lhokseumawe (Czaika & Kis-Katos, 2009). The development of people from various ethnic backgrounds created a multiethnic society that united people from different ethnicities and cultures. The existence of a multiethnic community could reduce the excesses of the Aceh conflict in Langsa while maintaining a harmonious community condition.

The existence of multiethnic communities influences the emergence of diverse local wisdom. Ethnic Aceh, as a native ethnic, has local wisdom. Ethnic immigrants also have local wisdom. Local wisdom has grown and developed in the midst of a multiethnic society and has become a bridge in building and strengthening social relations oriented towards social integration.

Previous studies have shown that local wisdom plays an essential role in various aspects of life. Local wisdom can drive fundamental changes in various aspects, ranging from social relations (Sinaga et al., 2019; Syakur & Khoiroh, 2021), bridging integration (Jayadi et al., 2018), or can be used as a foothold in uniting or unifying post-conflict societies (Hoedodo, Surjo, & Qodir, 2013; Zuhdi, 2019).

Existing studies of post-conflict Aceh can be divided into four categories. First, the study of the reconstruction

of local wisdom. This study analyzed the reconstruction of local wisdom from a political perspective (Bustamam-Ahmad, 2017). The reconstruction process is carried out by building communal awareness based on a social basis through meunasah, mosques, and coffee shops which are local social capital (Mujib et al., 2014). Second, a study that analyzed local wisdom as a symbol of Acehnese identity (Dhuhri, 2016). Third, local wisdom used to internalize qualitative values (Ratu et al., 2019; Syahril & Idris, 2019). Fourth, local wisdom as conflict resolution through specific mechanisms (Hoedodo, Surjo, & Qodir, 2013; Kasim & Nurdin, 2016). However, studies like these are ineffective in building an organically harmonious society (Dhuhri, 2016; Ginty & Richmond, 2013) because local wisdom is only used normatively.

Previous studies did not find a form to unite the Acehnese people after the conflict organically. The purpose of this study was to complement the shortcomings of the study of local wisdom after the Aceh conflict, which has been normative so far, by analyzing: First, what is the form of local wisdom of the multiethnic community in Langsa? Second, how does local wisdom function in integrating a multiethnic society post-conflict Aceh?

This paper was based on the argument that local wisdom can be a bridge for social integration that is built naturally in the multiethnic community in Langsa post-conflict Aceh and becomes social capital for the development of a society that upholds cultural values (Suharso, et., al., 2020). From various studies that had been carried out, the researchers concluded social integration based on local wisdom in Langsa can be a model of social integration to create a harmonious society in post-conflict Aceh.

Literature Review

Conceptual framework to explain the relationship between local wisdom of multiethnic communities and social integration. Multiethnic societies with post-conflict situations have many social dynamics in establishing inter-ethnic relations. Moreover, the Aceh conflict had an impact on social polarization between ethnic groups. In this study, local wisdom as ancestral heritage that has long existed and is still practiced by the community serves to bridge the differences caused by territorial/cultural factors, religion, interests, and social class, by reducing inequality.

Local wisdom and social integration of post-conflict multiethnic communities manifested in social stability and the development of a high sense of tolerance so that cooperation and inter-ethnic interdependence occur. Social integration based on local wisdom is realized with the support of individual abilities to interact, social systems that support social integration, and the strength of local leaders (Roffies et al., 2019). By involving multiple aspects in the community, local wisdom can be an adequate social integration capital because of its participatory, transparent, and flexible nature (Tafere, 2013).

Local wisdom contains values to answer the problem of disharmony in the life of modern society (Meliono, 2011). Local wisdom can even be developed and internalized in the local history learning process, manifested in cultural values, harmony, courtesy, , friendliness, responsibility, ethical values, and tolerance (Misnah et al., 2021). *Tolerance* is an understanding that puts forward equality from the perspective of humanity and nationality. Tolerance is in the form of an attitude of respect, caring for, and maintaining it into knowledge that individuals must possess (Utomo & Wasino, 2020). Inheritance of moral values of character education can be done using local wisdom (Djibat et al., 2019). Local wisdom needs to be maintained as a superior cultural practice that is beneficial for human survival, especially in maintaining sustainability and balance of life (Touwe, 2020). Local wisdom provides lessons in building diversity, integration, and social harmony (Alamsyah, 2015). Finally, local wisdom in multiethnic communities functions to organically integrate social and ethnic groups in post-conflict Acehese society. Effective social integration based on local wisdom requires positive support from indigenous people (Ng et al., 2017).

Methodology

This research was conducted using an ethnographic model of the local wisdom of the multiethnic community in Langsa, Aceh. The setting of this research was a multiethnic community in Langsa, Aceh. The focus of this research study was the cultural situation and integration behavior based on the cultural understanding of the community. Data were collected through observation of cultural phenomena and in-depth interviews focused on the integration practices of the multiethnic society in Langsa.

Data Collection

This research was conducted in 2019–2020. Data collection was carried out by participatory observation of the local wisdom of multiethnic communities; record and document the forms of integration in post-conflict multiethnic societies. The triangulation technique was used to sharpen the forms of social integration and complete some of the data. Interviews were conducted by interviewing ten leaders of seven cross-ethnic community leaders plus conducting a focus group discussion involving four key informants from adults and seven representatives of the youth population.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Interactive Analysis model proposed by Milles and Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1994). First, data reduction, namely, classifying both the data needed and those that were not. Second, presenting data; the researcher presented the data by analyzing it. Third, conclusion; researchers made conclusions based on the analysis of the reduced data.

Results

The Form of Social Integration Based on Local Wisdom

Langsa is a multiethnic and multicultural city. Langsa is a comfortable place for everyone regardless of their ethnic background. Based on observations, in Langsa, there are seven ethnicities: Acehese, Javanese, Gayo, South Tapanuli Batak, Alas, and Chinese. The multiethnic community in post-conflict Langsa agrees that post-conflict social integration in Aceh needs to be nurtured. They do not want to be trapped again and experience conflicts that cause material losses and loss of life. The multiethnic community in Langsa sees the existing ethnic differences as a good thing. Ethnic differences are not to be distinguished, let alone contradicted. The Acehese, as a native ethnic group, see the existence of a multiethnic community in Langsa as a good thing in terms of overall urban development (Syamsul Azwar, 19 February 2020).

Acehnese Ethnic Local Wisdom

Khanduri is a typical Acehese tradition which in its

implementation involves many people. *Khanduri* is a communal eating activity held by the community for various purposes in which there are sacred rituals. Every *khanduri* activity is always associated with certain events so that each activity is always named with a certain condition. There are at least three *khanduri* that can integrate the multiethnic community in Langsa.

First, *khanduri laot*, which is carried out by the fishing community. *Khanduri laot* is carried out as an expression of gratitude to God for the abundant fish catch and as a prayer so that the following catch will get great results. In the implementation of *khanduri laot*, all fishermen come to the coast with various types of food to eat together. Guests from various neighboring village areas attend the *khanduri* activity. Second, *khanduri blang*, which is carried out by the rice farming community. *Khanduri blang* is carried out before planting activities begin. All residents who own rice fields and want to plant rice participate in *khanduri* activities. In the belief of the farming community, by not doing *khanduri blang*, God's blessing will be kept away, and pests will attack the planted rice. The guests of the *khanduri* tradition are not limited to the farming community. Third, *khanduri maulid* is held to commemorate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. *Khanduri maulid* has become a tradition of the multiethnic society in Langsa. *Khanduri* activities are held in public places such as mosques, dayah (Islamic boarding schools), and meunasah. All residents are involved by donating food and energy for the implementation of *khanduri* activities. *Khanduri* begins with delivering food called *hidang*. At the time of its implementation, the villagers go to the place where the *khanduri maulid* is held to participate in the procession and eat *hidang* together. Residents from other villages are also invited to join the *khanduri*. In the *khanduri* tradition, integration behaviour is reflected because, in this tradition, togetherness is taught, along with friendship, mutual help, and reducing inter-ethnic community disputes (Syamsul Azwar, 3 August 2020; Anwar, October 2019; Idrus, December 7, 2020)

Javanese Ethnic Local Wisdom

Based on observations, the local wisdom of the Javanese ethnicity in Langsa that fosters integration is the *rewang* tradition. *Rewang* is an activity of collective exertion to relieve relatives or close neighbors who have an intention. Ethnic Javanese immigrants brought the

Rewang tradition since the era of Dutch colonialism in the 1910s. Currently, the *rewang* tradition still exists in Langsa. The term *rewang* is even widely used by ethnic groups other than Javanese in every working activity. *Rewang* reflects integration behaviour because it is taught to help each other and work together regardless of ethnicity and race (Roniadi, August 29, 2019).

Minang Ethnic Local Wisdom

The tradition that is still carried out by the Minang people in Langsa is to ask permission from the eldest in the father's family before making an important decision in life. This tradition is still carried out today even though they may be overseas. This tradition has the meaning of friendship value because it maintains relationships within the family. This tradition is also useful for carrying out and passing on traditions within the scope of tribal communities. In carrying out their traditions, the Minang community adapts to the norms of the local community. Based on an interview with Fahmi, adaptation was carried out to respect and appreciate the local community (Fahmi, March 21, 2019).

Mandailing Ethnic Local Wisdom

Alue Merbau village is one of the villages that has Mandailing ethnic roots. In the last 20 years, the mandailing tradition has no longer been dominant in Alue Merbau Village. The Mandailing Alue Merbau ethnic community uses an adapted tradition. In Alue Merbau, there is a tradition of *khanduri blang*. This tradition has been considered an ethnic mandailing tradition. This tradition has been carried out for generations and is followed by all Alue Merbau residents regardless of their ethnic background. Based on an interview with local community leaders, the *khanduri blang* in Alue Merbau village reflects an attitude of equality, community participation, cooperation, and togetherness in cross-ethnic communities (Anwar, October 9, 2020).

Discussion

The history of local wisdom in a multiethnic society can be traced from the formation of villages in Langsa. These villages were built in the early 1900s by migrants from various regions. They migrated with various

interests: trading, opening new land (Buka Seuneubok), or working on Dutch colonial plantations.

Furthermore, the immigrants interact with each other by upholding mutual respect. This is an excellent social capital in realizing unity in a diverse society. Gradually, in these villages, a relationship of cooperation, accommodation, and competition was established based on mutual respect and tolerance. This relationship creates unity based on religion, custom, and culture. This union is the root of the local wisdom of multiethnic communities based on mutual respect between tribes.

In the situation of post-conflict Aceh society, which still leaves problems of integration, the existence of ethnic diversity has the opportunity to cause conflict to become more open. Therefore, the existing diversity needs to be appropriately managed in order to become a strength. Local wisdom has succeeded in becoming a means of inter-ethnic interaction to understand each other and eliminate the egocentrism of each ethnic group. The interaction succeeded in uniting the multiethnic community by upholding tolerance, togetherness, and harmony.

The harmonious relationship in the multiethnic society in Langsa shows the maturity of the interacting community so that ethnic differences do not become an obstacle in social interaction. The social integration of the multiethnic community in Langsa can be understood through [Figure 1](#).

The local wisdom of multiethnic communities is closely related to collective values so that it is possible to gather many people from various ethnicities at a particular time. Local wisdom has succeeded in integrating multiethnic communities and instilling togetherness, solidarity, and mutual respect. Multiethnic communities are always involved in traditional activities organized by

the community. The values in carrying out these traditions make multiethnic communities regularly interact to have strong social ties gradually. The cultural attitude of helping each other, the spirit of solidarity and tolerance growing from the implementation of local wisdom, has been carried out from generation to generation. This local wisdom becomes a medium for community social interaction without distinguishing race and ethnicity.

This phenomenon is in line with Ritzer's opinion about two basic understandings of social integration: first, controlling social conflicts and deviations in a particular social system, and second, uniting some aspects in society to create a social order (George, 2013). In the multiethnic society in Langsa, each ethnic group is willing to let go of its ethnic ego by leaving behind a culture that is irrelevant to the customs and culture of the local community. Multiethnic communities also apply local customs and culture in their social activities. This practice keeps away from social deviations and conflicts caused by ethnic egos and strengthens the unity of multiethnic communities through customs and cultures that are practiced together.

According to the key informant, this practice cannot be separated from the community's belief in always following the customs and customs of the local community. This is relevant to the belief of the multiethnic community "where the earth is stepped on there the sky is upheld". This belief is currently a strong foundation for multiethnic communities in building inter-ethnic relations (Sa'dan, October 16, 2020).

The local wisdom of multiethnic communities can equalize perceptions at the individual and community levels. Aceh's local wisdom can be a model for social interaction to integrate multiethnic communities after the Aceh conflict. Integration can occur because multiethnic

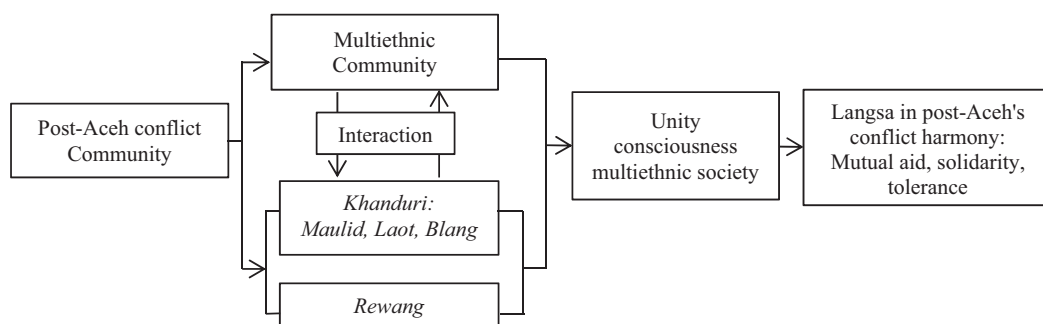


Figure 1 Multiethnic community social integration scheme

communities have the same views about the values of local wisdom. The integration of the multiethnic community in Langsa cannot be separated from the adaptations made by the immigrant ethnic community. Ethnic immigrant communities do not act selfishly to maintain their local wisdom that is not relevant to the norms of the local community. The adaptation of the local wisdom of the ethnic immigrants can be seen as an effort to stabilize the cultural system, which is aimed at achieving social integration.

Adaptation by immigrant communities has implications for their union with the Indigenous community. The form of unity can at least be seen from five aspects. First, the immigrant community respects the local wisdom of the local community. Migrant communities voluntarily carry out Acehese traditions and make these traditions their own. Some examples include the Javanese, Mandailing, Minang ethnic communities carrying out the Acehese traditions; use symbols of Aceh's identity; teach their children to learn the Acehese language; teach their children to learn Aceh dance. This makes the migrant community part of the Acehese community. Second, local people do not force migrants to use Acehese traditions. The people of Aceh respect the traditions of the immigrant community. Third, the union of indigenous people with immigrants in the traditions of *khanduri maulid*, *khanduri blang*, and *khanduri laot*, which are routinely held every year. Fourth, the occurrence of inter-ethnic marriages. This type of marriage creates more substantial unity between ethnic groups because it is based on mutual love.

Ethnic diversity does not create an atmosphere of unrest, hostility, and mutual suspicion. The local community sees the immigrant community as not a threat. The local community has considered the migrant community as guests or family. Finally, is the emergence of the terms; our Acehese, our Javanese, our Minang people, our Mandailing people in inter-ethnic communication. The word "we" in this term refers to recognizing immigrant ethnic communities in the broader community.

The results of this study are a sign that local wisdom can function to strengthen the social resilience of post-conflict communities. Local wisdom in a multiethnic society has substantial resistance in overcoming existing social problems. Aceh, as a post-conflict area, has conflict residues; it has succeeded in maintaining the social conditions of a multiethnic society in harmony. Local

wisdom has also been successful in preventing post-conflict social disasters in Aceh. Local wisdom has succeeded in substantively and organically integrating multiethnic communities. This form of social integration based on local wisdom needs to be encouraged and promoted to solve the problems of post-conflict Acehese integration that have not yet been accomplished.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study found that local wisdom in multiethnic communities played a role in people's behaviour to shape Aceh's post-conflict life organically. This paper shows that the natural process of social integration using local resources can lead to the recognition of the fundamental similarities between ethnic groups while at the same time eroding their differences. The natural process of social integration gives rise to a culture of mutual assistance, a spirit of solidarity and tolerance of different ethnic communities. Utilizing local resources in post-conflict social integration leads to strengthening unity and reducing differences and potential misunderstandings. Local wisdom can work to strengthen social resilience and succeed in preventing social disaster in post-conflict Acehese society. Social support from local communities increases the positive impact of social integration and reduces the negative impact of post-Aceh conflict. This study recommends maintaining the local wisdom of multiethnic communities that foster integration values and direct post-conflict communities to live in harmony. The findings can be the basis for future research on social integration based on local wisdom in other post-conflict areas to strengthen integration organically and create a harmonious community life.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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