

## Muslim community communication through cross-religious social interaction in the Mardika market Ambon, Moluccas

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – This article aims to map research by elaborating on cross-religious relationships and social interaction communication for the Muslim community in Mardika Market, Ambon City, Maluku.

**Method** – Blumer's theoretical exploration is used with a constructivist paradigm and phenomenological communication method as fundamental references. This review is developed based on input from mardika market management coordinator and identifies current field research obtained qualitatively through several informal conversational interviews and observations of various gaps in social interactions.

**Results** – The article highlights the complexity of cross-religious social interactions impacting intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group communication for the Muslim community in Mardika Market. It begins with understanding cross-religious social interaction relationships and communication events, then finds patterns of communication relationships within the Muslim community.

**Implications** – This article contributes to realize cross-religious harmonization by discussing the search for the meaning of social interactions with the hope of living together peacefully. Strengthening social interactions is very important as it tends to reduce the incidence of cross-religious conflicts. This contribution offers opportunities for social interaction accommodation and ways to avoid cross-religious tensions.

**Originality/Value** – Many published articles focus on cross-religious relationships by detailing the tensions and benefits of cross-religious social interactions, but they are still lacking. However, this study presents the phenomenological communication method and constructivist paradigm to observe the development of communication within the Muslim community engaging in cross-religious social interactions in Mardika Market, Ambon City, Moluccas.



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**Kata kunci:**

Peristiwa komunikasi, pola komunikasi, interaksi sosial, lintas agama, perspektif fenomenologi.

JID | 54

**Abstrak**

**Tujuan** – Artikel ini adalah untuk memetakan penelitian dengan mengelaborasi hubungan lintas agama, dan komunikasi interaksi sosial lintas agama bagi komunitas Muslim di pasar Mardika Kota Ambon, Maluku.

**Metode** – Dengan menggunakan penelusuran teoretis dari Blumer dengan paradigma konstruktivis dan metode fenomenologi komunikasi sebagai acuan mendasar. Tinjauan ini dikembangkan berdasarkan masukan dari koordinator pengelola pasar mardika, dan mengidentifikasi kekinian penelitian di lapangan yang diperoleh secara kualitatif melalui beberapa wawancara percakapan informal, dan pengamatan dari berbagai kesenjangan dalam interaksi sosial.

**Hasil** – Artikel menyoroti betapa kompleksnya interaksi sosial lintas agama berdampak pada komunikasi intrapribadi, antarpribadi, dan kelompok bagi komunitas Muslim di pasar mardika. Diawali dengan pemahaman hubungan interaksi sosial lintas agama, dan peristiwa komunikasi, kemudian menemukan pola hubungan komunikasi komunitas Muslim.

**Implikasi** – Kontribusi artikel ini untuk mewujudkan harmonisasi lintas agama melalui pembahasan pencarian makna interaksi sosial dengan harapan dapat hidup bersama secara damai. Penguatan interaksi sosial sangat penting karena cenderung menurunkan insiden konflik lintas agama. Kontribusi ini menawarkan peluang akomodasi interaksi sosial dan cara untuk menghindari ketegangan lintas agama.

**Orisinalitas/Nilai** – Banyak artikel terpublikasi hingga saat ini terfokus pada hubungan lintas agama dengan menguraikan ketegangan dan manfaat interaksi sosial lintas agama masih kurang. Namun kajian ini menyajikan metode fenomenologi komunikasi dan paradigma konstruktivis untuk mengamati pengembangan komunikasi komunitas Muslim melakukan tindakan interaksi sosial lintas agama di pasar Mardika Kota Ambon, Maluku.

## **Introduction**

Qualitatively, this article is set in Mardika Market, Ambon, and will analyze cross-religious communication (Muslim-Christian communities) in Ambon City, Maluku. Ambon City is a small island in the Maluku province, known for its spice trade with the city symbol "manise" (a sweet or beautiful place) and the "peace gong." It is located between Central Maluku Regency, Petuanan Suli Village, Salahutu District to the east, and Leihitu Barat District, Petuanan Hatu Village, Central Maluku Regency to the west. To the north, it borders Petuanan Kaitetu, Hitu, Hila Villages, Central Maluku Regency, and Leihitu District, and to the south, it is bordered by the Banda Sea.

Ambon City is situated in the Maluku Islands, south of Seram Island, and is the capital of Maluku province. It was established on July 17, 1958, based on Law Number 60 of 1958. Ambon City covers a total area of 413.00 km<sup>2</sup>, consisting of 359.45 km<sup>2</sup> of land and 17.55 km<sup>2</sup> of sea, according to Government Regulation Number 13 of 1979 regarding the Change of Boundaries of Ambon Level II Municipality.

JID | 55

Administratively, Ambon City is divided into five districts: Nusaniwe, Sirimau, Teluk Ambon Baguala, Leitimur Selatan, and Teluk Ambon, with 20 urban villages and 30 rural villages. The population in 2022 was 352,490 people, with a growth rate of 0.27%, an increase of 965 people from the 2021 population of 351,525 people. The population density in Ambon City is recorded at 4,878 people per km<sup>2</sup>, with the highest density in Sirimau District (1,710 people per km<sup>2</sup>) and the lowest in Leitimur District with 197 people per km<sup>2</sup>.

Regarding religious demographics, Christianity is the majority religion. According to 2022 data from the Ambon City Population and Civil Registry Office, in 2023, 199,116 residents are Protestant Christians, equivalent to 56.925% (200,656 people) of the total population of 352,490 people. The Muslim population is 142,652 (40.471%), and Roman Catholics are 8,761 (2.486%). There are 274 Hindus (0.079%), 132 Buddhists (0.037%), 9 Confucians (0.002%), and 6 (0.04%) adherents of traditional beliefs.

Due to the cross-religious diversity (Ridwan et al., 2023) in Ambon City, the population primarily resides in urban areas with differences in ethnicity, language, race, and inter-group affiliations. In line with self-identity (Sulaeman et al., 2019), diversity is created through community social interactions. This diversity has a dialectical relationship considered truth and develops within the community, generating knowledge and understanding of social interactions with value and benefits. Social interaction actions are upheld and become a way of life, such as cross-religious social interactions for the Muslim community.

Social interaction proves that cross-religious communication in Ambon City has the value of diversity. Cross-religious communication (Ridwan et al., 2023) is conducted through social interactions in Mardika Market in Ambon City. Cross-religious has the local tradition of "*pela gandong*" as self-identity (Sulaeman et al., 2022) in religious and social contexts. Cross-religious has different religious identities with their meanings and creators. The difference in religious identity is based on "belief" (Bamat et al., 2017; Mensah, 2020) as a symbol of "recognition." However, cross-religious has similarities (Varisco, 2014; Hayes, 2021) through a social context as a cooperative symbol (Lattu, 2019), concern, and support in aspects of social interaction.

The emergence of similar cross-religious identities will impact certain communication events through social interactions, such as communication in mutual aid and handling during disasters and/or conflicts; communication in residential areas with mutual help, whether requested or not (building places of worship); when visiting other communities, the host community must provide food for the guest (if the guest brings home the harvest, the guest does not need to ask permission from the host community; marriage is not allowed). Cross-religious communication is the precursor of diversity in social contexts (Eck, 2007). It is a social contract considered self-identity, living together, helping each other, and practicing tolerance, mutual cooperation, and togetherness.

Cross-religious communication through social interaction for the Muslim community always presents as a theater performance (Goffman, 1959). Depending on the situation, each cross-religious performance can change. This phenomenon happens throughout cross-religious life, regardless of who, and continues to interact with symbols in all scenarios (Charon, 1989; Dolgin & Kemnitzer, 1977; Sulaeman et al., 2021). If everything is seen as social interaction, cross-religious communication will use verbal and nonverbal symbols (Mead, 2008). These symbols have meaning from the actions of communication (Charon, 1989; Dolgin & Kemnitzer, 1977; Sulaeman et al., 2021). These symbols influence social interactions when cross-religious communication occurs in mardika market. These symbols are crucial in the Muslim community's daily life of cross-religious communication.

Cross-religious communication has symbolic communication (Sulaeman, 2018), explaining the reference for understanding how intrapersonal communication creates a symbolic world when together with other individuals (Charon, 1989; Dolgin & Kemnitzer, 1977; Sulaeman et al., 2021; Setiawan & Ankhofiyya, 2023). Cross-religious communication is symbolic because the meaning forms the fundamental idea from thoughts about self-identity and relationships in performing social interaction actions to mediate and interpret meaning. Before the communication was initiated, cross-religious individuals used particular meanings for their world according to interpretations conveyed through social interactions in Mardika Market. As a result, communication actions are usually adjusted and aligned with specific meanings (Sulaeman, 2018; Riyadi & Karim, 2024). Only with self-adjustment can the hope of achieving social interaction goals in Mardika Market according to cross-religious desires be fulfilled.

The idea-topic of cross-religious social interaction is brought up through the axiology of this article, which has novelty value in using symbols (Blumer, 1986) by providing knowledge to understand communication actions in Mardika Market. Cross-religious communication is unique as a medium of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group communication to understand the values of "contemporary humanity," starting with understanding the diversity of social contexts (Eck, 2007) with the religious peace symbol of "basudara samua" – all are brothers (Sulaeman et al., 2022) showing kinship relationships with the treatment of social context acceptance.

This condition is the reason for the study of this article. Furthermore, the explanation and focus are based on theoretical symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1986), emphasizing symbols and the meaning of social interaction processes in Mardika Market, Ambon City. The study suggests that cross-religious communication uses the symbol "katong basudara samua" (we are all brothers) to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood through social interaction.

Through cross-religious social interaction in Mardika Market, the focus is on using phenomenological methods (Schutz, 1972) to reveal the social reality of these interactions, describing how the Muslim community feels, thinks, and acts (Sulaeman, Rijal & Ridwan, 2021; Tasleem, Mohd & Nor, 2020). Phenomenology explains the reasons and purposes of identity as a result of a developing construction, along with life experiences (Sulaeman, Mahdi, & Darma, 2019; Tasleem, Mohd, & Nor, 2020), implying that identity is a product of construction rooted in the knowledge of cross-religious social interactions in Mardika Market, Ambon. Its contribution is to realize cross-religious harmonization by discussing the search for the meaning of social interactions with the hope of living together peacefully. Strengthening social interaction is crucial as it tends to reduce the incidence of cross-religious conflicts. This contribution offers opportunities for social interaction accommodation and ways to avoid cross-religious tensions.

Community groups like cross-religious ones, through communication actions in Mardika Market, aim to understand social interactions in the processes of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group communication. It begins with understanding communication events and then finds patterns of cross-religious communication relationships for the Muslim community. This article's study suggests that cross-religious communication uses the values of "contemporary humanity" to harmonize social interactions with the hope of living together peacefully. Communication is essential and offers opportunities for social interaction accommodation and ways to avoid cross-religious tensions.

## **Research Method**

For this article, data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and several informal conversational interviews (Sulaeman, Malawat, & Darma, 2019; Irti et al., 2022) with the Muslim community. The interviews were conducted during cross-religious social interactions (Muslim-Christian communities in Mardika Market, Ambon) from November 2023 to February 2024 with forty-three Muslim community members as informants involved in cross-religious interaction processes, considering that the Muslim community as sellers and the Christian community as buyers engage in social interactions in Mardika Market. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and also using digital live-streaming media. Approaching the Muslim community through phenomenological communication allowed for a focus on the experiences and observations of social interactions for the Muslim community in Mardika Market through cross-religious relationships and intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group communication events.

The article presents the experiences of the Muslim community and the author's subjective observations, which are inherent in the interview transcripts. Only thirty-four Muslim community members were willing to share their communication experiences during the interviews, while nine informants were not. From the interviews and observations, the findings are that the Muslim community members willing to share their communication experiences resulted in interview transcripts with the authenticity of the informants' names maintained, and the author did not edit the language of the transcripts, creating pseudonyms instead.

The article's presentation, using a phenomenological communication approach with a subjective interpretative paradigm and qualitative methods, does not provide statistically representative indications of cross-religious social interaction experiences for the Muslim community. The objective is to assess intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group communication for the Muslim

community by mapping cross-religious relationships, communication events, and cross-religious social interaction communication patterns in Mardika Market, Ambon City.

The mapping presentation with a phenomenological communication approach for the Muslim community involves analyzing the data through qualitative data processing (Sulaeman, Kamaruzzaman, & Malawat, 2020; Ridwan et al., 2020; Irta et al., 2022). Conclusions are drawn regarding cross-religious relationships, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group communication as communication events and communication patterns of the Muslim community through cross-religious social interactions. Finally, the findings are verified with other data for subsequent articles.

## Results and Discussion

As a concept, communication provides an understanding as a "communication process" (Littlejohn, 2010) across religions (Ridwan et al., 2023) through actions taken as a community group with social identity relationships. The author classifies cross-religious relationships, communication events, and cross-religious social interaction patterns for the Muslim community in Mardika Market, Ambon City.

### *Principles of Cross-Religious Social Interaction*

The main principle of cross-religious interactions (Ridwan et al., 2023) is the agreement on kinship ties for intrapersonal interests through social interactions that seek to find compatibility between the Muslim and Christian communities to achieve harmonization. Since cross-religious communication acts as a social drama, it provides a social function in performing social interactions. This social function aims to avoid differences and divisions and to improve cross-religious social interactions in the surrounding environment (Turner, 1969, 1962; Sulaeman, Kamaruzzaman, & Malawat, 2020). Cross-religious social interactions have principles (values and beliefs) through social care, kinship, diversity, togetherness, and equality, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Principles of Cross-Religious Social Interaction**

No.	Principles of Social Interaction	Meaning
1.	Social Care	Cross-religions help each other to build harmonious communication in their environment.
2.	Kinship	A belief system based on self-identity that results in shared responsibility.
3.	Diversity	Mutual understanding, respect, and acceptance of community identities.
4.	Togetherness	Understanding contemporary human values through social interaction.
5.	Equality	Feeling the connection that binds identity with respect and acceptance treatment.

Source: data processing (2023).

The practices and principles of cross-religious kinship have entered the dimension of communication psychology. Kinship bonds (Toth, 2016) are developed from the practice of *pela gandong*, which is considered deeper than sibling bonds. Cross-religious kinship upholds the value of "*panas pela*" through social interaction agreements by gathering together. The purpose is to remind the people that gathering is a shared responsibility bound by an agreement to achieve

harmony. The value of "*panas pela*" represents pluralism as "unity through diversity" (Eck, 2007) as a cross-religious practice, accepting differences through kinship bonds, regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, gender, generation, social or economic status. Religious pluralism is a bridge to build connections, not to eliminate our diverse cultural and religious worlds (Eck, 2007), but to link cross-religious communities through kinship.

Cross-religious kinship supports the beliefs and values of *pela gandong* and serves as an early warning mechanism for internal conflicts (Bigger, 2009; Turner, 1962, 1969) between religions and cross-religious identities as a kinship process (Herman, 2015). For example, cross-religious kinship has bonds (Toth, 2016) that imply intrapersonal belief systems as symbols of self-identity (Kapferer, 2019), depicting "human values." Kinship is manifested through togetherness, cooperation, and openness in forming a social contract to create peace. Cross-religious kinship implies a worldview based on belief systems that symbolize community, self-identity, and kinship relationships. This worldview becomes a self-identity that results in shared responsibility. Cross-religious interactions form personalities by communicating mutual care, sharing, responsibility, and acceptance treatment.

### *Cross-Religious Social Interaction Relationships*

Ambon City, with a population of 352,490, faces various religious issues, including differing religious understandings, manifesting through mutual greetings and indirectly finding the meaning of religion (Coward, 1989). Diversity involves differences and is not merely a celebration of diversity (Eck, 2007). Diversity can help build harmony if inclusive, transforming towards religious and social diversity through *wasatiyah* (moderate) management of cross-religious communities. Cross-religious diversity is naturally observed, heard, and felt in the harmonious relationships of cross-religious interactions (Majid's, 1989). Therefore, the forms of boundaries in cross-religious social interaction relationships are categorized into three harmonies, each related to the other through cross-religious violence, *pela gandong* relationships, and acceptance treatment.

### *Cross-Religious Violence*

The violence in Ambon City on January 19, 1999, marked by a high level of violence and significant casualties, reflects the dynamics of political identity and societal polarization as a dissociative social process (Herman, 2015). The chronology of this violence can be divided into several stages. First, on January 19, 1999, a brawl occurred between a car driver and thugs at the car terminal in Batumerah village, Ambon City. This dispute (Herman, 2015) quickly escalated into cross-religious violence.

The second stage occurred on July 24, 1999. The violence started with riots in Poka village, Ambon City, and spread throughout the city. The third stage of violence began on December 26, 1999, when the Silo church and An-Nur Mosque in Ambon City were set on fire. The Christmas celebration of the Christian community coincided with "Natal Berdarah" or Bloody Christmas, a tragic event triggering conflict, violence, and terror as a tool of social control (Herman, 2015).

The last incident occurred on May 14, 2000, when Laskar Jihad entered Ambon City. This event was considered an act of anarchy, with actors from outside Ambon City "participating" in violent actions. The entry of Laskar Jihad, led by Ja'far Umar Thalib with a force of approximately 10,000 people, resulted in an imbalance of cross-religious power. The bond of relations shows the communities built by their ancestors with a worldview (Ridwan et al., 2023). The bond of relations becomes the identity of unity, openness, and courage and generates shared family responsibilities. Kinship will shape one's personality. This principle is a picture of intrapersonal life formed by two life principles, "*sagu salempeng mar bage dua*" (one sago divided into two). The principle of life means caring, sharing, taking responsibility, and enjoying together. One person's suffering is everyone's problem and must be borne together based on relational life. Thus, the worldview of togetherness-familial helps each intrapersonal in the community to assist and respect each other.

### *Pela gandong Relationship*

*Pela gandong* is an "identity" (Sulaeman et al., 2022) of local tradition. *Pela gandong*, involving two populations of different religions within a village of Muslim-Christian communities, shares a kinship bond. Cross-religious communities have both religious and social identities. *Pela gandong* serves as a model for cross-religious relationships, facilitating harmonious interactions. The *pela gandong* relationship embodies traditional life values and communal social care institutions (Chou, 2015; Geiger, 2019). Initially, *pela gandong* lacked binding but bound itself through agreements and traditional ties in a communicative event. Once bound by *pela gandong*, cross-religious groups engage in social interactions at Mardika market and consider themselves brothers by conveying social messages.

The strength of *pela gandong* identity lies in uniting and valuing cross-religious differences. *Pela gandong* serves as an example and conflict resolution method for cross-religious communities. If there is a violation of the *pela gandong* agreements, it is understood that the involved community will be punished. *Pela gandong* is a cross-religious identity (Sulaeman et al., 2022). Cross-religious *pela gandong* involves "*panas pela*" (taking an oath), and the final ritual procession of *panas pela* is "*makan patita*" (eating together) with traditional food. Eating together symbolizes "unity and togetherness" identity without distinguishing religions. The values of *pela gandong* have become religious and social identities (Kapferer, 2019; Wood, 2014) representing efforts to build civil pluralism (Eck, 2007) by accepting different beliefs—essentially theological pluralism (Coward, 1985)—for peaceful coexistence. The strength of identity (Kapferer, 2019; Wood, 2014) unites and values theological pluralism.

The idea of cross-religious identity through agreements and kinship bonds (Toth, 2016) can arise due to specific events. Examples including (1) mutual aid during natural disasters or wars; (2) cross-religious villages assisting each other, whether requested or not, such as building places of worship; (3) when visiting other communities, the visiting community must provide food for guests; for instance, if guests bring home harvests, they do not need permission from the visited community; (4) for cross-religious communities bound by *pela gandong*, marrying within the community is prohibited. The four values of agreements and kinship bonds (Toth, 2016) are the foundation of pluralism (Eck, 2007) as a social contract considered an identity of cross-religious communities who must live together, help each other, and practice tolerance, mutual assistance, and togetherness.



Muslim communities are part of cross-religious *pela gandong* with Christian communities, forming kinship bonds (Toth, 2016) and identity (Kapferer, 2019; Wood, 2014) through beliefs and values of *pela gandong* based on accumulated knowledge about kinship, diversity, equality, and togetherness through the context of social communication.

#### *Acceptance Treatment*

Cross-religious acceptance for Muslim communities encourages creating harmonious relationships through intrapersonal acceptance by understanding each other's differences and respecting one another to achieve harmonious religious acceptance practices in social interactions at Mardika market. Despite having different beliefs and religions, cross-religious communities maintain relatively cohesive social communication in their social interactions. They can actualize the potential of "contemporary humanity values" by doing good through realizing life in a comfortable market environment.

Cross-religious acceptance entails understanding each other's intrapersonal existence and being open to learning about each other's identities. Cross-religious attitudes include open communication, loyalty, and willingness to listen to and accommodate each other's desires. These attitudes are used to achieve harmonious social interactions, which can build social life with humility, free from prejudice, and willingness to embrace all diversity and communicate ideas.

#### *Communication Events of the Muslim Community*

The category of communication events in cross-religious social interactions at Mardika Market, Ambon City, through intra-personal, interpersonal, and group communication, involves devices starting from topics, goals, backgrounds, keys, participants, and interaction rules. The Muslim community conducts communication events through cross-religious social interactions at Mardika Market by opening stalls, where the Muslim community (sellers) communicates with the Christian community as buyers.

#### *Intrapersonal Communication*

The term communication refers to understanding the process of communication (Littlejohn, 2010). The fundamental understanding of communication varies in various aspects. As Lasswell (1948) stated, communication is the quest for who does what through the process and the impact of communication. Similarly, forms of communication, such as intrapersonal communication, are used to see how the process of making sense of oneself continues.

The basic assumption of intrapersonal communication is the ability of oneself to express what is crossing the mind and the ability to grasp language (verbal communication) that can lead to understanding (Littlejohn, 2010). The intrapersonal ability to formulate ideas and give meaning to something is a step toward knowledgeable intrapersonal communication. In the context of intrapersonal communication, cross-religious social interaction carries out the process of communication within oneself. Religious communication through social interaction with bargaining in the "stalls" of Mardika Market. The Muslim community (sellers) offers prices, and the Christian community (buyers) declares the desired price.

**Table 2. Intrapersonal Communication Events of the Muslim Community**

No.	Communication Event	Characteristics of Communication Event
1.	Topic	Price negotiation.
2.	Objective	Finding cross-religious agreements.
3.	Background	The intrapersonal communication process is located in the stalls of the Muslim community in Mardika Market.
4.	Key	The key use of speech tone is a necessary way of doing an activity, such as saying "samua basudara" in everyday Ambonese Malay.
5.	Participants	Cross-religious, Muslim communities (sellers), and Christian communities (buyers).
6.	Interaction Rules	Respectful and adhesive for mutual budgeting and profit.

Source: Data processing (2023).

In the process of cross-religious social interaction at the stalls of Mardika Market, the Muslim community engages in intrapersonal communication by conveying messages through (Table 2) (1) considering and calculating the selling price offered to the Christian community - whether it matches the offered selling price, (2) the selling price can cover costs, and lastly, (3) the selling price can provide profit and or loss. After intrapersonal communication, the Muslim community conveys communication messages to themselves. Then, the next thought is whether the selling price is appropriate for the Christian community's offer to find cross-religious agreements.

Cross-religious intrapersonal communication at Mardika Market stalls, bargaining symbols, finding agreements, Ambonese Malay language, and mutually calculating budgets and profits are categories of communication events. Cross-religious intrapersonal communication is communication events through several actions of the Christian community, such as asking for selling prices, knowing selling prices, and thinking about the ability to buy prices. If it does not fit the ability, then the Christian community takes communication actions, bargaining with the Muslim community.

### *Interpersonal Communication*

The fundamental reference of interpersonal communication is communication between individuals through verbal and nonverbal communication messages during interaction. Interpersonal communication presents how individuals in a relationship communicate with each other, "why interpersonal chooses the message chosen, and how the message influences the relationship" (Littlejohn, 2010). According to Solomon & Theiss (2013), interpersonal communication is a "continuous process" through body position, eye contact, and facial expressions. Intrapersonal communication provides a different understanding of communication through relationships via relationship meaning, relationship motives, relationship messages, and relationship movements (Littlejohn, 2010) (Table 3).

**Table 3. Interpersonal Communication Events of the Muslim Community**

No.	Communication Event	Characteristics of Communication Event
1.	Topic	Cross-religious decisions.
2.	Objective	Cross-religious agreements.
3.	Background	The location of the interpersonal communication process is at the stalls of the Muslim community in Mardika Market.
4.	Key	The key use of speech tone is a necessary way of doing an activity, such as saying "ale rasa beta rasa" in everyday Ambonese Malay.
5.	Participants	Cross-religious, Muslim communities (sellers), and Christian communities (buyers).
6.	Interaction Rules	<i>Pela gandong</i> identity with mutual respect by considering budgets and profits.

Source: Data processing (2023).

In interpersonal communication, cross-religious social interaction carries out the communication relationship process between the Muslim community (sellers) and the Christian community (buyers). Cross-religious communication relationships are needed and developed through communication event symbols. The success of cross-religious relationships requires interpersonal communication to communicate and interpret the goals of communication events. According to Schutz (Knapp & Daly, 2002), interpersonal communication is motivated to fulfill needs through inclusion, control, and affection. Cross-religious communication events are motivated to engage in social interaction at Mardika Market for "mutual agreement."

Cross-religious communication through interpreting interpersonal communication situations at Mardika Market stalls. The meaning of communication actions using the local tradition "*pela gandong*" is to respect each other. According to Blumer (2010) and (Cappella, 1987), the fundamental assumption of meaning in relationships is interpersonal action, interaction, and meaning. The meaning of the communication relationship of the Muslim community is communication action at Mardika Market through social interaction in cross-religious communication events. Cross-religious backgrounds engage in communication actions to achieve consensus. During cross-religious social interactions, the communicative tone of "ale rasa beta rasa" is used through the daily language communication process of Ambonese Malay. Cross-religious interpersonal communication has an identity of "*pela gandong*" that functions to move relationships with mutual respect.

### Group Communication

Fundamentally, a group consists of individuals who have a common goal and engage in communication to achieve that goal, viewing themselves as part of the group to get to know each other better. In the context of communication, a group is understood as interpersonal communication. The categorization of group communication occurs after individuals receive stimuli and interpret them through intrapersonal communication. Interaction between

intrapersonal communications forms the principle of group communication by conveying and interpreting communication messages, as seen in cross-religious social interactions at Mardika Market.

**Table 4. Group Communication Events of the Muslim Community**

JID | 64

No.	Communication Event	Characteristics of Communication Event
1.	Topic	Transactions.
2.	Objective	Cross-religious mutual agreement.
3.	Background	The group communication process is held in the stalls of the Muslim community in Mardika Market.
4.	Key	The key to using speech tones, which needs to be done in an activity, is to communicate regularly with feedback.
5.	Participants	Cross-religious, Muslim communities (sellers), and Christian communities (buyers).
6.	Interaction Rules	<i>Pela gandong</i> identity with mutual attention to each word and desire.

Source: Data processing (2023).

In the context of group communication, the communication relationship process is needed for cross-religious groups to interpret the goals of communication events in the form of mutual agreement during social interactions at Mardika Market (Table 4). The goal of the communication relationship is to motivate the Muslim community to engage the Christian community in social interaction for transactions. Cross-religious communication is conducted in Ambonese Malay regularly, requiring attention to each word and desire.

#### *Communication Patterns of the Muslim Community*

The Muslim community engages in social interactions at Mardika Market in Ambon City to communicate with cross-religious groups, viewing it as social communication (Littlejohn, 2010), representing a cognitive knowledge system. Social interaction is the beginning of social communication (Littlejohn, 2010). The fundamental assumption is that cross-religious interactions are conducted patterned and systematically. These interactions are not merely regulated social interactions but are perceived as patterns that connect the daily lives of cross-religious groups through the social context of *pela gandong*. The Muslim community uses social interactions to develop self-identity to build, foster, and preserve the spirit of solidarity, unity, and cohesion among different religions to avoid and reduce conflict incidents.

The Muslim community's social interactions are a communication process because they involve relationships with cross-religious groups. They engage in meaning-making, starting with examining the category of cross-religious social interaction events at Mardika Market. Each individual interprets these symbols based on their daily communication experiences (Setiawan & Ankhofiyya, 2023), although their everyday communication experiences influence this interpretation. The resulting interpretation is the meaning derived from the social interactions. This process is highly symbolic (Setiawan & Ankhofiyya, 2023), involving the interpretation of social interaction symbols at Mardika Market.

Social interactions are close and tight, always connecting communication events. Cross-religious relationships' emotional closeness and tightness are crucial factors in building harmony. This factor is related to the social context of *pela gandong*, "living as brothers," which signifies cross-religious kinship ties. It can be said that cross-religious groups, although different in religion, have kinship ties through *pela gandong* as a self-identity in religious and social contexts. These kinship ties foster closeness in social interactions at Mardika Market, serving as a collective cross-religious communication that creates social meanings in the form of values upheld by cross-religious groups, such as unity, religiosity, and tradition. These values create peace and stability through daily social interactions at Mardika Market in Ambon City.

The social interactions that emerge among cross-religious groups at Mardika Market represent the actualization of contemporary humanitarian values by doing good and creating a comfortable market environment. Cross-religious acceptance behavior is an attitude and communication action to understand each other's intrapersonal existence through self-identity in a social context by opening up to each other. This attitude and action involve openness, loyalty, and willingness to listen and share everything they know. This attitude is used as a method to achieve cross-religious harmony by embracing diversity.

## **Conclusion**

This study examines the communication of the Muslim community through cross-religious social interactions at Mardika Market in Ambon City. Social interactions among different religious groups are conducted as a communication process to build social identity through intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group communication. Understanding cross-religious social interaction relationships and communication events is used as the basis of this study, and the study identifies patterns of cross-religious communication relationships. The Muslim community offers various reasons for engaging in social interactions as part of their role as sellers, explaining what they experience and how they experience it from a phenomenological perspective.

Several findings explain that the Muslim community engages in social interactions with the Christian community (buyers) through intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group communication, focusing on the social context of "*pela gandong*" with the symbol of interreligious peace "*basudara samua*," which signifies kinship relationships based on acceptance, such as the values of "contemporary humanity" to achieve harmonious social interactions with the hope of living together peacefully.

Acceptance through cross-religious social interactions for the Muslim community is driven by the desire to create harmonious relationships by understanding and respecting each other's differences to achieve harmonious acceptance practices in social interactions at Mardika Market. Acceptance of cross-religious social interactions will create communication events by setting up stalls and identifying communication patterns for the Muslim community through close and tight social interaction processes, creating social communication meanings that allow different religions to live together peacefully and at a higher level, to collaborate through social context activities.

Cross-religious social interactions at Mardika Market emphasize the subjective experiences of the Muslim community. The analysis from a phenomenological perspective demonstrates the benefits of developmental studies for Muslims by influencing the Christian community. These

developmental values will build kinship by searching for the meaning of social interactions and enabling peaceful coexistence. Cross-religious social interactions enrich and develop social and religious perspectives by strengthening scholarly knowledge and the roots of da'wah (Islamic missionary work).

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