

## Intercultural Communication Amid the Diversity of the Teluk Patipi Community West Papua

Muhamad Zidnal Hikam<sup>1\*</sup>, Asep Dadang Abdullah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>UIN Walisongo Semarang, Indonesia

\* 2201026146@student.walisongo.ac.id

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#### ABSTRACT

The ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity in Teluk Patipi District, West Papua, presents both social resources and potential sources of tension, making intercultural communication crucial for maintaining harmony. This study aims to examine how the Teluk Patipi community uses intercultural communication practices to maintain social cohesion amidst diversity. A qualitative research design with an ethnographic communication approach was used. Data were collected through participant observation and in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, religious leaders, youth leaders, and migrant residents. The findings reveal three main communication patterns: ritual-cultural communication, everyday social communication, and symbolic-ecological communication. Ritual-cultural communication is evident in traditional ceremonies that strengthen trust, identity negotiation, and cultural adaptation. Everyday social communication emerges in multilingual interactions, reciprocal cooperation, and interethnic social relationships that build intimacy and solidarity. Symbolic-ecological communication integrates customary values, religious principles, and environmental awareness into everyday community life. This communication pattern is supported by local wisdom, particularly deliberation, mutual cooperation, and the philosophy of *Satu Tungku Tiga Batu*, as well as interfaith communication that promotes inclusivity and conflict prevention. This study concludes that social harmony in Patipi Bay continues to be built through adaptive intercultural communication based on local wisdom, shared values, and collective responsibility.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The coexistence of various ethnic groups, religions, languages, and cultural customs makes Indonesia a multicultural country. While this diversity enriches social life, it also makes it difficult for groups with different values, beliefs, and symbolic systems to coexist peacefully. In this situation, intercultural communication is crucial for enhancing understanding between communities, preventing conflict, and strengthening social cohesion. The term "intercultural communication" describes interactions between people or groups from different cultural backgrounds, where social relations and meaning-making processes are influenced by variations in values, languages, beliefs, and symbols (Liliweri, 2003). Successful cross-cultural communication requires cultural empathy, openness, and the ability to adapt to diversity (Budiarti et al., 2022). In multicultural societies, intercultural communication functions as a social mechanism that enables mutual understanding, conflict prevention, and the strengthening of social solidarity across groups. West Papua is one of the most culturally diverse regions in Indonesia. Ethnic plurality, religious diversity, migration, and strong traditional traditions shape daily social interactions. The ecological characteristics of coastal, island, and mountainous communities further influence communication patterns, fostering cooperation, solidarity, and shared responsibility as essential strategies for social survival (Prof. Dr. Wayan Rai S. 2021). Consequently, communication serves not only as a means of exchanging

information but also as a mechanism for maintaining social cohesion. There are approximately 4,500 people living in Teluk Patipi District, Fakfak Regency, with a diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious composition. The residents here come from various ethnic groups, including Onin, Bugis, Seram, and Buton, and they adhere to three main religions: Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. They also speak regional dialects such as Iha and Onin in their daily lives. A total of 2,300 (51.11%) of the 4,500 residents are male and 2,200 (48.89%) are female. According to data from the Fakfak Central Statistics Agency (BPS) (2025), Teluk Patipi has a high level of religious plurality, with Protestants as the largest group with 2,205 people (49%), followed by Muslims with 1,800 people (40%) and Catholics with 495 people (11%). Social communication patterns that prioritize reciprocity, unity, and mutual respect are shaped by this diversity. Mutual assistance during religious festivals, customs, and other social events demonstrates that identity differences are managed through inclusive socio-cultural communication that focuses on social harmony rather than escalating into open conflict. In intercultural communication studies, social harmony is viewed as a dynamic state created through a continuous, fair, and egalitarian communication process, not simply the absence of conflict. According to (Pratama et al., 2024), social harmony is a state of collective life characterized by harmonious social interactions, mutual respect, and minimal conflict between individuals and groups within society. According to Durkheim's classical sociological perspective, social peace is created through social solidarity, which allows people to feel united by a shared consciousness and prevents social conflict arising from differences in position and background (Ikramatoun and Nisa 2022). According to Sulistyani (Sulistyani, 2020), social harmony in a multicultural society is described as both the absence of conflict and an active process of recognizing and valuing various social identities, guaranteeing that each group has equal opportunity to engage in social life. Consequently, inclusive and equitable social interactions are founded on the principles of tolerance that are regularly applied in daily life leading to societal harmony.

According to previous research, intercultural communication significantly improves societal harmony through discussion, understanding, and positive handling of differences (Ode et al. 2025). Similarly, (Fatimah, Jelytha N, and Sianturi 2025) argues that when intercultural communication is based on equality and respect for cultural identity, it can enhance social integration and reduce the likelihood of conflict in multiethnic communities. In contemporary society, intercultural communication faces increasing challenges due to modernization and the rapid development of digital technology, which not only expands opportunities for social interaction but also increases the risk of misunderstanding and symbolic conflict when cultural awareness and digital literacy are inadequate. At the same time, studies on intercultural communication in West Papua are still limited and mostly focus on tolerance or interfaith relations, while research examining the integration of customary values, religion, and ecological factors into adaptive communication systems is still rare. Therefore, this study analyzes the intercultural communication practices of the Teluk Patipi community in managing ethnic and religious diversity amidst social and technological changes. Using an ethnographic approach and an intercultural communication framework, this study explores communication patterns, local wisdom values, and the integration of customary traditions, religion, and ecological awareness into daily interactions, with the aim of providing a deeper understanding of intercultural communication as a sustainable social mechanism for maintaining harmony in the multicultural society of Teluk Patipi, West Papua.

## 2. METHODS

To understand intercultural communication practices in the heterogeneous community of Teluk Patipi, Fakfak Regency, West Papua, this study combines qualitative methodology with an ethnographic approach. Because it allows researchers to understand the meanings, symbols, and communication processes from the perspective of participants in their natural social context, a

qualitative approach was chosen (Cresswell and Cresswell 2020). The ethnographic method is one of the qualitative approaches that is effective in uncovering detailed insights, as it enables researchers to engage directly with the community (Fadila & Yulifar, 2023). According to Spradley (1997) there are six steps involved in conducting ethnographic research. Selecting an ethnographic project is the first step. At this stage, the researcher establishes the research objectives, research design, and the relationship between the objectives and the research problem (Isi, 2010a). Interviews or question-and-answer sessions are part of the second phase. An interview is a data collection technique in which two or more people meet face-to-face to exchange ideas and information through oral question-and-answer sessions, allowing meaning to be constructed on a particular subject. In this situation, conducting an interview requires three key components: clear explanations, ethnographic-style questions, and a specific purpose. Data collecting is the third step. Essentially, depending on the kind of ethnographic study being done, a variety of methods with differing degrees of intensity are used to collect data (Isi, 2010b). Data analysis followed the interactive model of (Miles, M.B., Huberman 1994), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. However, the analysis was conducted thematically to identify communication patterns emerging from the field data. Interview transcripts and field notes were first coded inductively based on recurring communication practices. Initial codes such as customary deliberation, mutual cooperation, interreligious participation, ritual symbolism, environmental stewardship, and adaptation of migrant communities were subsequently grouped into broader thematic categories. Through a process of constant comparison, three major themes emerged: Ritual-Cultural Communication, Everyday Social Communication, and Symbolic-Ecological Communication. These themes were then interpreted within the framework of intercultural communication to develop the Teluk Patipi Socio-Ecological Communication Model, which explains the interconnected relationship between customary values, religion, ecological awareness, and social harmony. The following table shows the sources.

**Table 1.** Interview informants

No	Name	Position
1.	AR	Head of Teluk Patipi District
2.	MU	Head of Tibatibanam Village
3.	AL	Head of Mawar Village
4.	AU	Head of Baperkam
5.	MAU	Religious Leader of AFKN
6.	AG	Village Youth Leader
7.	AU	Customary Leader
8.	EO	Migrating Residents
9.	LK	Religious Leader

To enhance interpretive validity, member checking was conducted with several key informants to ensure consistency between the researcher's interpretations and participants' perspectives. Epistemologically, this study is grounded in an interpretive-constructivist paradigm, which views social reality as a product of shared meaning-making between researchers and community members (Kouam Arthur William, 2024). The final stage involved writing the ethnographic account and refining analytical interpretations based on continuous engagement with the field data (Isi, 2010b).

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### RESULT

Research findings indicate that intercultural communication in Teluk Patipi District, Fakfak Regency, West Papua, fosters social harmony amidst ethnic and religious diversity through communication processes rooted in customary values, religious principles, and collective consciousness. This study identifies three interrelated communication patterns: ritual-cultural communication, reflected in traditional ceremonies such as Meri Totompورا that strengthen the relationship between humans and nature : everyday social communication, expressed through daily interactions, reciprocal cooperation, and multilingual communication; and symbolic-ecological communication, which integrates customary values, religion, and environmental awareness into a socio-ecological communication model. The following is documentation that describes communication in teluk patipi.



Figure 1. Social relations

Furthermore, social harmony is maintained by two key factors: local wisdom, including deliberation, reciprocal cooperation, and the Fakfak One Stove Three Stones philosophy, and interfaith communication, which strengthens solidarity through shared social activities and inclusive village deliberations. Table 2 presents three main patterns of intercultural communication and two supporting elements found based on field data.

Findings	Empirical Evidence from Fieldwork	Social Function
Ritual-Cultural Communication	Participation in Meri Totompورا rituals, customary meetings, exchange of symbolic objects such as sirih-pinang	Builds trust and intercultural adaptation
Everyday Social Communication	Mixed-language interactions, mutual cooperation activities, interethnic social relations, village gatherings	Head of Tibatibanam Village
Symbolic-Ecological Communication	Musyawah, gotong royong, and the philosophy of "Satu Tungku Tiga Batu"	Maintains ecological awareness and social balance
Local Wisdom	Musyawah, gotong royong, and the philosophy of "Satu Tungku Tiga Batu"	Functions as social glue and conflict prevention mechanism
Interreligious Communication	Joint participation in religious celebrations, village forums, and community development activities	Strengthens cross-religious solidarity and harmony

Table 2. main patterns of intercultural communication and supporting elements

#### DISCUSSION

##### 3.1 Intercultural Communication Patterns in the Teluk Patipi

The intercultural communication patterns of the Teluk Patipi community function well because they are based on established leadership structures, social relationships, and traditional values. Together, village, religious, and customary officials control decision-making, communication, and conflict resolution, forming a reliable system for maintaining community harmony. Agung Lapadanga (September 19, 2025) stated that religious beliefs and customary norms

are often cited as the main sources of legitimacy in communal decision-making. These findings support Liliweri's (2003) claim that social institutions and regional cultural norms that influence communication practices are essential for peaceful intercultural communication. Social cohesion is enhanced and the dominance of certain groups is reduced through vertical contact with leadership institutions and horizontal interactions among community members (Heryadi & Silvana, 2013). The formation of shared meaning and negotiation of intercultural identity is facilitated by ritual-cultural communication. The Meri Totompورا ritual serves as a symbolic representation of the reciprocity between humans and nature, in addition to being a traditional ceremony associated with nutmeg cultivation. These findings align with (Falimu 2022) opinion that traditional rituals offer a communication channel for the dissemination of morals, values, and group agreements. Agus Ugar (October 21, 2025) asserted that symbolic behaviors including body language, traditional items, and the sharing of betel and areca nut convey sincerity, honesty, and openness. Furthermore (Kim, 2012) notion of intercultural adaptation is demonstrated by migrants' active participation in traditional rituals. Rather than fully assimilating, migrants engage in an acculturation process by adopting local traditions and communication styles while retaining elements of their original identity. According to Eko (September 15, 2025), participating in traditional discussions fosters feelings of acceptance and belonging, illustrating a dialogical process of identity negotiation based on respect and recognition. Local languages, Papuan Malay and Indonesian, are used by community members in daily interactions. This reflects the convergence of Communication Accommodation Theory, which states that speakers modify their communication styles to foster mutual understanding and reduce social distance (Soliz and Giles 2014) These intercultural communication skills are learned through daily contact rather than formal education, as Dayat (November 25, 2025) points out. Furthermore, migrants progressively embrace the ideals of One Stove, Three Stones, demonstrating Kim's (2012) adaptation process through acculturation to local standards while selecting elements that alter their original communication patterns. Consequently, ongoing engagement and cultural education foster the development of intercultural competence. Another key finding is the Teluk Patipi Socio-Ecological Communication Model, which integrates customary values, religion, and ecological awareness into a unified communication system. Through deliberation, mutual cooperation, environmental conservation, and intergenerational dialogue, the community maintains social harmony and ecological balance. Unlike studies that emphasize post-conflict reconciliation, the Teluk Patipi case demonstrates how communication functions as a preventative socio-cultural mechanism embedded in everyday life, extending (Kim, 2012) concept of intercultural competence through ecological awareness, empathy, and collective responsibility. Overall, social harmony in Teluk Patipi is maintained through the interaction of ritual-cultural, everyday social, and symbolic-ecological communication. Together, these patterns form an adaptive intercultural communication system that manages diversity through convergence, adaptation, and ongoing negotiation of shared meaning and identity.

### **3.2 Factors Influencing the Harmony of Intercultural Communication**

Several In Patipi Bay, interfaith dialogue and local knowledge are crucial for maintaining multicultural harmony. In multicultural communities, values such as gotong royong (mutual cooperation), musyawarah (deliberation), and mutual respect serve as social mechanisms to minimize conflict and foster cohesion (Heryadi & Silvana, 2013). Agung Lapadanga (September 19, 2025) stated that customary deliberations consistently resolve social issues, reflecting a participatory communication system that ensures equitable engagement regardless of language, religion, or ethnicity (Riswandi, 2024). Consequently, local wisdom serves as a cultural standard and a useful framework for maintaining community harmony. Interfaith communication further strengthens this harmony through customary forums and village meetings involving all community groups. These

forums address religious and social issues, including education, environmental issues, and village development. Imam Abdul Latif Kouman (November 14, 2025) emphasized that religious leaders provide not only spiritual guidance but also moral considerations in collective decision-making. Similarly, Mayor Arsyad (November 17, 2025) noted that traditional, religious, and community leaders collaborate in resolving social issues, reflecting inclusive and dialogical communication patterns. These findings support studies highlighting the role of interfaith dialogue in strengthening social solidarity (Paramita & Sari, 2016a) and preventing conflict (Rizak, 2018). Theoretically, these practices align with Kim's (2012) concept of Intercultural Communication Competence, as communities demonstrate empathy, openness, and adaptability through mutual respect and shared understanding amidst cultural and religious differences.

### 3.3 Challenges of Intercultural Communication

The development of digital media has transformed communication patterns in Teluk Patipi, with WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok increasingly used for social coordination, information sharing, and community activities. This shift reflects the transition from traditional face-to-face communication to network-based communication, as described by (Paramita and Sari 2016) According to Ali (November 15, 2025), WhatsApp groups have become an important platform for organizing mutual cooperation, youth activities, and village announcements. However, digital communication also poses challenges, particularly misunderstandings caused by the lack of nonverbal cues and differences in communication styles between ethnic groups, as highlighted by Liliweri (2003), Eko (September 15, 2025) notes that migrants must learn local expressions and cultural metaphors to avoid misinterpretation, reflecting a process of communication accommodation (Soliz and Giles 2014). Which A prominent example involves the spread of false information through social media, which led to accusations against community members before the information could be verified. Rather than relying solely on digital responses, community members sought clarification from traditional, religious, and village leaders. In this context, “the One Stove, Three Stones” philosophy serves as a cultural framework that encourages dialogue, shared responsibility, and consensus before receiving or disseminating information. Similarly, these values are embodied in traditional institutions and rituals such as Meri Totompora, which encourages consultation and social accountability, helping to prevent digital misinformation from escalating into social conflict. These findings indicate that local wisdom in Teluk Patipi has not weakened due to technological change but has undergone a process of digitalization. Traditional principles of deliberation, mutual respect, and mutual verification are increasingly applied in digital communication practices. Consistent with Paramita dan Purnama Sari (2016), the integration of local cultural values into modern communication systems strengthens social harmony in a multicultural society. Thus, the Teluk Patipi community demonstrates that digital literacy and local wisdom can work together as an adaptive mechanism to manage disinformation and maintain intercultural harmony in the digital age.

### 3.4 Social Implications and Local Cultural Policy

The success of the Teluk Patipi community in maintaining intercultural harmony has important implications for the formulation of social and cultural policies, both at the district and regency levels. The patterns of social interaction that have developed organically within the community can serve as a strategic model for local governments in building inclusive and participatory village governance. Customary values such as deliberation (*musyawarah*), mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), and local traditions have proven effective in regulating social relations without relying entirely on formal bureaucratic mechanisms. This finding is in line with the view of (Suranto & Darumurti, 2024) who emphasizes that public policies based on local wisdom tend to be more effective because they emerge from the actual needs and social practices of the community. In an interview, Agus Ugar (October 21, 2025) explained that the customary deliberation model is capable of mitigating conflicts at an

early stage, as every individual regardless of ethnicity or background is given equal space to express their views. Decisions reached through customary deliberation are more readily accepted by the community because they are perceived as collective agreements grounded in social trust. In the field of education, local wisdom plays a significant role as a foundation for shaping the character of the younger generation. The value of “*Satu Tungku Tiga Batu*” is understood not only as a cultural symbol, but also as a philosophy of life that emphasizes the balance of relationships between humans, nature, and God. This philosophy represents interreligious harmony as well as the integration of customary values, religion, and governance in the social life of the Fakfak community (Pandie, 2018). The integration of local wisdom values into formal education highlights the importance of multicultural education based on local culture to strengthen students’ identity and tolerance. By internalizing these values from the primary education level, the younger generation is equipped not only with academic knowledge, but also with the ability to interact harmoniously within multicultural societies such as Teluk Patipi.

The advent of the digital era also requires local governments to integrate local cultural values into the management of information and technology-based public services. The concept of *local digital governance* becomes crucial to ensure that the flow of digital information does not conflict with the community’s identity and social values. This is in line with the view of (Fakhri, Zakiah, and Lely Novia 2025) who argue that digital transformation must be accompanied by cultural literacy to prevent value disorientation within society. Thus, digital technology should not be positioned as a threat to local culture, but rather as a new medium for strengthening identity and expanding community participation in development. Furthermore, the success of the Teluk Patipi community in maintaining intercultural harmony can serve as a foundation for developing cultural policies at the provincial level. Patterns of social relations that emphasize equality, dialogue, and adherence to customary values can be translated into collaborative development policies. The involvement of customary leaders, religious leaders, youth, and migrant communities in the policy-making process aligns with the concept of participatory governance proposed by Jayanti (2023), in which community participation is a key factor in ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of public policies. With this approach, policies do not merely reflect bureaucratic interests, but also address the real needs of the community. Therefore, the social implications and local cultural policy of Teluk Patipi demonstrate that intercultural harmony is the result of structured social mechanisms that are collectively maintained. Local wisdom, interreligious dialogue, customary deliberation, and values of solidarity serve as essential foundations for a peaceful and sustainable social life. These values are not only locally relevant, but can also serve as references for policy formulation in other multiethnic regions across Indonesia.

### **3.5 Strategies for Maintaining Harmonious Intercultural Communication**

The intercultural communication framework and Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth's idea of symbolic justice, as articulated by (Miswanto, 2022a). can be used to understand the tactics used by the Teluk Patipi community to preserve harmony. research on cross-cultural communication in multireligious societies, mutual respect during religious holidays reflects cultural empathy and enhances trust, tolerance, and social solidarity (Sumberjati et al. n.d.). Regard for all identities and avoiding symbolic marginalization, inviting relatives of all faiths to family and social gatherings promotes openness, inclusivity, and recognizing justic (Miswanto, 2022b) is in line with research showing that respectful and egalitarian social relationships are fostered by intercultural communication based on local knowledge (Sumiati, 2017). While customary meetings offer participatory spaces for inclusive discourse and group decision-making, the inclusion of members of various religious groups in committees for the construction of places of worship reflects symbolic justice through the equitable sharing of social roles and meanings Miswanto (2022). Additionally,

gotong royong (mutual collaboration) promotes equality among community members, lessens prejudice and social distance, and enhances intercultural understanding through ongoing pleasant interaction Liliweri (2003). These methods are consistent with research demonstrating how local wisdom-based social activities successfully promote social peace, solidarity, and tolerance in heterogeneous communities (Hayani & Harahap, 2025).

### 3. CONCLUSION

Research findings indicate that the Teluk Patipi community in West Papua has developed a unique, adaptive, and sustainable intercultural communication system rooted in traditional values, spirituality, and ecological awareness. Social harmony in this multi-ethnic and multi-religious society is not accidental but is continuously built through three interrelated communication patterns: ritual-cultural communication, everyday social communication, and symbolic-ecological communication. Ritual communication legitimizes traditional values, everyday communication fosters trust and intercultural adaptation, while symbolic-ecological communication promotes balance between humans, society, and nature. Values such as musyawarah (deliberation), gotong royong (mutual cooperation), and the philosophy of Satu Tungku Tiga Batu (One Stove, Three Stones) serve as key mechanisms for maintaining social cohesion, negotiating differences, and strengthening intercultural empathy. In this context, traditional and religious leaders act as crucial mediators, bridging cultural and religious values, strengthening solidarity and social justice among diverse groups. This study proposes the Patipi Bay Socio-Ecological Communication Model, which explains the reciprocal relationship between communication, culture, and the socio-ecological environment. This model extends Kim's (2012) Intercultural Adaptation Theory by incorporating local wisdom and ecological dimensions as essential components of intercultural harmony. The findings suggest that effective communication relies not only on individual adaptation but also on the strength of social and environmental values that support collective life. Practically, this model offers insights for character education, inclusive public communication policies, and digital cultural literacy programs in multicultural societies. Overall, the Patipi Bay experience demonstrates that diversity can be a foundation for sustainable social harmony when supported by communication practices rooted in culture and shared ecological responsibility in the spirit of Unity in Diversity.

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