Harmonization of Indonesia-Malaysia border communities based on socio-culture

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Abstract
Harmonizing the border society between Indonesia and Malaysia based on their socio-cultural similarities presented an exciting exploration into the social and cultural dynamics that formed the relationship between these neighboring countries. This study explored the complex interactions of traditions, faiths, and practices that fostered cross-border unity and cooperation and highlighted the socio-cultural foundations that bind these communities together. The research was conducted in the border area between Indonesia and Malaysia, especially at Aruk Village, Sajingan Besar District, Sambas Regency. The method used in this research is phenomenology with the qualitative approach. The research findings indicated that the community at Aruk Village collectively managed the forests and natural resources. There were several cultural similarities among the Dayak Ethnic, Bidayu Sub-ethnic, and Melayu Ethnic who stayed in the Aruk Village area. This research highlighted local ideologies' role in strengthening social togetherness. Local wisdom, a binding force, was found to contribute significantly to the prosperity of the society, instilling a sense of optimism about the future of these communities. The harmonization of the border society between Indonesia and Malaysia showed the cognation of those residing in Aruk Village, Indonesia, with those residing in Serawak, Malaysia.

Keywords: border region; border people; harmonization; Indonesia-Malaysia; socio-cultural

Introduction

The word border is essential as a political area and mobility space. Meanwhile, the border region can be interpreted as "a space that plays an important role in the political battle between two countries. It is also mentioned that the border area assists two regions with different localities" (Arifin, 2014, p. 51). The boundary and adjacent area called the border form the epidermis of organisms that demand protection and allow exchange (Arsana, 2007). Then, Opiola (2014) said that a border area is an area bordering the territory of another country as previously defined by the boundary line through an agreement between two neighboring

countries. The importance of maintaining state boundaries is emphasized in terms of legitimacy, legality, and protection of the integrity of the region (Šmidrkal, 2017).

The country's border area is the primary manifestation of a country's territorial sovereignty (Bangun, 2017). The border area is a geographical area in front of neighboring countries. Socioeconomic and socio-cultural relations unite the surrounding border communities after an agreement between two countries (Hadiwijoyo, 2008). Meanwhile, based on Martinez's conception (1994), border areas from a historical point of view are categorized into four (4) models, namely: *First,* aliniated borderland, that there is no relationship and interaction between two bordering countries can be caused by differences in different levels of welfare, nationalism, cultural differences, and ethnic competition. *Second,* there is a coexistent borderland, and there is a conflict between the two countries caused by the struggle for strategic resources that still needs to be resolved. *Third,* Interdependent borderland means mutually beneficial relations and interactions between two countries to create good stability in international relations. *Fourth,* in an integrated borderland, there is a unification of economic life and other aspects with neighbouring countries, both with the community and its government.

Based on the theory of Matinez (1994), the characteristics of interdependent *borderlands* are that two state borders have interdependence, and there is a strong interaction. This can positively impact meeting basic needs for regions that tend to be less developed than the border across them, which are more developed, so it can also threaten security and defence aspects. Management of border types with interdependent border land characteristics, as viewed from the point of view of Martinez (1994), can be managed with the Buzan (1998) traditional and non-traditional approaches. Border Area Communities People in English are referred to as social, which comes from the Latin word *'socialus',* which means "friend" or "friend". Meanwhile, the society known in Indonesian comes from the Arabic root *"syaraka,"* which can be interpreted as "participation." In line with that, Hylland-Eriksen (2011) states that "society is a collection of individuals who live side by side with each other or in a brief sense is "collaborating"

The research about border areas included exploring the importance of contemporary border studies and the role of national borders in global excellence, which is the main subject of this exploration (O'Dowd, 2010). Discussions of borders, both in normative political theory frameworks and in critical border analysis, often focus on the spatial dimension of borders (Little, 2015). Several studies have been conducted on border areas; the study explored the importance of contemporary border studies, and the role of national borders in global excellence is the main subject of this exploration. Discussions on borders, whether in normative political theory frameworks or critical border analysis, often focus on the spatial dimension of borders. The border control was conducted by the method of the exceeding traditional territorial boundaries of the nation-state system (Shields, 2014) and the social structure that existed around it (Scott, 2013), such as the partial occupation of Afghanistan and the state of its 'border status' (Manchanda, N,2017). Based on the previous studies, in this study, the author emphasized the appearance of issues contextually in the harmonization of the border society between Indonesia and Malaysia based on their socio-cultural, i.e., tensions and conflicts among local cultural values, local policy practices, and the government's regulations of government or state authorities that authorized. These examined a gap between the expectations and needs of local society and the policy's implementation, which perhaps disagrees with the values of cultures and traditions that have long been maintained in the border areas.

The novelty of this research is that it offered a new perspective that highlights the critical role of local wisdom and culture in strengthening peace and cooperation in border areas. This study provided more profound insights into how local cultural values and traditions could be a strong base in forming relationships between the society and those who live in border areas by focusing on the cultural practices that connected the Dayak Ethnic, the Bidayu sub-ethnic, and the Malay Ethnic. This study revealed the cultural richness that can be conducted as a source of

strength to promote cross-border collaboration and regional peace. The novelty of this study is situated in its holistic and inclusive approaches to social harmonization. The social harmonization considered not only political interests and economic factors but also deep cultural values in the context of interstate borders.

This study contributed to the science of civic education by highlighting the importance of maintaining social harmony in the context of interstate borders and emphasising wisdom and culture to maintain peace. This study offered valuable insights into civic education. It underscored the necessity of a more holistic approach to developing an understanding of citizenship, which included not only legal and political aspects but also cultural and social aspects. By considering the practices and values of local wisdom in this study, civic education will become more inclusive and relevant, strengthening national identity while encouraging respect for cultural diversity and harmony between societies in border areas.

Method

In this study, researchers utilized phenomenological research to gain a profound understanding of the human experience of specific phenomena through qualitative analysis. This approach allows for a comprehensive and detailed examination of the phenomenon. Additionally, the qualitative approach provides flexibility in data collection and analysis.

Our investigation into the harmonization of the border society between Indonesia and Malaysia in Aruk Village was conducted with a comprehensive understanding of the relevant literature. We first identified the influencing factors and then conducted a thorough review of relevant literature to understand the historical, demographic, and cultural aspects of Aruk Village society. Our use of participatory observation, in-depth interviews, surveys, and documentation analysis allowed us to directly observe socio-cultural interactions in public and conduct interviews with public figures, local leaders, and members of society. We also distributed questionnaires to the members of Aruk Village society to gather a broader range of perspectives. The data we collected were carefully analyzed and interpreted, revealing patterns, trends, and relationships among the examined variables. This comprehensive approach ensures that our research is well-informed and rigorous.

Result and Discussion

Aruk Village was located in Sajingan Besar Sub-district, Sambas Regency, West Kalimantan. Sambas Regency is about 5 hours from the capital city of West Kalimantan Province, Pontianak City. In Aruk, there is a direct border between Indonesia and Malaysia. The state border in Aruk is one of seven Integrated Cross Border Posts. The Indonesia-Malaysia border area in Aruk, included in the Seven Indonesian Borders, was called the most well-facilitated border in Indonesia. Sambas Regency had a population of 13,531 people in Aruk Village, with the distribution based on male gender of 7,145 people and female of 6,386 people. Moreover, the residents were mainly of Malay and Dayak ethnicity.

The study results revealed that in Aruk Village, the local society collectively managed forests and natural resources sustainability. Cultural similarities existed between the Dayak ethnic, the Bidayu sub-ethnic, and the Malay ethnic living in the Aruk Village area. The geographical location of the Indonesia-Malaysia border communities played an essential role in fostering harmony due to geographical similarities, facilitating interaction and understanding. The similarity of land conditions and ease of interaction influenced the blood interaction, which was the basis for maintaining harmony. However, it was the local wisdom, a cultural heritage site that has survived from generation to generation, from ancient times to the present, that played a crucial role in maintaining social welfare and economic growth. Economic interdependence also contributed to harmony, where border residents supported each other's economy by buying local goods from neighboring areas. Historical bonds and shared experiences strengthen harmony, as ancestral connections and shared perceptions of history and life experiences sustain communication and coexistence in the border area.

These factors supported the development of harmony in the communities inhabiting the Indonesia-Malaysia border, where the geographical similarities that made them maintain harmony were the similarity of the geographical location of one land, making it easier for them to interact well in addition to these similarities (Kadarisman, 2010). Local wisdom is a cultural heritage site that has survived from generation to generation, from ancient times to the present. However, the object of adaptation and the surrounding environment has changed significantly in the context of the modern era (Wang et al., 2024). The dynamics between the center and the local had an important role in understanding the implementation of the society of cultural reform policies and regional economic development (Yu & Xu, 2022). Interpretation of texts and analysis of local wisdom indicate a strong connection between the society and their cultural heritage (Parashar et al., 2023). The similarity of ethnicity and culture in Aruk Village caused them to have blood relations; Dayak and Malay ethnicities connected by greeting each other before the border area was formed. This factor dominated the lives of border societies, which blended and accepted each other's cultures.

Local wisdom and the interactions between crisis narratives have significantly shaped the evolution of society (Perkowski et al, 2023). In the context of local wisdom, collaboration does not directly ignore national borders or create new regional spaces that cross national borders (Prokkola, 2011). Local wisdom is one way to solve various issues and strategies for state development (Diab et al., 2022). However, creating harmony by bringing together and strengthening family bonds is one of the effective ways (Suwartiningsih & Purnomo, 2020). Local wisdom, a powerful force that unites society, has led to social welfare. This resilience, guided by unwritten lifestyle guidelines, is a testament to the community's strength and adaptability (Samiyono, 2017).

As stated by León et al. (2020), the role of local ideology in strengthening social togetherness is paramount. Ideology has played a crucial role in strengthening social, political, and economic skills, leading to the development of social accountability mechanisms at all levels of decision-making in the social structure. Local wisdom, considered a society binder, has profoundly impacted the community's welfare. Harmonizing the Indonesia-Malaysia border societies is a testament to blood relations between the people in Aruk Village, Indonesia, and those in Sarawak, Malaysia. The role of local ideology in strengthening social togetherness is a crucial aspect of maintaining harmony in the Indonesia-Malaysia border Societies. Local ideologies, including values, norms, and beliefs, form the foundation for social lives in the border area. They reflect a shared understanding of cultural identity and related histories, creating an awareness of the common goals and values upheld by local societies. By strengthening local ideologies, people on both sides of the border can feel more connected, strengthening social cohesion and promoting inter-society collaborations.

Local wisdom, a term used to describe the collective knowledge, traditions, and practices that have proven relevant and valuable in the daily lives of border communities, was increasingly prominent in maintaining the confidence and spirit of solidarity of rural communities or society for promoting the welfare and economic growth. By valuing and applying local wisdom, communities could strengthen bonds between community members, enhance cooperation in overcoming challenges, and create a more harmonious and sustainable environment for all.

Communities have become familiar with restorative justice (Hamzani et al., 2023). The cultural capital that existed in communities could generate income if properly developed (Jongsuksomsakul, 2024). Local wisdom accurately understood how kinship functions in the communities and system (Miller, 2023). The harmonization of the Indonesia-Malaysia border community showed the existence of blood relations between the people who stayed in Aruk, Indonesia, and those who stayed in Sarawak, Malaysia. This relationship, which includes family ties and reflects the long history and cultural exchanges that have taken place in the border areas, is a testament to the community's resilience. By understanding and appreciating these connections, people on both sides of the border can strengthen social solidarity, promote cross-

border bilateral relationships, and maintain a harmonious and mutually beneficial everyday life for both countries. Local wisdom, in particular, plays a significant role in promoting these cross-border relationships, making the audience feel connected and engaged in the narrative.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the harmonization of border society between Indonesia and Malaysia is deeply rooted in the socio-cultural fabric of the border areas. This connection predates the imposition of territorial boundaries by the government, as evidenced by the shared geographical location, ethnicity, culture, economy, and history. The close bonds and blood relations between the people of Aruk Village in Indonesia and those of Serawak in Malaysia reflect the intertwined lives of these communities.

In light of these findings, several recommendations can be made to enhance harmonization and inter-community cooperation in the Indonesia-Malaysia border areas. Firstly, both governments should strengthen programs supporting cultural exchange and economic development in the border areas, considering the needs and interests of local communities. Secondly, fostering dialogue and collaboration between local society communities through both formal and informal forums will be crucial in strengthening relationships and mutual understanding. Lastly, the government should adopt a holistic approach to managing the border region, incorporating socio-cultural aspects and local interests into the development and management processes. Implementing these steps is expected to improve harmony and the well-being of the people in the Indonesia-Malaysia border area.

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