

Constructing Interreligious Dialogue Through Local Wisdom for Peacebuilding in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet, Indonesia

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Abstract

Religious multiculturalism presents both opportunities for harmony and risks of conflict when differences are exploited, with ineffective communication frequently triggering social disintegration. In this context, religious leaders play a pivotal role in bridging societal divides and cultivating shared understanding to strengthen interfaith relations while countering religious radicalism. This study employs qualitative methods with a phenomenological approach, collecting data through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzing via data reduction, presentation, and verification techniques. Results demonstrate that religious leaders in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet drive peacebuilding by constructing social values anchored in local traditions, such as: first, the Ina Riha practices in prayer gatherings; second, a consensus prohibiting open pork processing by Christians to respect Muslim neighbors; and third, mutual cooperation in the Mbolo Weki and Karawi Ulucempe traditions. These mechanisms fortify interfaith bonds and ensure social stability amid diversity. These practices strengthen interfaith relations and ensure social stability amidst diversity. These findings contribute to interfaith communication theory by demonstrating how religious leaders act as social architects, not merely facilitators, of peace in a multicultural society.

Keywords: interreligious dialogue, religious leaders, local wisdom, peacebuilding

Introduction

The fact about multicultural religion sometimes backfires, because differences are often used as an excuse to ignite hostility. Humans, as social beings, should be able to avoid conflict by developing effective communication strategies with one another. So far, many social disintegrations have occurred due to the lack of effective communication in society (Muhtadi, 2019). Humans' dependence on one another confirms that communication plays an important role in connecting individuals within social groups and solving problems. Communication also plays a role in fostering a peaceful interfaith life, especially in a society with high religious diversity. Inter-religious communication is an important aspect in creating harmony in the midst of religious plurality (wahyuni, 2018). Religious leaders play a strategic role in providing shared understanding, reducing social differences, fostering mutual trust, and increasing respect between religious communities. With good communication, people can avoid radicalism that often appears in the guise of religion (Suprpto, 2025).

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Nggeru Kopa Hamlet, Donggo Subdistrict, Bima Regency, is one of the areas with unique dynamics in religious life. This area is inhabited by people with various religious backgrounds, and until now, a peaceful life has been maintained. This phenomenon is interesting to study, especially in relation to the construction of communication between religious leaders in building peace. History records that several religious conflicts have occurred in Bima and its surroundings, such as the Islamic-Christian conflict in 1969 in Donggo Sub-district, the Hindu-Islamic conflict in North Lombok in 2007, and other conflicts in Sumbawa, Kalimantan, Poso, and Maluku (Fariza, 2025). These conflicts indicate that religious differences can trigger social divisions. Therefore, creating peace in a multicultural society requires an inclusive and effective communication strategy (Abu-Nimer, 2011).

This study is grounded in Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's (George Ritzer, 2014) theory of social construction, which posits that social reality emerges from human interaction through three interconnected processes: externalization, objectivation, and internalization. In Nggeru Kopa Hamlet, religious leaders, both Muslim (*Lebe*) and Christian (Pastors and Priests), actively externalize values of peace through interfaith dialogue and locally rooted practices such as *Mbolo Weki* (mutual cooperation) and *Karawi Ulu cempe* (collective problem-solving). These shared values are then objectified in binding social agreements, including the prohibition on openly bringing or processing pork as a sign of respect for Muslims, and the tradition of collaboratively building houses of worship regardless of religious affiliation. Subsequently, these objectified norms are internalized by community members across generations through informal family education and routine participation in collective events, ensuring the long-term reproduction of social harmony. Thus, Berger and Luckmann's framework is not merely referenced but actively employed to explain how peace is systematically constructed and sustained in a multireligious setting. To further illuminate the communicative dynamics at play, this research also incorporates the concept of intercultural communication developed by Deddy Mulyana (Deddy, 2019) and Joseph A. Devito, which defines it as the exchange of messages between individuals or groups from different cultural and religious backgrounds. The effectiveness of such communication (Saefudin dkk., 2024) hinges on the participants' ability to understand and accommodate differences. In Nggeru Kopa, this is vividly exemplified by the *Ina Riha* tradition during joint prayer gatherings, where Muslim and Christian religious leaders alternately deliver messages of peace without compromising their own doctrinal commitments. Far from being passive facilitators, they act as active agents who create inclusive dialogical spaces. By integrating social construction theory with intercultural communication concepts, this study reveals how religious leaders function as social architects of peace, not merely mediators, building interfaith harmony through dialogue deeply embedded in local wisdom.

Inter-religious communication is a fundamental aspect of peacebuilding, especially in multi-religious communities. The role of religious leaders in providing a common understanding, dismissing social differences, building trust, and respecting each other is crucial in creating harmonious relations (Rahman dkk., 2025) and (Faizah dkk., 2022). If

communication can be constructed well, then the potential for religious-based conflict can be minimized and relations between religious groups can be closer. Nggeru Kopa Hamlet in Donggo District, Bima Regency, is a clear example of how multicultural life can take place peacefully. Although Islam is a minority among the Christian majority, social relations between religious communities remain harmonious. The community's awareness of the importance of communication in establishing harmony is supported by the active role of local religious leaders, such as Muslim *Lebe* and Christian Pastors and Priests. These religious leaders play a strategic role in building inclusive communication and fostering religious values that can strengthen social ties (Seran, 2021).

This research differs significantly from previous studies. Abdul Wahid (Wahid, 2022) highlights the role of cultural rituals in fostering social harmony within the Dou Mbawa community in Eastern Indonesia, arguing that shared cultural practices can reduce potential interreligious conflict. However, his research focuses more on the transformation of rituals as an instrument of harmony without providing an in-depth analysis of the strategic role of religious leaders in constructing effective interfaith communication. Similarly, the study by Gede Agung, Nasih, and Kurniawan (Gede Agung dkk., 2024) discusses local wisdom as a model for interfaith communication in promoting religious harmony in Indonesia. While it emphasizes the importance of cultural values in interreligious interactions, it does not specifically examine how religious leaders actively shape communication as a primary instrument for peacebuilding at the community level. Moreover, that study adopts a general approach across various communities in Indonesia without delving deeply into the communication dynamics within a specific community. Meanwhile, the research by Erawadi and Setiadi (Erawadi & Setiadi, 2024) explores religious harmony through the local wisdom of Dalihan Na Tolu as a peacebuilding strategy in Indonesia, illustrating how cultural values strengthen interfaith relationships within the Batak ethnic group. However, it focuses more on the social and cultural system of that group without specifically highlighting the role of religious leaders in constructing effective interfaith communication (Rasyid dkk., 2023). Furthermore, the study by Siddiq et al. (Siddiq dkk., 2024), titled "Dynamics of Interreligious Communication: How it has led to Religious Harmony in Indonesia," focuses on interfaith communication dynamics in an urban setting, specifically the Jamika Tolerance Village in Bandung. Their research emphasizes psychographic profiles of religious communities and the development of tolerance, equality, and cooperation through structured interfaith forums and collaborative activities.

In contrast to these studies, the present research focuses on Nggeru Kopa Hamlet as a case study, which exhibits a unique dynamic of religious diversity in which Muslims live as a minority within a Christian majority, yet are still able to maintain strong social harmony. This study specifically analyzes how religious leaders construct interfaith communication as a key strategy for preventing conflict and strengthening social integration, rooted in local wisdom through practices such as *Ina Riha*, *Mbolo Weki*, and *Karawi Ulu cempe*. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, this research does not merely portray religious leaders as facilitators of dialogue but as architects of social values

who embed peace messages within traditional cultural frameworks. Thus, this study addresses a gap in the literature by exploring how interreligious harmony in rural communities can be sustained organically, without formal institutional structures or government-led programs, and provides a new perspective in the study of interfaith communication and the role of religious leaders in local wisdom-based peacebuilding (Muslim dkk., 2025).

The uniqueness of this research lies in its phenomenological approach, which explores the subjective experiences of religious leaders in building interfaith communication. Through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, this study seeks to understand how religious leaders construct peace values through concrete communication practices, such as the *Ina Riha* tradition in prayer gatherings, the prohibition of open pork processing for Christian residents as a form of respect for Muslims, and the mutual cooperation practices found in the *Mbolo Weki* and *Karawi Ulu cempe* traditions. Thus, this study offers a new perspective in the field of interfaith communication, demonstrating how religious leaders do not merely act as facilitators of dialogue but also as key actors in shaping communication strategies that can prevent conflict and strengthen social stability in the midst of religious diversity (Zulkarnain dkk., 2025).

This study is highly significant given the rising cases of religious intolerance and conflicts in various regions of Indonesia. Religious diversity, which should be a source of enrichment, is often exploited as a trigger for division due to the lack of effective communication between groups. Therefore, this research offers a local-wisdom-based interfaith communication model that can serve as a reference for other communities seeking to develop inclusive and sustainable communication strategies. The uniqueness of this study lies in its phenomenological approach based on local wisdom, which highlights the subjective experiences of religious leaders in constructing inclusive communication. Through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation, this study reveals how religious leaders actively develop communication strategies in various social practices, such as *Ina Riha* in prayer meetings, the prohibition of open pork processing for Christian residents as a form of respect for Muslims, and the mutual cooperation practices in the *Mbolo Weki* and *Karawi Ulu cempe* traditions. Thus, this study makes a significant academic and practical contribution to religious leaders, policymakers, and society at large in understanding how effective communication can serve as a primary tool for peacebuilding in multicultural communities. Furthermore, the findings of this study can serve as a reference for policymakers in designing programs to strengthen social harmony grounded in local values, which have been shown to maintain social stability amid religious diversity.

Based on observations in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet, the composition of the population is religiously heterogeneous, with a Christian majority and a Muslim minority. Despite this, the community life remains harmonious. This success can be attributed to the communication strategies used by religious leaders to maintain social balance. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of Bima Regency even placed Nggeru Kopa Hamlet as a “Harmony Aware Hamlet” because of its ability to manage religious differences peacefully. Thus, this

study aims to answer the main question of how interfaith leaders construct communication to build peace in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet.

Research Method

This research was conducted in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet, Donggo District, Bima Regency, from January 2023 to August 2024. This 20-month duration was necessary to build trust with the community, observe interfaith interactions across different religious holidays and agricultural seasons, and ensure the credibility of phenomenological data through sustained engagement. The study used a qualitative, phenomenological approach (Abuddin Nata, 2016), aiming to gain a deep understanding of the experiences and meanings constructed by interfaith leaders in fostering peace in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet. The paradigm employed is the sociocultural paradigm, which emphasizes the importance of communication in building social interactions, norms, and cultural values in a multicultural society (Ismail Nurudin & Sri Hartati, 2023). This hamlet has a community with diverse religious backgrounds, where Islam is a minority group amidst a Christian majority. The phenomenological approach was used to explore the subjective experiences of religious and community leaders in building social harmony through inclusive communication strategies (Maleong, 2011). Informants were selected using purposive sampling (Feri Sulianta, 2022), in which the researcher selects informants considered credible and capable of providing information relevant to the research questions. Key informants included religious leaders (*Lebe*, Pastor, Abbot Wati, and Priest), four individuals each from the Islamic and Christian communities (excluding religious leaders), the hamlet head, and community and cultural leaders.

Data collection employed three techniques: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation allowed the researcher to be directly involved in community social activities, such as the *ina riha* tradition in prayer events, weddings, and celebrations, as well as interactions in mutual cooperation (*karawi ulucempe*) (Rahardjo, 2020). In-depth interviews were conducted with informants, while documentation was used to collect visual and written evidence. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, consisting of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation (narrative descriptions and conceptual schemes), and verification/conclusion drawing (Ismail Nurudin & Sri Hartati, 2023). To ensure data validity, this research used source, method, and theory triangulation (Rahardjo, 2020). All participants provided written informed consent before interviews. Pseudonyms are used to protect anonymity, and identifying information has been removed. Data is stored securely and accessible only to the research team (Sandu Siyoto & M. Ali Sodik, 2015).

Results and Discussion

In this study, it was found that inter-religious communication in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet has an important role in building peace and social harmony. This communication is constructed through several approaches, namely inclusive communication, local culture-based communication, and religion-based communication. The Nggeru Kopa Hamlet

community has unique social characteristics due to its religious diversity. However, inter-religious conflicts have almost never occurred in the history of the community (Hilmi, 2025) (Abidin, 2014). In this context, religious leaders in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet, both Muslim and Christian, serve as mediators and facilitators in community social interactions. They not only function as religious leaders, but also as agents of peace that connect communities of different beliefs.

1. Inclusive Communication and Open Re

According to Berger and Luckmann (George Ritzer, 2014), the construction of social reality begins with externalization, the process through which individuals or groups project their subjective values into social interaction. In the context of Nggeru Kopa, religious leaders act as primary agents of externalization. They do not merely convey messages of peace ceremonially but actively create open dialogical spaces that allow the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and collective problem-solving to become shared assets of both Muslim and Christian communities (Saefudin dkk., 2024; Ritzer, 2014).

Inclusive communication is achieved by fostering an open dialogue between Muslim and Christian communities. Religious leaders regularly hold meetings in both religious forums and social activities. In these meetings, various social and religious issues are discussed together to reach an understanding and create solutions that accommodate the interests of all parties (Driessen, 2025). This inclusive approach also includes involving various parties in discussions about social problems faced by the community. Not only religious leaders, but also community leaders, youth, and women are given the opportunity to express their views. Thus, communication becomes more participatory and is no longer dominated by certain groups. In addition, inclusive communication is realized through joint activities that involve the entire community. For example, community service to build public facilities, social activities, and religious celebrations are open to all communities.



Figure 1 Collaborative Cooking Practices Among Religious Communities During Family Weddings In Nggeru Kopa

One of the local traditions that concretely embodies this inclusive communication is *Mbolo Weki*, a form of deliberation and mutual cooperation involving all community members. Regarding this kind of activity, *Lebe*, the Islamic religious leader, stated:

“We have always lived side by side with Christians in this hamlet. We have a mutual agreement, for example, in religious and social events. We respect each other. If there is a problem, we always discuss and find a solution together without conflict (interview with Mr. Ibrahim, 20 January 2023).”

What occurs in *Lebe*'s statement is not merely an expression of goodwill. It is an act of active externalization (George Ritzer, 2014). *Lebe* takes a subjective value that he believes (that religious difference does not hinder harmony) and projects it into the public sphere. He repeats this message in various forums Qur'anic recitations, village meetings, and even everyday conversations. Each time he utters a sentence such as “we always discuss and find a solution together without conflict,” he is constructing a reality in which conflict is not an option and dialogue is the only way (Husein, 2004).

The same thing was expressed by a Christian priest:

“In every meeting, we always prioritize the values of tolerance and togetherness. We believe that peace can only be created if all parties are open in communication. Therefore, interfaith dialogue is an important part of our lives (Mr. Syam Latinus, 8 January 2023).”

Here, externalization becomes an interfaith phenomenon. When Muslim and Christian leaders consistently voice the same message despite coming from different theological traditions, what Berger and Luckmann call early objectivation takes place (Ritzer, 2014). The community begins to hear the same “truth” from two different authoritative sources. Gradually, the principle that “open communication is necessary for peace” is no longer regarded as someone's opinion but as a social fact that no longer needs to be debated. It becomes an objective “reality,” standing apart from the individuals who utter it. The objectivation process initiated through routine dialogue is then reinforced by joint social activities, which serve as the material medium for the internalization of tolerance values. Inclusive communication is also implemented through community involvement in religious events that are not exclusive to one religious group (Garing dkk., 2023). For example, during religious holidays, people from different backgrounds participate out of respect and solidarity. This shows that communication is not limited to dialogue but is also a real practice in everyday life. Inclusive communication in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet is further supported by informal policies run by religious leaders. They actively encourage the community to be open in expressing opinions and to establish good relationships with others, regardless of religious differences (Ulya dkk., 2024).

Open religious dialogue, which in this community naturally intertwines with inclusive communication, emphasizes understanding and respect for each other's beliefs without requiring individuals to change their faith. Religious leaders teach the importance of respecting one another and hold regular discussions that present religious teachings in a peaceful light. They emphasize that every religion has principles that support harmonious living and reject violence (Hm & Halim, 2019). Thus, religious dialogue serves not only as

a means of conveying information but also as a tool to reduce misunderstanding and prejudice. Father Andreas added.

“We do not only talk about differences, but also about how we can collaborate in social activities. We want to show that religion should be a unifying force, not a divisive one (Father Andres, 8 January 2023).”

Father Andreas’s statement shows that externalization does not stop at the level of rhetoric but is immediately followed by concrete social action (collaboration in social activities). By linking theological dialogue with practical cooperation, religious leaders strengthen the foundation of objectivation: the community not only “knows” that they must live in harmony but also “sees” and “feels” that harmony in everyday actions. Thus, open religious dialogue not only reinforces objectivation but also opens the door for the internalization of peace values through collective action (Muslim dkk., 2025).

Furthermore, for the objectified social reality to be sustained, it must be internalized by every member of the community, especially the younger generation. Here, the role of women and informal education becomes crucial. Hawsyah, a convert from Christianity to Islam, revealed:

“I used to be a Christian, now I am a Muslim, but my family still accepts me. Nothing has changed in our relationship, and I can still attend both Islamic and Christian family events (Mrs .Hawsyah, 12 February 2023).”

Hawsyah’s case is strong evidence of internalization. In a community without robust internalization, a convert would often face social ostracism or even violence. But in Nggeru Kopa, her changed religious identity does not sever family and community ties. This indicates that tolerance values have penetrated the deepest structures of consciousness, even more deeply than religious identity itself.

Similarly, Maria, a community figure, actively transmits these values to the younger generation through informal education, stating:

“Since childhood, children are taught to respect each other. Differences are not reasons to fight, but opportunities to learn from one another (Mrs. Maria, 12 Februari 2023).”

Maria serves as a secondary socialization agent (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). The family and the community take over the internalization process initiated by religious leaders. Children are not taught tolerance through complex theological doctrines but through simple proverbs and everyday role modeling. This process ensures that the constructed social reality will not die with the founding generation but will be continuously reproduced.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the construction of social reality is never perfect and always faces challenges. While interfaith harmony is the norm, occasional minor tensions exist. Scheduling conflicts between Friday prayers and Sunday services sometimes arise, as do differing opinions about the appropriate volume of loudspeakers for

the azan (call to prayer) versus church bells. A small minority of newcomers initially shows reluctance to participate in mutual cooperation. However, through persuasive approaches and the role modeling of religious leaders, most newcomers eventually adapt to local norms, demonstrating that internalization can occur even among new members of the community. These minor tensions never develop into open conflict because the community possesses an already objectivated resolution mechanism (*Mbolo Weki*, which will be discussed in the following subsection). In other words, the reality of peace does not mean the absence of conflict, but the existence of a shared system for managing conflict. This finding extends Berger and Luckmann's theory by demonstrating that successful objectivation does not dissolve differences but rather establishes governance over them (Nitschke, 2024).

2. *Mbolo Weki* Tradition as Communication Media

After discussing how inclusive communication and open dialogue are externalized and objectified through routine interactions, this subsection focuses on a specific local institution where these processes are most visibly materialized: the *Mbolo Weki* tradition. According to Berger and Luckmann, objectivation occurs when human-produced values and norms become institutionalized as objective social facts that confront individuals as external realities. The *Mbolo Weki* tradition in Nggeru Kopa is a clear example of such objectivation, as it transforms the abstract ideals of tolerance and cooperation into a structured, recurring, and collectively binding practice. community. This tradition is a form of deliberation and mutual cooperation that involves all elements of society, regardless of religious background. The community gathers to solve various social problems together, such as building houses of worship, helping people in need, and organizing social events (Fajrin, 2021).



Figure 2 Traditional *Mbolo Weki* Ritual Conducted During the Wedding Preparation Phase

One of the key aspects of this tradition is the involvement of religious leaders as facilitators, ensuring that communication runs smoothly and without friction. They provide guidance on maintaining the values of togetherness and mitigating potential conflicts arising from religious differences. In an interview, a local religious leader, Pastor Andreas, emphasized:

“In Nggeru Kopa Hamlet, we always prioritize communication in solving social problems. In every *Mbolo Weki* meeting, both Muslims and Christians sit together, discuss, and find the best solution. We believe that as long as there is good

communication, conflicts can be prevented before they happen (Pastor Andreas, 13 Augustus 2023)”

This statement by Pastor Andreas illustrates how externalization – the initial projection of peace values by religious leaders – is reinforced through institutionalized practice. When religious leaders repeatedly declare that “good communication prevents conflict” within the formal setting of *Mbolo Weki*, their subjective belief begins to acquire an objective character. The community does not hear this as Pastor Andreas’s personal opinion but as a normative principle embedded in the tradition itself.

Similarly, the village *Lebe* (Islamic religious leader), Ustaz Ibrahim, explained:

“The *Mbolo Weki* tradition is a form of local culture-based communication and a key element in maintaining peace in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet. It not only serves as a space for problem-solving but also strengthens social ties among individuals with different beliefs. Each *Mbolo Weki* gathering fosters a sense of shared responsibility and collective decision-making, which significantly reduces the potential for conflict (Ustaz Ibrahim, 13 August 2023).”

Here, Ustaz Ibrahim explicitly articulates the objectified function of *Mbolo Weki*. The tradition is no longer merely a cultural habit; it has become an institution that actively produces shared responsibility and collective decision-making. In Berger and Luckmann’s terms, *Mbolo Weki* has reached the stage of objectivation: it confronts community members as an objective social reality that exists independently of any single individual’s will. Newcomers and younger generations inherit this tradition as a pre-existing fact, not as a matter of choice.

Participation in *Mbolo Weki* is not merely a social obligation but a concrete manifestation of interfaith dialogue and coexistence in practice. What makes *Mbolo Weki* particularly effective as an objectified structure is that it operates through participation rather than coercion. Community members are not forced to attend, but the repeated experience of successful collective problem-solving creates a positive feedback loop; the more they participate, the more they internalize the values of tolerance and cooperation.

The internalization stage of Berger and Luckmann’s theory is most evident in the way *Mbolo Weki* shapes individual consciousness, especially among the younger generation. Through repeated participation, individuals do not merely “learn about” harmony; they come to “live in” harmony as a taken-for-granted reality. In every *Mbolo Weki* meeting, the community gathers to discuss various social issues, including the construction of houses of worship, social assistance, and the resolution of minor conflicts that may arise. The uniqueness of this tradition is that it prioritizes the involvement of all parties in every decision-making process (Mutawali, 2021).

Citizens can show empathy and solidarity by actively participating in social activities. Even though women and youth are not always explicitly mentioned as formal leaders in *Mbolo Weki*, field observations confirm that they actively participate in deliberation and mutual cooperation. Their presence and contributions, though often understated in formal

accounts, are essential to the internalization of peace values throughout the community. Without their involvement, the objectified norms of *Mbolo Weki* would not reach all segments of society.

Beyond its function as a mechanism for collective decision-making, the *Mbolo Weki* tradition also serves as a subtle medium of civic and interfaith education. Through repeated participation in these community gatherings, individuals, particularly the younger generation, learn about pluralistic values in practice, not merely through formal instruction. The intergenerational transmission of social harmony becomes embedded in the lived experiences of mutual assistance and deliberation. Thus, *Mbolo Weki* not only preserves local wisdom but also serves as a tool for socialization in interreligious ethics, tolerance, and coexistence, ensuring the continuity of peaceful relations across generations. In this sense, *Mbolo Weki* exemplifies what Berger and Luckmann might call a “plausibility structure” a social arrangement that maintains and reproduces a particular reality (in this case, interfaith peace) through ongoing interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Keller, 2024). As long as *Mbolo Weki* continues to function, the constructed reality of interreligious harmony remains stable and self-sustaining.

3. The Role of Religious Leaders as Conflict Mediators

According to Berger and Luckmann, once values such as tolerance and dialogue have been objectivated through traditions like *Mbolo Weki*, they must be defended and restored when conflicts threaten to disrupt the social order. Religious leaders in Nggeru Kopa act as what may be called “guardians of objectivation.” They not only prevent conflicts but also actively repair and reinforce the shared reality of peace whenever it is challenged. Religious leaders ensure that any differences in views can be communicated properly through dialogue forums or joint deliberations (Abidin, 2014). They use various approaches to resolving conflicts, ranging from persuasion to negotiation.



Figure 3 Muslim and Christian Leaders (*Lebe* and Pastor) at a Christmas Celebration in Nggeru Kopa

Mr. Ibrahim, the hamlet head and pastor of Nggeru Kopa, explains “In this hamlet, we always resolve differences by sitting together, talking from heart to heart. If there is a problem between Muslims and Christians, for example, about land use or religious events,

we immediately hold a meeting. We believe that with good communication, there is no problem that cannot be solved" (interview with Mr. Ibrahim, 25 Augustus, 2023). This statement illustrates a key mechanism of objectivation maintenance. When Mr. Ibrahim declares that "no problem cannot be solved" through communication, he is not merely expressing optimism; he is reinforcing the objectivated norm that dialogue is the only legitimate path to conflict resolution. His role as both hamlet head and pastor gives his utterance institutional authority, making the norm more resilient against potential violations. In Berger and Luckmann's terms, he is re-objectivating the peace reality each time a conflict arises. Similarly, *Lebe*, the Islamic religious leader, also emphasized the role of discussion and mutual respect: "We have a tradition of *Mbolo Weki*, where we help each other in various social activities, including the construction of mosques and churches. This is proof that togetherness and tolerance can coexist without having to sacrifice each other's beliefs" (interview with Mr. Ibrahim, 10 December, 2023). *Lebe's* reference to *Mbolo Weki* as "proof" is significant: he anchors the abstract value of tolerance in a concrete, observable practice. This transforms tolerance from a subjective ideal into an objective fact that can be pointed to and verified by anyone. His statement thus serves as a powerful tool for ongoing externalization, even when no conflict is present; such affirmations keep the shared reality alive.

Religious leaders ensure that all parties involved feel heard and that solutions are fair and do not disadvantage either group. In addition, they often hold special sessions for communities involved in conflict to help them understand the importance of peaceful coexistence. With their empathetic, values-based approach rooted in religion, they have succeeded in easing tensions that have arisen in the community. What is particularly noteworthy is that this mediation role is not performed exclusively by men. Women religious figures, though fewer in number, also participate in conflict resolution at the household and neighborhood levels. For instance, Maria, a senior community figure, is often consulted when disputes involve family matters or when tensions arise between women of different faiths. Her involvement shows that the internalization of peace values is incomplete without the active participation of female mediators, who reach social segments that male leaders may not easily access. Although no major interfaith conflicts have occurred during the research period, minor tensions, such as disagreements over the timing of joint social events or perceived disrespect from newcomers, have been successfully mediated through the leaders' interventions. These cases, while small, confirm that the mediated resolution mechanism works in practice. However, it is also important to acknowledge that the success of mediation depends heavily on each religious leader's personal authority and trustworthiness. A future change in leadership could challenge the stability of this system. This potential vulnerability suggests that the objectified peace reality in Nggeru Kopa, while robust, is not entirely immune to change.

4. Strengthening Local Cultural Values in Communication



Figure 4 Community Cooperation (Rawimori) as Part of Customary Wedding Practices

According to Berger and Luckmann, the most durable social realities are those that are not only talked about but also embedded in everyday practices and material culture. In Nggeru Kopa, local cultural traditions such as *Karawi Ulu cempe* (mutual cooperation) and Rawimori (community work in weddings) serve as the embodied, non-discursive foundation of interfaith peace. These traditions externalize the value of togetherness through action rather than words, then objectivate it as an unquestioned aspect of community life, and finally internalize it in individuals through habitual participation. These traditions represent a form of sedimented objectivation – accumulated, taken-for-granted knowledge that no longer requires explicit justification. When a Muslim helps build a church or a Christian joins a wedding feast, they are not consciously “being tolerant”; they are simply doing what has always been done. The value has become an embodied habit.

Strengthening cultural values in communication is also done through teaching the young generation. Religious and traditional leaders together teach local cultural values that emphasize the importance of togetherness and tolerance (Mutawali, 2021). In addition, local culture is also used as a tool for peaceful conflict resolution. In some cases, customary mechanisms such as village meetings are used to find solutions to problems as they arise. By prioritizing a cultural approach, communication becomes more effective and accepted by all parties. What makes this cultural approach particularly powerful is that it bypasses the potential resistance that formal religious doctrines might provoke. A Muslim may hesitate to attend a Christian prayer meeting, but the same person will not hesitate to join *Karawi Ulu cempe* because it is framed as culture, not religion. In this way, local wisdom serves as a neutral ground where externalization and objectivation occur without triggering interfaith anxieties.

This study found that interfaith communication in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet is built not only through verbal interactions but also through social practices passed down for generations. One of the community leaders, who is also the village head, Ibrahim, emphasized that the people in this hamlet have long been accustomed to living side by side without conflict. He stated:

"Since long ago, we have been used to living side by side. Whether Muslim or Christian, we are still one family. If there is a problem, we never get angry right away,

but we sit together and talk properly (interview with Mr. Bapak Ibrahim, 15 January 2024)

This statement exemplifies how internalization works through cultural framing. The phrase “we are still one family” is not a theological claim but a cultural one, yet it carries immense social force. It has been internalized to such a degree that it shapes emotional responses (“we never get angry right away”) and behavioral routines (“we sit together and talk properly”). Ibrahim’s words show that internalization is not merely cognitive but also affective and conative.

Furthermore, the role of religious leaders in shaping harmonious communication patterns is highly significant. *Lebe* H. Mahmud, a Muslim leader in the hamlet, explained how their communication is always oriented toward shaping a community that respects one another.

"We always teach the younger generation to maintain good relationships. No matter what their religion is, what matters is that they know how to respect others (interview with H. Mahmud, 15 Januari 2024)."

Here, *Lebe* H. Mahmud articulates the educational dimension of internalization. The fact that teaching is directed at the “younger generation” indicates a conscious effort to ensure the continuity of the objectified reality. This is what Berger and Luckmann call secondary socialization, the deliberate transmission of institutionalized values through explicit instruction.

Additionally, *Andreas*, a Catholic leader, stressed that in every social interaction, the principle of equality is fundamental in fostering healthy communication. He stated:

"In every village meeting, we always prioritize togetherness. No one should feel superior to others because here we are all brothers and sisters (interview with Mr. Andreas, 5 February 2024)."

From this statement, it can be concluded that the communication established by the people of Nggeru Kopa Hamlet prioritizes equality, ensuring that no group feels superior or inferior in social relations. This approach aligns with the concept of interreligious communication, where interfaith dialogue must be built on mutual respect and understanding. The principle of equality, as voiced by *Andreas*, is a crucial condition for successful objectivation. If one religious group felt superior, the shared reality of peace would be fragile. By insisting on equality, community leaders ensure that objective norms are perceived as fair by all, thereby increasing their legitimacy and durability.

One concrete example of the success of interfaith communication in this hamlet is the experience of *Hawsyah*, a Christian convert to Islam. Despite changing her religious beliefs, her social relationships with her family and the community have remained strong. She revealed:

“I used to be a Christian, now I am a Muslim, but my family still accepts me. Nothing has changed in our relationship, and I can still attend both Islamic and Christian family events (interview with Mrs Hawsyah, 12 February 2024).”

Hawsyah’s case, already introduced in subsection 1, is revisited here to show how cultural values, rather than religious doctrines alone, enable such smooth adaptation. Her family’s acceptance is rooted not in theological reasoning but in the cultural principle of “we are still one family.” This demonstrates that internalization through cultural traditions can be more resilient than internalization through religious dogma alone. Religious identity changes, but cultural kinship does not.

However, it would be incomplete to claim that cultural traditions automatically guarantee harmony. Acknowledging challenges strengthens the credibility of this study. First, the younger generation, increasingly exposed to social media and urban, individualistic lifestyles, sometimes shows less enthusiasm for participating in *Karawi Ulu cempe* than their parents do. Second, when newcomers from outside the hamlet arrive, they occasionally resist local customs because they lack the same cultural memory. In both cases, however, religious and traditional leaders have responded by actively explaining the value of these traditions and by making participation more flexible. These minor tensions have not escalated into open conflict, but they signal that the internalization of cultural values requires continuous effort, especially in a changing social environment. In conclusion, local cultural values in Nggeru Kopa function as a powerful medium for externalization, objectivation, and internalization – but their strength lies precisely in their everyday, taken for granted character, which must be actively reproduced across generations.

5. Joint Commitment to Maintain Peace

One aspect that supports the success of inter-religious communication in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet is the joint commitment to maintain peace. From the perspective of Berger and Luckmann, such commitments represent the highest stage of objectivation, norms that are not only agreed upon but also internalized as moral obligations. One important form of agreement is the prohibition for Christians to bring and process pigs in open spaces, which is respected as a form of tolerance towards Muslims. In addition, at every religious celebration, people of different religions help one another and participate, not only as a symbol of togetherness but also as a concrete practice of strengthening interfaith relations. This commitment is also evident in the community's habit of always involving religious leaders in important decision-making. For example, in the construction of public facilities such as churches and mosques, religious leaders from various backgrounds are involved in the deliberation and construction processes. What makes this joint commitment theoretically significant is that it involves mutual sacrifice – Christians voluntarily limit their dietary practices out of respect for Muslims, and Muslims reciprocate by respecting Christian worship. This reciprocity transforms the commitment from a one-sided concession into a shared moral contract.

The success of inter-religious communication in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet is strongly supported by a shared commitment to maintaining peace. This commitment is not merely a discourse but is manifested in various daily social practices. One concrete example is the agreement made between religious leaders and the community on how to handle religious differences in everyday life. A Muslim religious leader, Ibrahim, explained:

"We have long agreed that it is not allowed to bring or process pigs in open spaces. This is not because we want to restrict their freedom, but as a form of tolerance toward us Muslims (interview with Ibrahim, 12 February 2024).

A similar perspective was shared by a Christian leader, Andreas:

We respect this rule because we also want to live peacefully together. Conversely, the Muslims here never prohibit us from worshiping in the church. This is what keeps us harmonious (interview with Andreas, 12 February 2024).

These statements exemplify reflexive objectivation: both parties explicitly articulate the norm and its rationale, reinforcing its legitimacy.

Beyond these agreements, religious solidarity is also evident in various social activities. Whenever public facilities, such as churches or mosques, are built, all residents actively participate in both the deliberation and construction process. Yusuf, a Muslim resident, expressed:

"Whenever there is a church or mosque construction, we all help. Because in the end, these are places of worship that are part of our community itself (interview with Bapak Yusuf, 25 March 2023).

This statement demonstrates internalization through action: Yusuf does not help because he is forced to, but because he has internalized the value that churches and mosques belong to "our community." The possessive pronoun "our" signals that the objectified reality has become part of his subjective identity.

This commitment is not only upheld by the older generation but is also passed down to younger generations through informal education within families and the community. A community figure, Maria, stated:

"Since childhood, children are taught to respect each other. We always tell them that differences are not reasons to fight, but opportunities to learn from one another (Maria, 20 March 2024).

Maria's role as a transmitter of values highlights the gendered dimension of internalization. While male religious leaders often dominate formal mediation, women like Maria ensure that peace values are reproduced in the domestic sphere. This dual structure, formal externalization by male leaders, informal internalization by female community figures, makes the joint commitment more resilient."

Nevertheless, no commitment is immune to strain. A potential challenge to this joint commitment is the increasing influence of online religious extremism, which some younger

residents are exposed to via social media. Although no open rejection of the pork prohibition has occurred, some youth have privately questioned whether such “compromises” are religiously permissible. Religious leaders have responded by holding special youth forums to reaffirm the local consensus. This shows that objectivation requires continuous maintenance, especially when external ideologies enter the community. The informal social contracts maintained in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet reflect a model of “everyday governance,” where peace is safeguarded not only by formal rules, but through shared moral obligations rooted in religious understanding. The agreed prohibition of public pig processing, for instance, highlights how sensitive interreligious issues can be resolved through mutual respect rather than legal coercion.

6. Interpersonal and Group Communication Strategies

In addition to communication in large forums, religious leaders are also active in building interpersonal communication with the community. They often visit people's homes to hear their concerns and provide guidance. This approach creates a closer relationship and increases mutual trust between religious communities. From Berger and Luckmann's perspective, interpersonal visits represent micro-level externalization. When a *Lebe* visits a Christian family, he is not merely being polite; he is projecting the value of interfaith care into the most intimate social space, the home. Interpersonal communication used by religious leaders in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet is highly effective at building bridges between religious communities. For example, *Lebe* (Islamic religious leader) regularly visits Christian residents to discuss various social and cultural issues (Keban dkk., 2024). Vice versa, Pastors and Priests also do the same for Muslims. Here, the boundary between formal and informal blurs. The resulting spontaneous internalization, where trust is absorbed without conscious effort, explains why conflicts rarely escalate.

In addition to interpersonal communication, group communication also plays an important role in maintaining harmony in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet. Regular meetings involving various elements of the community are often held to discuss issues related to social life. Forums such as *Mbolo Weki* are used to discuss various problems faced by the community and to find mutually agreed solutions. function as institutionalized spaces for collective externalization and objectivation. In this forum, each individual is given the opportunity to express their opinions without fear of discrimination. When diverse voices are heard and respected, the resulting consensus is not merely an agreement but an objectified social fact that binds all participants. This communication strategy is also evident in the practice of mutual cooperation, where Muslims and Christians work together on various social activities, such as constructing houses of worship, repairing village infrastructure, and other social initiatives. What transforms these activities into sustainable peace is not the activities themselves but the internalization that occurs through repeated participation individuals come to embody cooperation as a habit, not a duty. The communication approach used by religious leaders is not limited to verbal messages but also to concrete actions that reflect the values of togetherness. Thus, the interpersonal and

group communication strategies applied in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet not only function as a tool to solve social problems, but also as a foundation in building sustainable peace (Jamaludin & Yaqinah, 2024).

Women are central to both interpersonal and group strategies, not merely as participants but as active agents. Maria, for instance, is known for hosting informal gatherings at her home where women from both faiths discuss household concerns and community events. These gatherings, though less formal than *Mbolo Weki*, serve as powerful sites of internalization. As demonstrated earlier, Hawsyah's successful conversion without social rupture was possible in part because women like Maria maintained everyday solidarity.

The Nggeru Kopa experience serves as a microcosmic illustration of how interreligious harmony can be engineered and sustained through dialogical communication and cultural mediation. The success of this model suggests that social peace does not necessarily require homogenization, but rather, intentional efforts to institutionalize inclusive communication platforms and foster cross-community empathy. Moreover, women play a strategic role in maintaining interfaith bridges and sustaining social harmony. Although not always visible in formal religious leadership structures, women actively engage in interfaith social events, including community savings groups, joint religious celebrations, and local humanitarian aid. They also serve as primary agents in passing down the values of tolerance and cooperation to the younger generation through informal family education. As demonstrated by figures such as Maria and Hawsyah, women reinforce peaceful coexistence through personal relationships and everyday solidarity that transcend religious boundaries (Arifin, 2011).

On the other hand, while the community of Nggeru Kopa enjoys relative social stability, external challenges, such as the influx of exclusive religious ideologies via social media and preaching campaigns, remain a potential threat to their cohesion. Nevertheless, the well-established local communication system serves as an effective buffer against value disintegration. Religious and customary leaders actively organize discussions, community forums, and religious sermons that emphasize the importance of maintaining harmony and preserving indigenous values. This form of social resilience proves that the people of Nggeru Kopa are not passive recipients of external narratives but are proactive in safeguarding interreligious peace. Their culturally rooted communication strategies function as a robust mechanism for social defense and can serve as a model for other multicultural regions across Indonesia (Marhaeini, 2009). In summary, interpersonal and group strategies in Nggeru Kopa operationalize all three stages of Berger and Luckmann's theory: externalization through home visits and forums, objectivation through shared decision making in *Mbolo Weki*, and internalization through repeated participation and women's informal networks.

Conclusion

This research confirms that interfaith communication in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet has a crucial role in maintaining social harmony and preventing conflict. This study successfully

identified inclusive communication strategies developed by Islamic and Christian religious leaders in maintaining social harmony in Nggeru Kopa Hamlet. Through a phenomenological approach, it was found that interreligious dialogue is effectively constructed by drawing on local wisdom, such as the *Mbolo Weki* tradition (deliberative mutual cooperation) and *Karawi Ulucempe* (social collaboration). Religious leaders act as active mediators who facilitate open dialogue spaces, establish mutual agreements (such as the prohibition of pork processing in public spaces), and integrate the values of tolerance into cultural practices. This communication model has proven effective in preventing conflict, strengthening social cohesion, and transforming religious diversity into a peace-building asset, even though Muslims live as a minority. This study is limited to a single hamlet; findings may not be generalizable to urban or institutionally structured interfaith settings. Future research should conduct longitudinal studies on how younger generations inherit these communication practices, as well as comparative studies with hamlets lacking religious diversity.

The findings directly support the recommendation that the government and religious institutions adopt this strategy as a policy reference. The Ministry of Religious Affairs is advised to: (1) establish a "Harmony-Conscious Hamlet" replication program in conflict-prone areas; (2) integrate local wisdom into interfaith dialogue curricula; and (3) strengthen religious leaders' mediation capacity through training based on the Nggeru Kopa case study. In an era of rising religious radicalism fueled by social media, local wisdom as practiced in Nggeru Kopa offers a robust alternative: peace is built not through homogenization but through shared governance of difference, making religious diversity a social asset rather than a threat.

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