

# Social Relations between the Kaili and Balinese Ethnic Groups in Central Sulawesi: Patterns and Social Acceptance

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this research is to find out the patterns of social acceptance between ethnic Kaili and ethnic Balinese and to find out the differences in social acceptance between ethnic Kaili and ethnic Balinese in Mertasari Village. The research used descriptive qualitative method. Data collection was obtained through observation, interviews and documentation. The population of this research is the entire Kaili Ethnic community totaling 110 people and the Balinese Ethnic totaling 765 people. The technique of determining informants was carried out using purposive sampling technique, in this case the researcher determined the key informants as many as 8 people. The results showed that patterns of social acceptance between the two ethnicities were formed through social relations on religious days, neighborly social relations and social relations in social activities. While the level of social acceptance shows the difference that the Kaili Ethnic group has the highest social acceptance towards the Balinese Ethnic, namely accepting as fellow life partners. Whereas in Balinese Ethnicity, social acceptance is only limited as friends. This means that Ethnic Kaili has the closest social distance to Ethnic Balinese.

**Keywords:** social acceptance; ethnic relations; Kaili ethnicity; Balinese ethnicity

## 1. Introduction

Society is a community of people who interact and occupy a certain area within a certain period of time (Soekanto & Sulistyowati, 2017). Sociologically, society is also diverse, with ethnic differences that are viewed as coexisting harmoniously (Ujan, et. al. 2011). However, such a diverse society is often prone to conflict and disintegration (Dewi, 2016). This is what is referred to as cultural gap in a diverse society. Cultural gaps and differences in beliefs are cultural issues faced by this nation (Simarmata et al., 2017).

According to Nasikun, the presence of diversity, such as ethnic differences, can cause society to experience disintegration (Nasikun, 2009). Conflict theory sees that disintegration is possible if there is rejection within society and an inability to accept differences, which will ultimately lead to division within society (Pruitt & Rubin, 2004). Meanwhile, Lewis Alfred Cosser argues that overly strong group bonds (ethnicity) can lead to extreme ingroup solidarity (Poloma, 2007). Research shows that overly strong

ingroup sentiments can create gaps, social segregation, and even conflicts based on ethnic or religious identity (Susan, 2012; Trijono, 2009). However, another issue that has been overlooked due to ethnic differences and strong ingroup characteristics is the creation of social distance between two different (ethnic) groups.

According to Emory Bogardus, every group and individual will have a certain social distance, which is followed by differences in the level of acceptance (Borgatta & Montgomery, 2012). Social distance is a measure of the closeness or distance between individuals, between groups, or between individuals and other groups. Psychologist Doob (1985), quoted in Liliweri (2005), defines social distance as the feeling of separating a person or group based on a certain level of acceptance (Liliweri, 2005). Social distance is demonstrated in the form of closeness or distance. This means that relationships between groups will always be mediated by differences in social acceptance, whether based on ethnicity, religion, language, or culture, which can lead to unexpected changes (Hatu, 2013).

Several other studies have found that relations between ethnic groups are usually accompanied by negative perceptions between the two ethnic groups, which have the potential to become threats to disintegration in social relations between ethnic groups. This means that social reality often cannot be separated from conflict and tension in social relations (Laha et al., 2021). The general assumption of this study is that the distance between social groups is determined by the existence of forms or patterns of social acceptance between different (ethnic) groups. Regarding differences in social acceptance, several studies have found that there are fundamental differences between different groups, such as differences in social acceptance between religious groups, especially in post-conflict situations. This study found that the acceptance of the Christian group towards Islam was higher than the acceptance of the Islamic group towards the Christian group (Nutfu, 2016).

Based on the findings of the above research, it is understood that in social relations between different groups, there is a social distance that determines differences in patterns and forms of social acceptance. As in Central Sulawesi, a multicultural society is a reality that is ingrained in the lives of its people, such as differences in religion, language, and ethnicity. This is no exception in Mertasari Village, Parigi District, Parigi Moutong Regency, which still displays a multi-ethnic character. Of the several ethnic groups within it, there are two dominant ethnic groups in terms of population, namely the Kaili and Balinese ethnic groups. The Kaili ethnic group is the indigenous tribe that inhabits the Mertasari Village area, while the Balinese ethnic group is a migrant ethnic group.

The diversity of the community living in Mertasari Village means that not everyone has the same level of social acceptance. There are differences in the form of social acceptance that can be caused by values, customs, and cultural views that are very different between ethnic groups. This is especially true between the Kaili and Balinese ethnic groups. This indicates that not all different groups living in the same area have the same sense of acceptance. In other words, each different group will have different forms or patterns of social acceptance in their social relations. As in the case in the 2000s, the Kaili ethnic group once rejected the Ngaben ceremony, which is a Hindu ritual for cremating the dead. The Kaili ethnic group opposed the Ngaben ceremony because they considered it

to be contrary to their religious beliefs (Islam). However, in the end, this contradiction was resolved through a traditional Kaili consultation, commonly known as Patanggota.

Based on this, it can be understood that social relations or intergroup relations are not always considered harmonious even though they live side by side (Susan, 2012; Taib, 2010). Therefore, social relations between the Kaili and Balinese ethnic groups in Mertasari Village cannot be considered perfect. Based on these issues, there are two main problems, namely: (1) the existence of different patterns of social acceptance between the Kaili and Balinese ethnic groups in social relations; and (2) the existence of differences in the form of social acceptance between the Kaili and Balinese ethnic groups in social relations.

## 2. Method

A qualitative approach through case studies was used to explore the reality of patterns and forms of social acceptance between two different groups. Data were collected through field research, participant observation, and in-depth interviews (Bungin, 2015). The type of research is descriptive research to describe in detail the research object and also analyze social phenomena (Bungin, 2012; Moleong, 2014), which will describe the patterns and differences in social acceptance between the Kaili and Balinese ethnic groups. The research location is in Mertasari Village, Parigi District, Parigi Moutong Regency, Central Sulawesi, conducted in 2023.

The two ethnic groups became the research analysis units, with 8 informants selected purposively from the Kaili and Balinese ethnic groups. The research data was sourced from primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly through observation and in-depth interviews. Meanwhile, secondary data was sourced from public documents and scientific documents that supported the primary data requirements. Triangulation was carried out to achieve data credibility by checking and comparing information (data).

## 3. Patterns of Social Acceptance

Historically, the Kaili ethnic group is the largest ethnic group on the island of Central Sulawesi. This ethnic group has traditionally spread across most of the regions in Central Sulawesi. It can be said that the Kaili ethnic group are the indigenous people of this region. Population data for Mertasari Village in 2022 shows that there are five ethnic groups in this village, namely 164 Bugis, 35 Javanese, 765 Balinese, 110 Kaili, and 23 Minahasa. This data shows that Mertasari Village is dominated by the Balinese ethnic group.

### 3.1. Social Relations During Religious Holidays

Social relations during religious days show that the Kaili ethnic community tends not to feel disturbed by the religious ceremonies conducted by the Balinese ethnic group in Mertasari Village. So far, there has been no conflict regarding the religious ceremonies performed by the Balinese ethnic group, even though their traditional customs and traditions are very different from those often practiced by the Kaili ethnic group. As

stated by Mrs. Erni (52 years old), a member of the Kaili ethnic group who has long lived in Mertasari Village and works as an elementary school teacher, she explained that:

"Regarding the religious ceremonies performed by Hindus or the Balinese ethnic group in Mertasari Village, I have never felt disturbed by it. Even though we are ethnically and religiously different, I respect whatever they do and believe in. Because we live side by side in the same environment, it is good to maintain tolerance and mutual respect. I have also taught children who are Balinese, and they are no different from children of the Kaili ethnicity. They are still polite and respect me as their teacher." (Interview on March 19, 2023)

The statement from the informant above means that Hindu religious celebrations are considered mandatory to be understood as a form of respect for differences in religious beliefs and culture. The Kaili ethnic group considers that Hindu religious celebrations must be respected from generation to generation. Meanwhile, the Balinese ethnic group also shows the same attitude. According to the informant, the custom of visiting during Eid al-Fitr is a form of harmonious social relations between them. For the Balinese ethnic group, religious life must be demonstrated by visiting each other as a form of caring and friendship between the two religious groups.

### 3.2. Social Relations in the Neighborhood

The pattern of acceptance of social relations between the Kaili ethnic group and the Balinese ethnic group in the Social Relations indicator in the neighborhood is described by a member of the Kaili ethnic group who has long lived in Mertasari Village, Mrs. Marka Lawado (74 years old). She explained that:

"Before it became Mertasari Village, this area was divided into two, namely Kelor Hamlet and Bali Hamlet. At that time, most of the Kaili ethnic group lived in Kelor Hamlet. However, when we were children, we often played together with the Balinese, either I would go to Bali Hamlet or my friends would come to Kelor Hamlet. In fact, I once had a Balinese neighbor, and our friendship was very close and still continues to this day." (Interview on March 20, 2023)

Based on this statement, neighborly relations between the two ethnic groups have existed since the arrival of the Balinese ethnic group in Mertasari Village. This pattern of social acceptance among neighbors has been established over a long period of time. Although at present this pattern of neighborly relations may be shifting towards individualism due to the development of communication technology, which has led to the emergence of individualistic tendencies, thereby causing neighborly relations among friends to become strained, neighborly relations are still maintained through social events where they invite each other to wedding celebrations, as described by informant SR below:

"If it's a wedding and I'm invited, then God willing, I always make time to attend. But sometimes those (Balinese) who invite me are only certain people, whom I know and who know me. And to be honest, I don't have as many Balinese acquaintances as I used to. Some of them have passed away, and some have

moved away. Now, due to poor health and limited energy compared to before, I have less time to interact with those I don't know. But if it's a funeral, I will definitely make time to attend without waiting for an invitation, especially if the deceased is an acquaintance of mine or someone who lives close to me" (Interview on March 25, 2023).

As seen in the social life cycle, which is inseparable from wedding ceremonies, funerals, and celebrations within the neighborhood, the community continues to show its concern by participating in these activities regardless of ethnic differences.

### 3.3. Participation in Social Activities

Social acceptance patterns in research indicators related to participation in social activities. The author observed several social activities that were quite actively carried out by the community during the research. As seen in competitions and farewell events held by KKN UIN Datokarama Palu students and KKN STAH Sharma Sentana Central Sulawesi students. It was evident that the community was quite enthusiastic and eager to participate in these activities.

According to observations, the social activity that was actively carried out at that time was the ronda activity. This activity was held by the village to maintain the security of the community by involving the community itself to work together to maintain security. Ronda posts were set up in each hamlet, and the hamlet head was responsible for organizing the community in the hamlet he coordinated by making and distributing schedules. The men or fathers participated in guarding, while the women or mothers were responsible for providing food during the guarding, and all of this was arranged by the respective hamlet heads by creating a schedule. The ronda activity ran quite well because the community was willing to cooperate and was easy to coordinate.

## 4. Differences in Levels of Social Acceptance

Being a multi-ethnic region does not guarantee that all ethnic groups in the region have the same level of acceptance towards groups of different ethnicities. This is certainly experienced by the Kaili ethnic group towards the Balinese ethnic group. The results of the study show that there are differences in the levels of social acceptance between the two ethnic groups.

Similar to the Kaili ethnic group, who are indigenous to Central Sulawesi, the Balinese ethnic group, as migrants, certainly also have different levels of acceptance among different ethnic communities. Not all of them have the same level of acceptance. The lowest level of acceptance is when informants can only accept others as fellow villagers, and the highest level of acceptance is when informants can accept others as life partners. The differences in the level of acceptance between ethnic groups have five research indicators, starting from the lowest level of acceptance to the highest level of acceptance, namely: (1) as fellow members of the Mertasari village community; (2) as neighbors; (3) as co-workers; (4) as friends; and (5) as life partners.

The results of the study show that the acceptance of the Kaili ethnic group towards the Balinese ethnic group extends to the acceptance of life partners. This is as stated by Moh Afrizal (22 years old), an unmarried member of the Kaili ethnic group, as follows:

"In terms of acceptance, I think I can accept the Balinese ethnic group to the extent of becoming a life partner. I have several female friends from the Balinese ethnic group, and they are very diligent, not only at home but also at school. They are quite ambitious and open-minded, in my opinion. My dream is to have a life partner like that, someone who has strong principles and is on the same wavelength as me, because I am also a rather ambitious person. Perhaps the difficulty lies in the issue of religion. Usually, most ethnic Balinese are Hindu, while I am Muslim. It would be a bit scary if the woman's parents or extended family were strict about religion. It would be naive of me to expect the woman to convert to my religion, but if she is willing, then anything is possible. The point is to just try first."

Based on the informant's statement, it is known that as a Kaili ethnic group, he can accept the Balinese ethnic group to the highest level, namely accepting them as a life partner. On the other hand, unmarried female informants from the Kaili ethnic group said that social acceptance of the Balinese ethnic group only extends to the level of friendship. Afifa (22 years old) and Fadila (21 years old) stated that they choose social relationships only up to the level of friendship as follows:

"Considering the issue of faith, I think it is clear that I can only accept them as friends. It would be different if the Balinese ethnicity embraced the same religion as me, then maybe I could accept them as a life partner. I never question the issue of different ethnicities, but rather the beliefs they hold. No matter what ethnicity they are, I will still look at their character to see if it matches my personality. For me, religion is like a principle; how can we be life partners if our principles are different from the start?"

Based on the statements of the two informants above regarding their level of acceptance of the Balinese ethnic group, it can be seen that both of them chose the level of friend. However, the factor of belief, which is the main point in this issue, is compounded by an inability to follow the customs and traditions of the Balinese ethnic group. Another meaning contained in the informants' statements shows that there is a difference in social acceptance between unmarried men and women. Men tend to have a higher level of acceptance, namely accepting the Balinese ethnicity to the level of life partner, compared to women who have a lower level of acceptance, namely accepting the Balinese ethnicity to the level of friend. This means that in the theory of social distance as seen in the level of acceptance of male and female participants, men have the closest social distance to the Balinese ethnicity compared to women.

Meanwhile, social acceptance of the Kaili ethnic group among the Balinese ethnic group also shows differences. In statements made by two male informants of Balinese ethnicity who are unmarried, they gave similar answers regarding the level of acceptance. One of the informants, I Putu Arya Candra (23 years old), said:

"For me personally, it's limited to friendship. I did have a relationship (dating) with a woman from the Kaili ethnic group in the past, but due to many incompatibilities, the relationship did not last long. I also feel that I am not ready to guide my partner if I were to have a spouse from a different ethnicity, because there are still many Balinese customs and traditions that I do not understand. Therefore, I plan to find a spouse from the same ethnicity or religion so that it will not be too difficult to guide them because at least we will have a common foundation."

Then Eka Yuda Laksmana (23 years old) responded as follows:

"Just like Putu, I also accept them as friends only. However, I have always lived alongside them, even attending the same schools from elementary school to college with those of Kaili ethnicity, so I have quite a few friends from the Kaili ethnic group. So far, I have not felt any interest in forming relationships beyond friendship with those of different ethnicities. Besides, I just want to play it safe with those of the same ethnicity. That way, in the future, there won't be too many complications and conflicts."

Based on the statements from both informants, unmarried men from the Balinese ethnic group tend to avoid situations that could lead to conflicts and disputes in their future marriages. Furthermore, they feel that choosing a partner from another ethnic group would complicate their future married life, due to the many different customs and traditions that must be followed, not to mention the high cost of implementing all of them. Therefore, according to them, marrying someone from the same ethnic group is the best option.

Meanwhile, unmarried women from the Balinese ethnic group gave different answers. Both informants, Ayu Vasundhari Triesnadewi (22) and Rifka Wulandari (23), admitted that social acceptance of their choice of partner was a source of pressure for them. Ayu Vasundhari Triesnadewi said:

"To be honest, I have dated several people from different ethnic groups, including the Kaili and Minahasa ethnic groups, among others. But that was then. Now that I'm older, I want to find someone from the same ethnic group to be my life partner. Especially since my parents are the type of parents who are quite strict when it comes to matters of faith, and I am still of pure Balinese descent. So, customs and traditions are still very strong in my family."

The response from the next informant, Rifka Wulandari (23 years old), is as follows:

"Personally, I have no problem accepting people of Kaili ethnicity, even to the extent of becoming a life partner. I don't mind that, and I don't think my parents would mind whatever decision I make. Because I have been accustomed to making my own choices. To be honest, I also have many relatives from the Kaili ethnic group who are Muslim. It can be said that by blood, I am of mixed ethnicity, but currently I live in the neighborhood of my father's family, who are of Balinese ethnicity. So if the question is about accepting them to what extent, I would

automatically answer that I would accept them as life partners if that is where my destiny lies."

The differences between these two statements have been described quite clearly. Ethnic Balinese with pure ancestry tend to choose to marry other ethnic Balinese because they want to live according to Balinese customs and traditions, as well as to preserve their pure ancestry. Meanwhile, ethnic Balinese with mixed ancestry tend to be more open to their choice of life partner. This attitude is driven by the motivation that a life partner is a free individual choice that cannot be linked to religion, ethnicity, customs, or other factors that restrict individuals.

Another meaning contained in the statements of the three informants above, regarding the level of acceptance between male and female participants, shows no difference in the frequency of agreement regarding the level of acceptance of Balinese ethnicity. Both chose level four on the acceptance indicator as friends. However, a different level of acceptance was found in the context of female participants who turned out to be of Balinese ethnicity in their lineage but were no longer native Balinese in the sense that they had mixed blood from other ethnicities. These participants had a higher level of acceptance up to the fifth acceptance indicator, which was accepting them as life partners.

This means that both Balinese men and women with pure ancestry do not have different social distances in accepting the Kaili ethnicity, compared to female participants with Balinese ancestry who have mixed with other ethnicities who have closer social distances because their level of acceptance reaches the highest level or acceptance to the closest relationship, namely as a life partner.

## 5. Conclusion

The pattern of social acceptance between the Kaili and Balinese ethnic groups can be seen in social relations indicators, namely social relations on religious holidays, social relations between neighbors, and social relations in social activities. The pattern of social acceptance in neighborly relations shows a pattern of mutual respect. Similarly, religious relations show mutual tolerance in carrying out each other's religious activities.

Meanwhile, the pattern of acceptance in the indicator of participation in social activities shows that both ethnic groups do not mind participating in the same activity. There is a difference between the social acceptance of unmarried men and women. Men from the Kaili ethnic group tend to have a higher level of acceptance, namely accepting the Balinese ethnic group to the level of life partner, compared to female participants who have a lower level of acceptance, namely accepting the Balinese ethnic group to the level of friend.

Meanwhile, unmarried Balinese women show different attitudes of social acceptance. Women of mixed ancestry show close social distance, namely social acceptance to the level of life partner. Meanwhile, Balinese men and women of pure ancestry have a level of social acceptance at the level of friendship or show a fairly distant social distance.

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