Dynamics of Intergroup Relations among Indonesian Youth

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Abstract The richness of social, cultural and religious diversity of Indonesia is a unique and relevant context for stimulating intergroup relationships. In such context, maintaining social harmony is a challenge because group identity is easily salient. This study aims to picture intergroup relationships among Indonesian youth, who will take main roles on the future of this country. They are also potential change agents for communities. Specifically, this study explores and identifies salient social, cultural and religion group categorization among college students in Indonesia. Furthermore, this study examines the level of outgroup trust and the level of accommodative communication practicing in interaction with members of outgroup. This study also pays a particular attention on exploring the role models for Indonesian youth in communication. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are implemented using questionnaires and focus group discussions. 1197 college students from five universities in four big cities in Indonesia are participated. The findings show that the group categories salient are religion, ethnicity, and clan/family memberships. This indicates that strong group identity is highly likely to be built mainly based on those categorizations, which would be used as a basis to make distinction who belongs to the ingroup and the outgroup. The findings also identify the low of outgroup trust among the participants, particularly on benevolence dimension. The findings are in line with the assumption that less positive evaluation, specifically on affective basis tend to be given to people from different group identity. Furthermore, participants also tend to avoid interaction with outgroups, and to express such a non-accommodative communication in interaction with members of outgroups. Almost thirty percent of the participants does not have role models in communication may take role on the results. They do not have sufficient references to communicating accommodatively with members of outgroups. While a few participants have an attitude of openness to differences, most of them appear reluctant to have intensive interaction with members of outgroups due to negative anticipation and feeling uncomfortable in dealing with outgroups. The

implication from this study is that the context of diversity in Indonesia needs to be managed, particularly for the young generation, so the negative impact of low of outgroup trust and less positive communication with members of outgroups could be minimized.

Keywords Intergroup Relations, Indonesian Youth, Accommodative Communication, Trust, Role Model

1. Introduction

With more than 491 ethnic groups, 567 languages and dialect, and various religion groups and other groups, Indonesia indeed is a country with very high diversity. This provides a unique context for intergroup dynamics. On one side, intergroup relationships is easy to stimulate because people rather interacting with one another based on groups salience. On the other side, people living in a diversity context is growing up with intensive interactions with individuals from different backgrounds since their early life, so they are expecting to have attitude of openness to differences. Social harmony in interaction with individuals from different backgrounds is also found in a bulk of local wisdoms, which are expressed in traditional arts and rituals. Picturing the intergroup dynamic in Indonesia is therefore important in order to understand the unique context which is not often explored in the literature. Understanding intergroup relationships in Indonesia is also a substantial step to develop an effective program to maintain social harmony. The target population is Indonesian youth, particularly college students, who will take main roles on the future of this country, and are also potential change agents for creating harmony in communities. The conceptual framework used is derived from Social Identity Theory (1,2).

Intergroup Relations in Indonesia

One among the wellknown theories in the area of intergroup relationships is Social Identity Theory from Tajfel

(3). According to Social Identity Theory, self is mainly conceptualised in intergroup context, and the behaviour of individuals is based significantly on their group memberships. The theory is taking a view that when group identities are salient, then the interaction among individuals are mainly based on group membership. It is indicated by depersonalization (high attention on group cues than toward personal characteristics), followed by ingroup and outgroup bias (4).

Numerous cross cultural studies have shown that Indonesia is a collectivist country as indicated by strong group cooperation, collective achievements and strong group attachments (e.g. 5-8) and strong group solidarity and traditional order (9). In terms of social identification, self conception as a group member is even stronger, and the distinction between ingroup and outgroup is sharper when there is strong attitude that favor interdependence and embeddedness in the ingroup. It is a part of individuals' awareness that they are members of a common group and have a shared social identity (10). In order to achieve self comfort, individuals from a collectivist culture need a clear position within the group, so they have a clear guidance to follow when interact with one another. Thus, this make it is difficult for them living separately from their group (11). There is a high tendency in the society to make categorization as consequence of the importance of group within the society (5,11). Maintenance of strong and cohesive ingroups in collectivistic cultures leads to strong ingroup loyalty, cooperation and solidarity. They perceive members of their ingroup more positively, with stronger mutual influence and ingroup favoritism (12).

Intergroup Trust

Numerous studies in the area of intergroup relations indicate that same identities are a substantial basis to make evaluation about other individuals, which influence their belief to rely on others within the same group (14). Trust concepts, therefore are among the critical components on the intergroup context. Trust is defined as an individual belief that the other individuals interact with has the ability, integrity, benevolence, predictability, and reliability in their behaviour (15, 16). Trust has long been believed to be among the key factors contributing to the success of cooperation work, which would encourage a more positive interaction among individuals or groups. Interaction is based on a belief of capability, benevolence, and integrity of the other party (15, 17). In a high trust situation, there is a belief that the other party is capable of fulfilling what is expected, understanding in achieving its mutual goals, and will not treat others unfairly for its own benefit. Moreover, there is also belief that the other party will act accordingly to the common social norms and values.

On the intergroup context, trust is no longer developed based on a consequence of the direct interaction of all parties, but rather, it is developed based on membership in the same category, especially when the membership of that group is salient (17). Individuals from the same group membership

(ingroup) is believed to develop values and social norms applied in the group, so that they have lower possibilities to act in unpredictable ways. As a result, it is expecting individuals would have low risks in interaction. That kind of belief reinforces the expectation of individuals to cooperate and to have high level of ingroup trust compared to the level of outgroup trust (14).

Intergroup Communication

Intergroup relationship is also being expressed through communication because when communicating in intergroup context, individuals are expressing their motivation to promote one group and to discriminate other groups (21). Communication is a means through which intergroup comparison is maintained (19). Group identity is formed, shaped and maintained through communication. Accents, words, jargons, dialects which are exclusively practiced within a particular group would build a clear boundary between one group and other groups. Others who are not understand topics and words used in interaction would easily feel as not being a part of the group (20). In this such a situation, conflict is highly likely to happen because this enhance the differences and segregation between "we" and "they", would lead to less sympathy and hard compromising in intergroup interactions (32). Many studies show the contribution of communication on discrimination of members of outgroups in intergroup interaction (22, 23). Therefore, communication is not only about information exchange, but also about group identity negotiation during interaction through the process of accommodation (24).

On this study, a number of communication strategies proposed by Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (25, 26) is used. The four main types of strategies are approximation, interpretability, discourse management, and interpersonal control. Approximation strategies focus on the adjustment of a communicator's communication style to be more or less like the other person. Interpretability strategies refer to the strategies used by the communicator to attune to another's communication skills and competence, for instance, the communicator may use slower or simpler speech, ask more questions to check understanding, or choose more familiar topics. Discourse management strategies refer to the understanding of the other person's conversational needs, in terms of making an effort to share topic choices and conversational register. Interpersonal control strategies focus on the strategies of giving the communicator and/or the other person a specific position or role in the interaction.

Research Objectives

The aims of this study are (1) to identify the salient social, cultural and religion group categorization among college students in Indonesia; (2) to describe the level of students' outgroup trust; (3) to describe the level of accommodative communication practising in interaction with members of outgroups; (4) to explore who are the participants' role models in communication.

2. Method

In order to have more comprehensive picture of intergroup relationship in Indonesia, mix method of quantitative and qualitative approaches were implemented in this study. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data and series of focus group discussions were carried out for collecting qualitative data. Bahasa Indonesia was used in all procedures of data collection.

Participants

A non random sampling technique was applied in this study. In total 1197 college students of five universities in four big cities in Indonesia, i.e. Jakarta, Jogjakarta, Surakarta and Makassar were participated. More men (55.47%, $n = 664$) participated in this study than women (44.53%, $n = 533$). In terms of religion, most of the participants were Moslem (51.04%), and followed by Christian (21.72%), Catholic (21.05%), Budha (5.18%), and other (1,01%). They came from various ethnic backgrounds. Only 5.01% ($n = 60$) of the participants had intensive interactions with members of outgroups. Majority of them has a limited contact with people from different backgrounds.

Measures

Three questionnaires were being used in the study. The first questionnaire identified group identity salience, the second questionnaire measured the level of outgroup trust, while the third questionnaire measured the frequency of accommodative communication practising in communication with members of outgroups. There was also a single open ended item asking participants to mention their role models in communication.

On the first questionnaire, participants were given scenarios with various situations. The first situation was the social group they refer to when they introduce themselves. The second situation was the social group of the person they prefer to get along with. The third situation was the social group of the person they are willing to support when conflicts occur. The fourth situation was the social group they will feel offended when the person from the group is blamed and scolded. The last situation was the social group the person they most admired belong to. Participants were asked to rank their social group preferences in the above situations, from 1 (the most social group preference) to 7 (the least social group preference). The social groups choices were religion, ethnicity, family/clan, place of residence, school/faculty/university where they study, important organization they belong to, and other things that are not related to the social group.

The ten items questionnaire of trust was developed based on the three aspects of trust: ability, benevolence, and integrity (15). The questionnaire takes the form of four points Likert scale (from highly unfavorable to highly favorable). The example of the item is "I believe that person

from other group is telling the truth about their past live". The psychometric properties of the questionnaire are sound, with construct validity range is from .32 to .57, while the alpha reliability coefficient is .70 for the current study.

The questionnaire of accommodative communication was developed and adapted from the scale used by Gardner and Jones (27) using Communication Accommodation Theory (25, 26). Participants were asked to report the extent to which they are practising the strategies of approximation, interpretability, discourse management, and interpersonal control in their communication with members of outgroups (18 items, e.g., "I ignore opinions different from what I belief). Responses to these items are made on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1-almost never; to 4-almost always. Data from this study shows sound Cronbach's alpha reliability score (.71), and the construct validity range is from .32 to .52.

Data Analysis

The means and standard deviations of outgroup trust and accommodative communication are calculated to give a general description of the data. The profile of distribution of the data is also used to classify the participants into the high, medium and low levels on outgroup trust and on the frequency of practising accommodative communication in interacting with members of outgroups. The percentages are also presented as part of the findings.

The median values of the rank of social group preferences is implied to identify the most salient social group.

Cross tabulation analysis is conducted to picture the link between the most salient social group and the level of outgroup trust and also between the most salient social group and the frequency of practicing accommodative communication in interacting with members of outgroups.

Qualitative Method

On the qualitative approach, eight serials of focus group discussions were conducted (two in each city) with 10-12 participants in each group. Focus group discussions aim to explore the participants views of individuals from different backgrounds, their relationships with members of outgroups, and their role models in communication.

All information from the focus group discussions was transcribed. A content analysis was done by clustering the responses based on the coding procedures. Inter-rater reliability with the coding process was done through the discussion among researchers, and the revision and the completion of the coding procedure were done in the Mayring (28). Furthermore, themes were identified.

3. Findings

The following table 1 shows means and standard deviations of all dimensions of outgroup trust and strategies of accommodative communication.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of trust and accommodative communication

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Trust	24.79	3.11
Benevolence dimension	4.81	1.46
Ability dimension	7.10	1.00
Integrity dimension	12.89	1.76
Accommodative Communication	50.25	6.01
Approximation strategy	10.05	2.01
Interpretability strategy	18.03	2.30
Discourse Management strategy	8.47	1.45
Interpersonal Control strategy	13.70	2.42

Referring to median values of the rank given by the participants on their responses to the group identity salient, it shows that there are three social groups which consistently put in the three highest rank as the participants' preferences in all situation (see Table 2). Religion is the most salient group identity, followed by clan/family memberships and ethnicity. These group categorization are being used as the bases to make distinction between who are belong to the ingroup and the outgroup.

Table 2. Salience of Group Categorizations

Rank	Group Categorization
1	Religion
2	Clan/Family memberships
3	Ethnicity

The following Table 3, shows students' level of outgroup trust. The number of students of high level of outgroup trust (16.54% n = 198) is the lowest in comparison to the number of students of medium level (37.34% n = 447), and low level of outgroup trust (46.12% n = 552).

Table 3. Level of outgroup trust

	Number of participants	Percentage
High level of trust	198	16.54
Medium level of trust	447	37.34
Low level of trust	552	46.12
TOTAL	1197	100

Looking at the results on each dimension of trust (see Table 4, 5 and 6), the same results are shown. However, low level of outgroup trust is particularly demonstrated on benevolence dimension (59.98% = 718). Participants develop such a higher outgroup trust on the dimensions of ability and integrity. The biggest percentage of them is on the medium level of outgroup trust, both on ability dimension (41.19% = 493) and on integrity dimension (45.95% = 550).

Table 4. Level of outgroup trust based on benevolence dimension

	Range	Number of participants	Percentage
High level of trust	14-9	188	15.71
Medium level of trust	8	291	24.31
Low level of trust	7--3	718	59.98
TOTAL		1197	100

Table 5. Level of outgroup trust based on ability dimension

	Range	Number of participants	Percentage
High level of trust	12--6	265	22.14
Medium level of trust	5	493	41.19
Low level of trust	4--2	439	36.68
TOTAL		1197	100

Table 6. Level of outgroup trust based on integrity dimension

	Range	Number of participants	Percentage
High level of trust	22-15	171	14.29
Medium level of trust	14-13	550	45.95
Low level of trust	12--7	476	39.77
TOTAL		1197	100

Consistent with the results on outgroup trust, the participants are also shown having a low frequency of practicing accommodative communication in their interaction with members of outgroups, as presented on Table 7. Only a small percentages of the participants (14.45% = 173) who are practicing such a respect, empathy and understanding when interacting with members of outgroups (high level of accommodative communication). The findings support most of the previous studies in the intergroup context (e.g.21).

Table 7. Level of Accommodative Communication

	Number of participants	Percentage
High level of accommodative communication	173	14.45
Middle level of accommodative communication	382	31.91
Low level of accommodative communication	642	53.63
TOTAL	1197	100

Furthermore, a cross tabulation analysis is conducted between each of the group identity salience and outgroup trust. It is done by grouping participants who put each of the group identity on the first rank of their preferences and link it with their level of outgroup trust. The findings (Table 8) show that whatever social group preferences the participants have, most of them has a low level of outgroup trust. This means that whether religion, ethnicity, or clan/family membership is used as a basis to differentiate between ingroup and outgroup, they are not likely to put on trust to members of outgroups.

Table 8. Level of outgroup trust among each of the salient group identity

Salient Social Group	Low Trust	Medium Trust	High Trust
Religion	301	226	76
Ethnicity	147	96	42
Clan/Family Membership	258	197	63

Cross tabulation on group identity salience and accommodative communication presented in Table 9. It shows that in all categories of salient group, high number of participants in this study indicate low accommodative communication with members of outgroups. It is indicated that whatever social categorization salience, participants are practicing lack of positive communication with members of outgroups. However, among the salient group, data in Table 9 shows that the highest number of participants with low accommodative communication are in the group of religion.

Table 9. Level of Accommodative Communication among each of the salient group identity

Salient Social Group	Low Accommodative Communication	Medium Accommodative Communication	High Accommodative Communication
Religion	413	160	30
Ethnicity	199	76	10
Clan/Family Membership	368	134	16

Data gathered from focus group discussions confirm the statistical findings. Eventhough some of participants are sincere to the group differences and have attitude of openness to differences, most of them tend to avoid interaction with members of the outgroups. They reluctant to communicate with members of outgroups, particularly in face to face communication, due to negative anticipation of conflicting values and perspectives during the interaction that will give effect to uncomfortable feeling. In addition, they do less effort to understand and to give respect to members of outgroups.

Table 10. Role model in communication

Role model in communication	Number of participants
No role model	355
Family (Father : 75 people)	255
Soekarno (Indonesia founding father & the first president)	88
Mario Teguh (public figure on national TV)	87
Obama (USA president)	80
Jokowi (Indonesia current president)	72
Teacher/lecturer	48
Oprah Winfrey	46
Habibie (The third president of Indonesia who is famous as a very intelligent person)	36
Close friends/buddies	29

As shown in Table 10, thirty percent of the participants do not have role models in communication, particularly on intergroup situation. Consequently, they do not have sufficient references on how to practising positive communication to members of outgroups. Among those who have role models in communication, it is likely that family and mass media are being used as the sources for role models preferences. Fathers and public figures – both national and international, frequently showed up in mass media are

mostly chosen as the participants' preference for role models in communication. In contrast, figure in educational setting, e.g. teachers, in only chosen by very few participants as their role model in communication.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In general, the study provides evidence that social group categorization, such as religion, ethnicity, and clan/family membership are salient among Indonesian youth, and are highly likely to stimulate intergroup relationships. Previous assumption that people living in a diversity context is dealing with individuals from different background since their early life, so that they might have attitude of openness to differences is not confirmed in the current study. The background data of the participants shows that only 5.01% (60) of them have such an extensive contact with people from different backgrounds. This indicates that they tend to interact only limited within their own groups. The low level of outgroup trust and the low frequency of practising accommodative communication with members of outgroups found in the study also indicates that most of the participants do not have attitude of openness to differences. The findings are consistent with existing literature on the intergroup relations. This study suggests the aplicability of existing theory of social identity and intergroup relations in the unique Indonesian setting with highly diversity.

This study suggests that the diversity of Indonesia, in terms of religion, ethnicity, and family/clan, creates the salient of group identity. Interactions with members of outgroups are based on the group identity, indicated by the lack of outgroup trust, particularly on benevolence/affective basis and the lack of accommodative communication with members of outgroups. Previous study conducted in Indonesia setting also showed the meaningful of religious group identity on everyday life. Students tend to make a judgment based on religious categorizations even on situation which is not related to religion issues (28). The current study reveals that ethnicity and clan/family members are also salient group categorization in addition to religion.

While the current study provides insights into the intergroup dynamics among Indonesian youth, several limitations must be noted. First, as a consequent of non-random sampling implemented in this study, there is no guarantee that the findings are representative of Indonesian youth in general, even though the participants are carefully selected in terms of geographical locations and public/private university representations. All results should be generalized to a bigger population with caution. It is also a challenge to ask participants to rank their social group preferences. The first questionnaire is not easy to understand without extensive explanation individually. As the result, there is a number of incomplete data which could not be used for further analysis.

As the implication, this study suggests that more interaction with members of outgroups may help to develop

higher outgroup trust, as suggested by Allport's contact hypothesis perspective. Allport (30) proposed that intensive interaction with outgroup members could help to know the outgroup members personally, not only base on group stereotype features. This mechanism would break the thick wall separation between ingroup and outgroup, help to perceive from outgroup perspectives, so that conflict could be minimized and the possibility of social discrimination could be reduced (30, 31).

Higher skills on accommodative communication is also needed because expressing respect and understanding when interacting with members of outgroups may induce sense of sharing identity which enhance outgroup trust and lead to social harmony. Intensive training might be proposed to develop such skills. It is also regarded important to provide more good role models in communication who are expressing respect and understanding when interacting with members of outgroups. Family and media are the main setting accessed by young people, as shown in this study, which need to be prepared and managed for being a good role model for this. Educational institution, although only being chosen by a few number of the participants, is indeed need to take a more significant part to provide the role models. It is a part of the duty of educational institution to prepare young people for taking part as change agents for social harmony.

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