Constructing New Cultures and Transforming the "Perkumpulan Merah Putih" Roles in Post-Conflict West Kalimantan, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the creation of new cultural constructs and examine the evolving role of local leaders across ethnic groups to address potential conflict in West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Data were collected using a phenomenological approach through document analysis, interviews, and observations. The results showed the pivotal role of novel perspectives in alleviating ethnic tensions, which prompted leaders to establish the Red White Association (*Perkumpulan Merah Putih* – PMP) as an innovative platform dedicated to protection, mediation, and sustainable peacebuilding initiatives. At the grassroots level, this association was instrumental in fostering mutual trust among ethnic communities, mitigating tribal stereotyping that could escalate into communal conflict. Meanwhile, at the elite level, the association prevents power-triggered political contestation that may lead to ethnic politicisation. This growing cultural movement, spearheaded by local leaders, promoted understanding and countered detrimental stereotypes and stigmatisation in the local populace. In conclusion, the PMP role should include a proactive stance in preventing the rise of communal conflict narratives that might incite collective action among local tribes. This represents a significant advancement toward a more comprehensive peacebuilding approach beyond rhetorical commitments to strengthen local community bonds.

Keywords:

New Cultural Constructions: Transforming "Perkumpulan Merah Putih" Role; Post-Ethnic Conflict; Resilience and Social Immunities; West Kalimantan.

Introduction

The post-conflict period in West Kalimantan, Indonesia, has witnessed substantial progress in social reconstruction and interethnic relations. However, there are persistent concerns over the potential recurrence of ethnic violence. Recent criminal incidents serve as plain reminders of previous violence, often triggered by apparently minor events such as traffic accidents, drug-related disputes, and misunderstandings in social interactions. These incidents are individual in nature but may be worsened by stereotypes and negative perceptions of immigrant populations, which obscure the underlying causes of conflict and risk escalating into broader communal violence (Tanasaldy, 2012; Yonefendi et al., 2018). Based on previous studies (e.g., Davidson & Kammen,

2002; De Jonge & Nooteboom, 2006; Klinken, 2007; König, 2016), various cultural- and structural-based interventions have addressed riot incidents. However, the reinforcement of bonds among ethnic groups has been identified as a distinctive model that promotes new principles and sustainable grassroots peacebuilding initiatives. This approach is more effective than previous efforts in fostering resilience and social immunity against potential conflict by specifically targeting issues related to personal cultural biases and structural favouritism toward dominant tribes (Hauge et al., 2015; Palma, 2019).

In recent decades, numerous ethnic conflicts have shown similar patterns throughout the peacebuilding process (Siyum, 2021). Past studies underscore a recurring

theme, namely the contested nature of the state, which precipitates social conflict and violence centred on political representation. Examples include the communal conflict during the Rwandan genocide (Schimmel, 2021), the Balkan conflict in Serbia, Kosovo, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina (Biondich, 2016), the Sri Lankan civil war between Sinhala and Tamil (Ibrahim et al., 2022), the Darfur conflict in Sudan including Darfuris and other Sudanese groups in Central Africa (De Waal, 2007; Sarwar, 2009), as well as the disputes in the South Caucasus region comprising Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan (Hunter, 2006). The conflict shows how dominant groups use state power as a mechanism of control. The strategy has proven largely ineffective in preventing conflict, primarily due to the failure to guarantee equal opportunities for minority populations. Therefore, a disparity arises between state dominance and social cohesion, intensifying the unrepresentative character of structural governance.

Several studies on peacebuilding have consistently reported efforts to challenge dominant power structures and contest political attributions (Maddison & Diprose, 2018; Schneider & Wiesehomeier, 2008). Similar to many ethnic conflicts, West Kalimantan shows patterns of state contestation that may trigger violence. However, over the past decade, a promising movement has evolved, associated with the Red White Association (*Perkumpulan Merah Putih* – PMP). This grassroots initiative, driven by the Madurese, Malay, Dayak, and other ethnic groups, aims to rebuild mutual trust, foster resilience, and prevent conflicts. It was founded on July 4, 2018, by a diverse coalition aiming to address cultural-personal factors like ethnocentrism and structural-communal aspects, while redefining the state's utilisation of ethnic symbols as mechanisms of control. Therefore, this study aims to extend the understanding of cultural construction for sustainable peacebuilding.

In the absence of effective preventive strategies, the possibility of ethnic conflict may increase, potentially leading to collective actions that require addressing social and political issues beyond individual grievances (Fontana, 2023; Vila, 2023). PMP, which constitutes the central theme of this study, has significant potential to facilitate transformative change toward sustainable peacebuilding by fostering collaboration among diverse leaders. The collaboration can enhance social cohesion and community resilience, as well as establish a new narrative as a mechanism for managing and preventing conflicts in post-conflict ethnic regions. To examine this phenomenon, the study developed three primary questions: First, how are inter-ethnic relations currently constructed in West Kalimantan? Second, what perspectives do PMP actors hold regarding the formation of new relations in the post-conflict context? Third, in what ways do the new constructs implemented by the PMP contribute to the promotion of sustainable peacebuilding? These questions seek to explain the significance of new cultural constructions in the context of post-ethnic conflict in West Kalimantan. The paper is organised into six sections: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion.

Literature Review: Three Elements Shaping the New Cultural Constructions

This section explores the concept of cultural construction as the process through which meanings, norms, and values are created, transmitted, and modified to define social identities, beliefs, and cultural practices of ethnic groups or communities (Nastasi et al., 2017, p. 137; Chen, 2019; Kipnis et al., 2014). The formation of new cultural constructions requires, among other things, social interaction, ethnic representation, cultural identities, and power relations. Communication and collaboration are also prerequisites for sharing diverse perspectives and experiences

(Adzahlie-Mensah et al., 2016; Van Leeuwen & Verkoren, 2012; Yonefendi et al., 2018). A significant phase in this process includes the adaptation of tribal symbols, languages, and logos to establish a unified cultural identity that fosters belonging (Tag, 2013). However, when dominant groups control cultural constructions, conflict and debates may arise over narrative control and consensus-building. In general, cultural constructions are often dynamic and continuing negotiations among social actors, ideas, and power structures that shape the identities and narratives of the cultures in question.

Theoretically, the construction of new cultural frameworks includes cultural formation and transformation from interactions among individuals, groups, and external factors, including in the context of post-conflict ethnic dynamics (Adzahlie-Mensah et al., 2016; Amal, 2020; Maddison & Diprose, 2018). Many studies have attempted to integrate approaches to conflict prevention (Carls, 2019; Wang & Wu, 2020). However, Wallensteen and Möller (2004) mentioned that the existing literature does not yield a unified preventive theory. Due to the diverse conceptualisations, two principal frameworks were suggested for the analysis of conflict prevention in this study. First, direct preventive actions aim to avert crises during critical phases such as escalation, intensification, and social diffusion. Second, structural prevention aims to establish secure conditions for the actors by mitigating threats and forestalling military action. Accordingly, this study used the conflict prevention theory with an emphasis on four principal indicators in preventing protracted conflict: context, issues, actors, and time.

Conflict prevention requires an analysis of socio-cultural, political, and historical dimensions. The socio-cultural dimension examines group cohesion or polarisation based on ethnicity, religion, or language, underscoring the role of local tribes and ethnic groups in fostering new understandings and policies to reduce conflict. The political dimension focuses on power relations, institutional stability, and governance. In this case, certain regimes may sustain inequality or external actors exploit divisions, specifically in resource-rich areas (Vayrynen, 2003; Wennmann, 2019). Finally, the historical dimension focuses on tracing communal conflict narratives to identify recurring patterns and unresolved grievances. Local actors, therefore, need to engage with contested histories to inform solutions (Mirawati, 2017; Tanasaldy, 2012). In general, effective conflict prevention depends on identifying key actors, including individuals and groups with vested interests, as well as leveraging ethnic leaders and grassroots networks to build consensus (Daminov, 2020; Ubaedillah, 2022). The analysis of historical, socio-economic, and political factors, as outlined above, is needed to reframe problems and propose viable alternatives (Amal, 2020; Carls, 2019). Collectively, these elements, including context, actors, and issues, form a comprehensive framework for understanding conflict dynamics and developing sustainable prevention strategies.

After an ethnic conflict, the role of local associations in preserving cultural identities change; for example, Moreda (2022) reported that the Ethiopian ethnic conflict fostered a new symbolic identity. However, Angstrom (2000) mentioned that sociology has not reached a consensus on the impacts and solutions of the conflict. This perspective is supported by various global cases, including ethnic tensions in Kyrgyzstan (Minardi, 2018), Kazakhstan ethic management strategies (Daminov, 2020), communal violence after election in Kenya and Nigeria (Krause, 2020), the Haiti ethnic conflict prevention model (Hauge et al., 2015), and peacebuilding efforts in North Waziristan (Makki et al., 2022). These examples show how new cultural constructs shape ethnic symbolism and foster consensus among ethnic groups.

JSP

JURNAL ILMU SOSIAL
DAN ILMU POLITIK

This study examines post-conflict cultural reconstruction and changes in local association in West Kalimantan in Borneo Island, consistent with international studies on similar issues. It builds on previous investigations that have analysed social conflict through stereotyping, structural politics, stigmatisation, and communal actions based on cultural-personal factors, as studied by Alfath (2015), Cook et al. (2017), Mirawati (2017), and Ubaedillah (2022). These studies focus on ethnic conflict complexities, but less on the role of grassroots movements in fostering mutual understanding that prevents conflicts. New cultural constructions from these grassroots efforts can promote sustainable peacebuilding by addressing social vulnerability, which causes prolonged conflict, as reported by Aspinall (2011), Hartoyo et al. (2020), and Qurtuby (2013). These studies underscore the underexplored potential of grassroots movements to build social immunity and resilience. Therefore, this study proposes a novel synthetic theory positioning social immunity as a central element in developing a new post-ethnic conflict culture in West Kalimantan.

Scholars define resilience and social immunity as the abilities of individuals or groups to confront, mitigate, and recover from crises and social stress (Beel et al., 2017; Byrne & Mcculloch, 2012; Van Leeuwen & Verkoren, 2012). Although these concepts are often applied to mental and physical health contexts, resilience is particularly important for analysing how local ethnic groups in post-conflict settings navigate humanitarian crises, endure adversity, and remain positive under social pressures. Social immunity also enables individuals and ethnic groups to collaboratively address problems and challenges (Cotter & Kilner, 2010; Sharma, 2020). Therefore, the concepts of resilience and social immunity offer valuable insights to enhance the understanding of ethnic conflicts.

Based on the theoretical framework, PMP exemplifies how grassroots movements can institutionalise resilience and social immunity in post-conflict societies by fostering dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, and interethnic solidarity. PMP strengthens social cohesion and enables communities to withstand external shocks and reduce internal divisions through initiatives such as cross-cultural workshops, joint economic projects, and the creation of shared narratives (Hartoyo et al., 2020; Qurtuby, 2013). This approach is in line with conflict prevention theory (Sharma, 2020; Van Leeuwen & Verkoren, 2012), which emphasises engagement of local stakeholders, including ethnic leaders, youth, and women, to challenge existing power structures and cultural narratives (Daminov, 2020). It reduces vulnerabilities and empowers individuals to become more active peacebuilders. By embedding resilience and social immunity into community practices, PMP contributes to sustainable peace. It establishes new cultural constructs based on mutual trust and shared identity that replace the legacies of conflict.

Method

This study used a transformative paradigm, as outlined by Creswell and Poth (2017, p. 17), to investigate how new cultural constructions and the redefined role of PMP contribute to fostering collaborative action at the grassroots level in post-ethnic conflict contexts in West Kalimantan. Using a qualitative approach grounded in phenomenology, this study examines participants' lived experiences and perceptions of social realities. Table 1 shows the sources of information and the methods of elicitation. The interpretation of the logic in participants' activities provides a basis for generating novel insights into the phenomenon being studied.

This study used a range of field methods for data collection. Initially, primary documentary sources were collected over five months

Table 1.
Data collection matrix: Classification of information by source

Information sources	Interviews	Observations	Documents
Local government official	Yes		Yes
Local ethnic groups			
• Dayak	Yes	Yes	
• Malay	Yes	Yes	
• Madurese	Yes	Yes	
Journalists			Yes
Local business player	Yes	Yes	
Academicians			Yes

Source: Author's Elaboration, 2023

(January to May 2022) to identify pertinent themes and examine the transformation of the PMP in fostering new cultural dynamics amid ethnic conflict in West Kalimantan. The collected documents comprised published journal articles (spanning 2003-2023, 20 papers), books addressing regional conflict, relevant legal regulations, the statutes of the PMP association, and regional government decrees concerning the organisational structure from 2018 to 2022. Following the compilation of these documents, comprehensive analyses and interpretations of post-conflict phenomena were undertaken throughout the study process.

After this document analysis, non-participant observations, and in-depth interviews were conducted to refine and contextualise data related to the post-ethnic conflict settings. Observations focused on capturing participant behaviours, social interactions, and communication within the communities to support and enhance the initial document analysis and inform design adjustments. Field notes were systematically recorded to document these observations and guide subsequent data collection. Over four months from August to November 2022, with additional interviews in October 2023, ten participants were interviewed based on the relevance to the study area, comprising 2 Malay, 2 Dayak, 4 Madurese, 1 local business player, and 1 local government official. The interviews focused on three main themes,

namely the rise of new cultural constructions, local actors' perspectives on building new inter-ethnic relations after conflict, and strategies for sustainable peacebuilding. Each session lasted between 30 minutes and 1.5 hours, with all responses transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and depth of qualitative data.

Data analysis was carried out through a detailed examination of participant statements to extract insights related to experiences (Lester et al., 2020), using verbatim transcripts to identify key statements consistent with the study questions. These statements were organised into thematic categories, enabling a shift from broad observations to specific results, particularly focusing on new cultural constructions post-conflict. To ensure accuracy and deepen understanding, the study location was revisited, and participant feedback was integrated into the draft papers, aiming to interpret the core meanings of post-conflict cultural phenomena. Furthermore, this study emphasised methodological consistency through a thorough process of verification, validation, and validity checks (Cudjoe, 2023). Verification included an extensive literature review, strict adherence to phenomenological methods, documentation, identification of negative cases, and conducting interviews until data saturation. Validation was performed through a multimethod approach combining observations, interviews, and document analysis, with participants actively verifying

key codes. Finally, validity was confirmed by reconciling results with the main objectives and incorporating external feedback from seminar presentations.

Results

Figure 1 shows novel cultural constructions in post-conflict West Kalimantan. This representation is derived from empirical data collected through fieldwork, document analysis, interview transcripts, and observational records.

Reinventing a new culture post-ethnic conflict

Leaders representing various ethnic groups in West Kalimantan, including the Malay, Dayak, and Madurese, have coalesced around a novel approach to address longstanding ethnic tensions. This transformation commenced with the formation of an inter-ethnic organisation, particularly the PMP, established on July 4, 2018. It constitutes a significant advancement toward sustainable peace by uniting 24 ethnic groups in West Kalimantan under a shared cultural framework. Traditional houses such
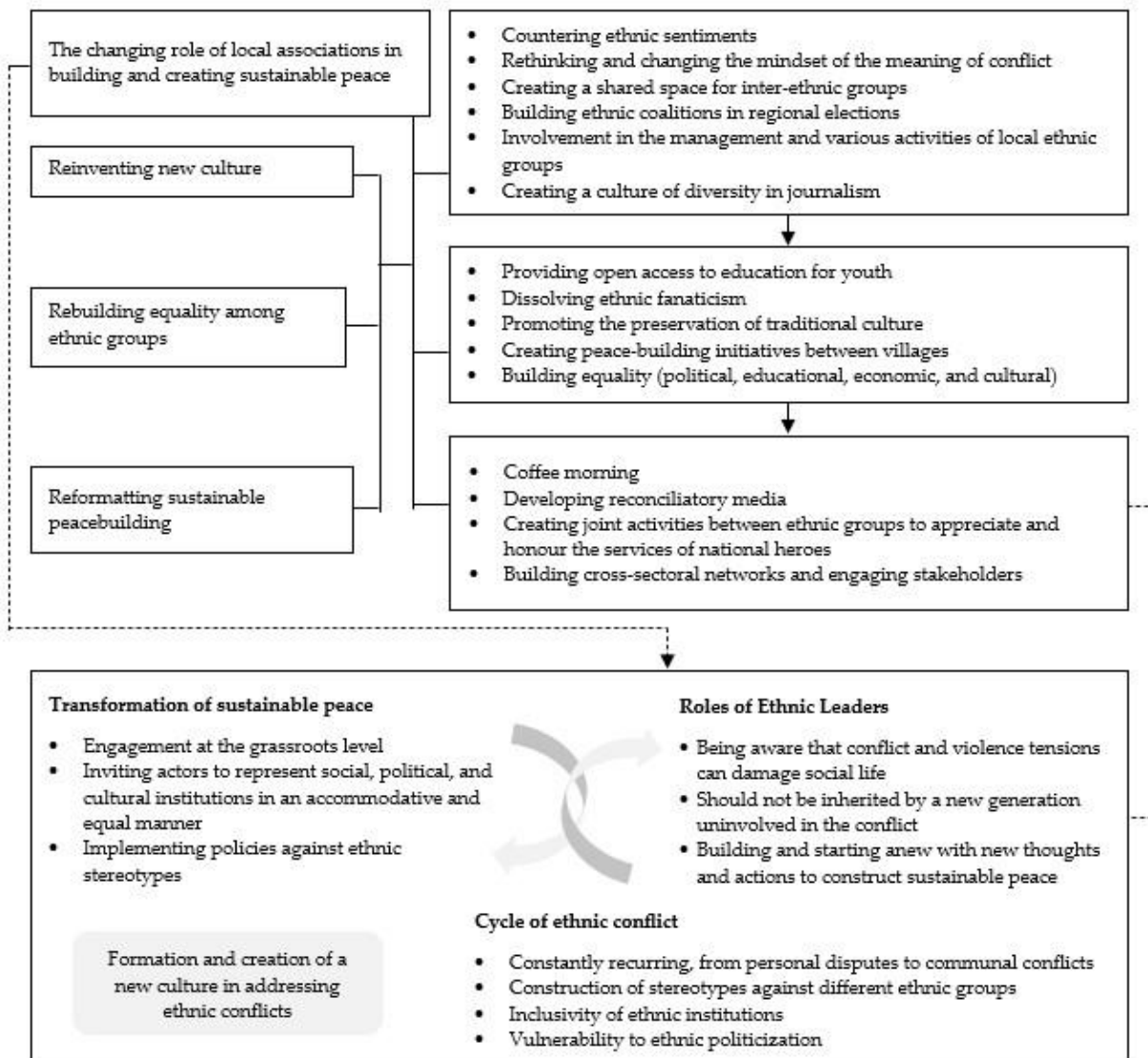

Figure 1. Cycles of New Culture Construction in Post-Conflict West Kalimantan
Source: Author's elaboration from the fieldwork, 2023

as Betang Radang, Baluk, Melayu, and Panjang function not merely as residences but also as crucial communal spaces that facilitate dialogue and conflict prevention. Ethnic leaders actively use these houses to promote cross-cultural discussions aimed at preventing ethnic discord, as exemplified by Chairil's (Malay leader) statement, *"Let's gather at the Malay house, talk openly, and proactively address any sparks of tension"* (Interview, November 3, 2022). This evolving perspective, reflected in the continuing dialogue among ethnic groups, offers a redefined understanding of conflict dynamics within the region.

The movement led by these traditional leaders has become a new driving force for sustainable peace, inspiring changes in ethnic groups such as the Chinese Cultural Council (*Majelis Adat Budaya Tionghoa* - MABT), the Malay Cultural Council (*Majelis Adat Budaya Melayu* - MABM), the Madurese Extended Family Association (*Ikatan Keluarga Besar Madura* - IKBM), the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (*Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara* - AMAN), and the Dayak Customary Council (*Dewan Adat Dayak* - DAD). Additionally, NGOs, including Gemawan, Pangingu Binua Foundation, and Misem, also address these issues (Sukandar et al., 2015, p. 45), as evident in the 2008 and 2013 regional elections, when Madurese and Malay figures formed a coalition supporting Cornelis (Dayak) for West Kalimantan Governor (2008-2018) (Interview with Sukir, November 22, 2022). Effendy (member of IKBM) stated, "*All these institutions are part of the PMP, a traditional body that prevents personal conflict from escalating into communal ones*" (Interview, November 22, 2022). This association plays a key role in managing ethnic tensions, as evidenced in the interventions in street crimes at Flamboyan Market and traffic accidents, effectively preventing ethnic escalation (see details in Table 2). A traditional figure, Sukir, stated that:

> "Ethnic leaders, particularly those affiliated with the PMP, play an active role in mitigating inter-ethnic tensions. They promptly apprehend individuals in street crimes that affect diverse groups,

Table 2.
Examples of cases related to ethnic conflict

No.	Cases	Year	Explanations
1.	Night of Eid Al-Fitr (*Takbiran*) incident	2020	On the night of Eid Al-Fitr, May 22, 2020, tensions arose between Malay and Chinese youths when one group tried to wake residents for suhoor. A Chinese individual allegedly shot a Malay person, sparking emotional unrest and viral social media attention. To defuse the situation, PMP members held a meeting to clarify the incident. The Chinese individual later admitted to using a slingshot, not a gun. The case was then referred to the police for legal processing.
2.	The fight for parking area at the market traditional	2021	A dispute over a parking space at Flamboyan Market in Pontianak resulted in the death of R, a Malay individual, caused by HL, who is Madurese. Community leaders from both ethnic groups intervened to defuse tensions and handed HL over to the authorities. Although primarily a criminal case, the incident could heighten social tensions if not managed promptly and effectively.
3.	Insult case on social media	2022	LH, a Madurese individual from Malang, posted derogatory social media content about the Dayak community in June 2020, sparking public outrage and increased tensions. In response, PMP members coordinated with stakeholders to prevent conflict. By uniting ethnic and religious leaders, PMP successfully maintained stability and preserved social harmony without incidents.
4.	Frictions among drug addictions	2022	Conflict of drug abuse occurred in Beting on February 23, 2022, between the Madurese and Malay ethnic groups. In response, the PMP promptly called a meeting to arrest those implicated. The PMP delegation later recommended referring the case to the police for legal action, regardless of ethnic background.

Source: Author's own work, 2024

thereby facilitating reconciliation among victims, perpetrators, and their families. This commitment to justice transcends ethnic boundaries, as shown by the Madurese Extended Family Association (IKBM), which initiated legal action in February 2022 against Madurese and Malay youth involved in drug abuse in Beting, irrespective of their ethnic background. Consequently, PMP leaders also address issues related to crimes, drug use, and conflict, such as parking disputes at Flamboyan Market" (Interview with Sukir, November 4, 2022)

These efforts by PMP align with the good practices of journalists and online platform users. The Independent Journalists Alliance promoted responsible reporting amid ethnic conflict, advocates for increased diversity in journalism and reforms. This transformative approach is evident in three principal domains. First, traditional print media emphasises balanced, fact-checked reporting, prioritising constructive affirmation and stringent editorial management oversight. Second, online platforms, guided by a consensus among journalists, developed non-provocative news outlets that prioritise investigative rigour, factual accuracy, and the avoidance of confrontational reporting, particularly in the context of ethnic diversity. Third, radio and television media focus on affirmative strategies when disseminating information about social phenomena with the potential to worsen conflict. Collectively, this shift across various media forms shows a novel perspective on news delivery, emphasising affirmation, the avoidance of provocative content, as well as the prevention of sensationalism. Dian, a journalist, underscored the significance of responsible reporting:

> *"News reports on conflict and violence often show machetes (Clurit), a symbol linked to Madurese identity. However,*

> *the perpetrators may not be Madurese. Such ethnic symbols shape public perception, wrongly associating the wrongdoers with the Madurese."* (Interview with Dian, 7 November 2022)

Moreover, traditional leaders identify new personal conflicts through proactive measures and adjustments to regional regulations. PMP functions as a platform for inter-ethnic groups, creating new spaces that uphold traditional mottos such as *"Adil Ka' Talino, Bacuramin Ka' Saruga, Basengat Ka' Jubata"* (justice for all, reflection on heaven, and reliance on God for life). This motto serves as a guiding principle for government officials in West Kalimantan, encouraging the incorporation of respect for local cultural heritage into the opening remarks at official events. Chairil stated, *"We instructed all local government officials (MUSPIDA) to begin their addresses with a greeting that reflects this appreciation, acknowledging the significance of our cultural heritage as a social unifier binding our communities together"* (Interview, September 12, 2023). The directive exemplifies the continuing interaction between ethnic and community leaders during traditional communal activities.

In sum, post-conflict resilience in West Kalimantan is a composite model of social practices and institutions that transform ethnic diversity from a source of tension into a resource for sustainable peace. This model builds peace infrastructure to prevent escalation, foster trust, embed ethical communication, and coordinate across societal and state boundaries. For example, PMP provides platforms for conflict mediation, while traditional houses serve as spaces for interethnic dialogue. Leaders from Malay, Dayak, Madurese, and other groups actively intervene in incidents, such as market disputes, drug-related violence, and social media insults, to de-escalate tensions, often referring perpetrators to legal authorities regardless of ethnicity. Meanwhile, media alliances practice ethical journalism to avoid

provocative reporting and counter-narratives that could inflame identity-based conflict. Coordination among community leaders, NGOs, and local government officials also institutionalises cultural mottos into official greetings and governance, embedding cultural heritage within administration. These efforts are consistent with previous studies, e.g. Ginty & Richmond (2016), Tongeren (2013), and Ware & Ware (2022), including those that emphasised that resilience depends on adaptive, locally rooted mechanisms rather than top-down interventions. In general, post-conflict resilience is a locally rooted ecosystem of preventive institutions, relational practices, ethical communication, and coordinated governance that collectively build ethnic diversity into a foundation for sustainable peace.

Building ethnic equality through access to higher education

Based on the previous experiences of ethnic conflict, West Kalimantan is actively promoting initiatives aimed at preventing future discord. Leaders, through the implementation of the PMP program, advocate for recognition and respect of diversity, emphasising equality among ethnic groups. According to Fauzi (secretary of IKBM), *"while many Madurese people have historically focused on trade and traditional Islamic education (Pesantren), it is now imperative to pursue new directions that prioritise equal access to modern education"* (Interview, November 19, 2022). This initiative aims to foster inclusive perspectives among the Madurese, Dayak, Malay, and other communities. Similarly, Chairil underscored the significance of encouraging families from all ethnic backgrounds to prioritise higher education for children, including university-level studies (Interview, November 25, 2022). Providing future generations with access to higher education equips children with critical and open-minded thinking skills necessary to

navigate social challenges that may otherwise worsen ethnic tensions.

To promote awareness and equality among ethnic groups, PMP ethnic leaders in West Kalimantan encourage youth to participate in collaborative initiatives. Empirical data from the field shows the role of youths in village-based programs designed to foster interethnic harmony. They can help mitigate ethnic fanaticism, which often incites negative behaviours such as ethnic prejudice. More importantly, the IKBM association advocates for the discontinuation of the *Sekep* tradition, which allows carrying sharp weapons, among ethnic Madurese youth during social activities. The statement from a participant reinforces three key points pertinent to advancing equality among ethnic groups:

> *"Conflict involving Madurese people often begins as personal disputes from criminal acts, but escalates into communal issues. For instance, after a traffic accident, the question 'Is the person Madurese?' arises, reinforcing stereotypes that fuel hatred and can lead to mass attacks on the Madurese community, even if they are uninvolved. Similarly, media coverage of crime frequently shows individuals wielding machetes, wrongly linking this weapon to Madurese people and promoting ethnic stereotyping."* **(***Interview with Fauzi, November 3, 2022)*

By fostering consensus and cultivating a new shared culture through education, ethnic communities can actively engage in local organisations. This process facilitates a transformation in the perception of conflict, shifting from individualistic viewpoints to a more collective understanding. PMP plays a crucial role in promoting equality and addressing personal conflict before escalating into broader communal tensions. It also works to prevent provocations and the politicisation of ethnic identities. In general, external support is essential in mitigating community tensions

and building trust through shared activities such as gatherings and traditional ceremonies. This study shows that education is a tool for equality in the Madurese community of West Kalimantan. Many members of this community regarded education as a critical investment in raising awareness for future generations. As stated by Marhali (member of IKBM), *"Wealth is easily buried and lost in conflict, but knowledge is ingrained in the body and becomes a provision in the afterlife"* (Interview, November 4, 2022). This evolving perspective is further evidenced by the migration of Madurese families to educational centres such as Yogyakarta in pursuit of better opportunities for children. Budiono (member of Malay association), a Madurese resident of Kalimantan, corroborated this trend, emphasising the increasing number of Madurese parents encouraging children to pursue higher education at Islamic boarding schools and universities in Java and Madura (Interview, 24 November 2022).

Social immunity is a collective mechanism through which communities protect against recurring ethnic violence. It is the ability to develop proactive norms, institutions, and practices that protect society against conflict as stereotypes, provocations, and identity politicisation, using proactive, adaptive, and intergenerational strategies. For instance, the PMP program promotes diversity and equality by ensuring inclusive access to modern education, equipping future generations with critical thinking skills to resist ethnic fanaticism. Ethnic leaders encourage youth participation in collaborative initiatives to encounter prejudices that might escalate minor disputes into communal conflict. The educational investment of Madurese families in sending children to pesantren, universities, and educational centres in Java reflects a shift toward knowledge as a means to break cycles of violence. This is consistent with reports on resilient peacebuilding for peace (Hauge et al., 2015; Vila, 2023), emphasising that

sustainable peace relies on socially embedded mechanisms rather than external interventions. The initiatives transform social structures into proactive systems that reduce conflict relapse and foster long-term peace.

Promoting sustainable peace

In the post-conflict period, PMP members have adopted a collaborative approach to peacebuilding through solidarity-based social movements. This shift is evident in the responses to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and floods in Siantang Regency. During the pandemic, diverse ethnic groups united to distribute Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and map safe zones, delivering around 2,152 PPE items in 2021 (Interview with Sukir, 2 October 2022). Furthermore, during the Siantang floods, communities received aid, including 1 ton of rice, 60,000 eggs, and 150 cartons of noodles (Interview with Sutar (member of IKBM), 15 October 2023). Sukir further stated that the assistance helped rebuild infrastructure such as houses and roads (Interview, November 12, 2022). These acts of solidarity show PMP's ability to overcome ethnic stereotypes and work toward common goals. The Community Early Warning Forum (FKDN) and the National Integration Forum (FPK), government-established ethnic organisations under PMP, hold regular "Coffee Morning" meetings to discuss current ethnic developments in West Kalimantan. This meeting fosters harmony by incorporating representatives from various ethnicities, each serving four-year terms with rotating leadership; for instance, Professor Chairil Effendi (representing the Malay community) led the forum from 2017-2020, and H. Sukriyanto currently represents the Madurese community (Interview with Sukir, 15 October 2022). The gatherings, held in different traditional houses to promote inclusivity, also engage stakeholders such as the police, local government (FORKOPIMDA), and the Indonesian National Army (TNI) to address

issues such as ethnic politicisation during elections.

Ethnic leaders within PMP have cultivated mutual trust among different groups through strategic investments in both social and cultural capital. Socially, the leaders organised a significant event for National Heroes Day in November 2022, which comprised a joint pilgrimage to the grave of Juang Mandor. Culturally, members participate in events such as Maulid and Cap Gomeh, extending invitations across cultural boundaries. This intercultural exchange promotes appreciation and respect for diverse traditions, thereby fostering new shared experiences and strengthening social bonds. PMP also functions as a key institution in safeguarding identity politics. In an interview conducted on October 12, 2023, Jakius (member of Dayak) emphasised the following:

> "Many individuals have already distanced themselves from identity politics. It is essential to manage this phenomenon to prevent conflict arising from identities that are based on religion, ethnicity, or other affiliations. Effective collaboration with the Election Commission (KPU), the Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu), and relevant government stakeholders is imperative. Our objective is for the regional elections (Pilkada) to proceed peacefully, regardless of the office contested—whether president, governor, or regent. If the outcome reflects the genuine choice of the electorate, it must be respected. I am confident that West Kalimantan, united under the PMP and through initiatives such as supporting the police, can peacefully address the challenges associated with politicised identities."

Collective experiences are reshaping the cultural landscape of West Kalimantan by promoting mutual trust and dismantling ethnic stereotypes. This dynamic is exemplified by the cooperative efforts among the Madurese, Dayak, and Malay in assuming the role of mediators in interpersonal disputes, thereby transcending ethnic division. Individuals adjudicated as culpable under the law are subject to appropriate sanctions, which contribute to the establishment of a culture of peace. The progressively significant role of PMP is central to preventing the politicisation of ethnic identities, serving as a crucial mechanism for maintaining harmony and unity within West Kalimantan.

PMP and affiliated organisations in West Kalimantan exemplify a comprehensive conflict prevention model, combining solidarity initiatives, interethnic cooperation, and institutional mechanisms to reduce violence risk. Effective prevention is embedded in daily practices and supported by hybrid institutions blending state frameworks with community-led efforts. Peacebuilding studies emphasise the need for peace infrastructures, everyday peace practices, and capacities to counter ethnic politicisation (Adzahlie-Mensah et al., 2016; Fontana, 2023). In West Kalimantan, PMP fostered solidarity during crises such as COVID-19 and floods by distributing aid and rebuilding infrastructure, reframing interethnic relations around shared goals. Forums such as FKDN and FPK institutionalise dialogue through "Coffee Morning" meetings comprising the police, government, and ethnic communities, while cultural events build intercultural trust. These practices transform vulnerabilities into sustainable peace pathways.

Discussion

This study introduces a new cultural construction supported by PMP. Local leaders recognise that conflict and violence hurt social harmony, and future generations may inherit unresolved tensions if these issues remain unaddressed (Diab et al., 2022; Elgammal, 2022; Hartoyo, 2019; Palma, 2019). Negative

inter-ethnic sentiments can persist without new perspectives, obstructing sustainable peacebuilding. However, constructing a new cultural identity among ethnic groups is complex and influenced by internal and external factors (Werf et al., 2020). Grivijitr (2019) mentioned that marginalised groups struggle to assert social identity amid oppression and urged new ethnic groups to prioritise harmony as well as diversity in social conflict. Djordjevic (2021) also offers a cultural-psychological theory emphasising culture and self-acceptance in embracing differences. Meanwhile, Badache et al. (2022) underscored the importance of expanding conflict resolution transparently and inclusively to recognise ethnic cultural spaces. In this case, PMP plays a crucial role in fostering a new culture of action to promote sustainable peacebuilding.

The documented cases from 2020 to 2022 offer valuable insights into the micro-dynamics of daily interethnic tensions in Indonesia, including conflict occurring during religious ceremonies, disputes in marketplaces, provocations on social media, and violence related to drug-related activities. These incidents may appear isolated and context-specific, but show persistent vulnerabilities in interethnic relations, specifically within multiethnic urban settings. More importantly, the continued role of PMP underscores the presence of a localised peace infrastructure that operates independently of formal state mechanisms, actively engaging in real-time conflict de-escalation through mediation, intergroup dialogue, and coordinated legal collaboration. This phenomenon is in line with Ginty and Richmond's (2013) concept of daily peacebuilding, which emphasises the critical role of non-elite actors in conflict mitigation through contextually grounded and culturally relevant practices. Moreover, PMP initiatives correspond with Lederach's (1999, pp. 23–28) conflict transformation framework, which prioritises relationship-

building and the promotion of sustainable social harmony rooted in local agency. These interventions also exemplify aspects of legal pluralism, in which customary and community-based practices coexist alongside formal legal responses to conflict. Collectively, the dynamics emphasise the importance of grassroots models in informing global peacebuilding policies, particularly within ethnically diverse and legally pluralistic societies (Harper, 2021; Manse, 2024).

Previous studies have shown recurring conflict patterns where individual grievances escalate into communal actions, influenced by the insular nature of local associations (Christensen & Jones, 2020; Fei, 2017; Maddison & Diprose, 2018; Sudjatmiko, 2008). State policies promoting political competition in the post-reformation era have also contributed significantly to the conflict (Amal, 2020; Klinken, 2006; Rozaki, 2022; Suprapto, 2015). Conversely, the ethnic motto "*adil ka' talino, bacuramin ka suraga, basengat ka' jubata*", rooted in Dayak customary values, has fostered cultural cohesion post-conflict and is used by the apparatus government in official speeches. PMP initiatives enhance higher education access, discourage violence by preventing *Sekep* (carrying sharp weapons), address ethnic tensions through forums such as "Coffee Morning", strengthen community solidarity during disasters, promote inter-ethnic interaction through cultural events, and advocate peace journalism for responsible media coverage. These results show the need for innovative peacebuilding strategies that combine active grassroots participation with community-government collaboration to foster inclusive policies preventing discrimination and promoting lasting peace (Bock, 2015; Esteban & Schneider, 2008).

This study offers a novel perspective on sustainable peacebuilding by showing the significance of resilience and social immunity at the grassroots level. Conventional conflict

prevention strategies have predominantly used top-down, structural approaches (Bell, 2018; Byrne & Mcculloch, 2012; Carls, 2019). However, these methods frequently prove insufficient, resulting in only temporary cessations of violence and recurring conflict (Rokhim et al., 2020; Sanmee et al., 2021; Smith, 2014). This study shows that bottom-up, community-driven peace initiatives show greater resilience and protective capacity. By cultivating awareness within local communities and enhancing social capital through the engagement of local actors, the initiatives offer a more enduring resolution to conflict. Consequently, this approach broadens the conceptual framework of conflict resolution by moving beyond cultural and structural dimensions to underscore the crucial role of grassroots mobilisation.

Although this study provides novel insights into the prevention of post-conflict among ethnic groups, it does not comprehensively examine the applicability of the results across the varied contexts within West Kalimantan. It predominantly concentrated on the existing PMP at the provincial and district levels, overlooking the potential influence at the village and sub-district tiers. Meanwhile, the presence of PMP at the provincial and several district levels contributes significantly to mitigating incidents that may trigger similar ethnic conflict. Further studies should investigate the role of ethnic groups at the village and sub-district levels across West Kalimantan and throughout Borneo Island. Grassroots movements and local community engagement should also be prioritised in the development and promotion of sustainable peacebuilding initiatives to uncover distinctive models that could be adapted and applied in diverse regional contexts globally.

Conclusion

In conclusion, new cultural constructions can effectively mitigate ethnocentric behaviours

that lead to communal conflict by engaging local ethnic groups and influential leaders to raise awareness and shift mindsets toward inclusivity and collaboration, as shown by the diverse activities of PMP. This study emphasises the role of communities in transforming values, symbols, and customs to build consensus and resolve conflict collectively, fostering the reinvention of cultures, access to modern education, and the creation of social spaces conducive to sustainable peacebuilding. This process cultivates communal consciousness and new social identities, reducing suspicion and prejudice that fuel conflict, thereby providing resilience against manipulation of ethnic differences for political purposes. Although this study identified innovative cultural mechanisms for sustainable peace and equality in education access, it has limitations in generalisability, suggesting the need for broader, context-specific investigations. Further studies are needed to develop a culturally grounded "immune system" with diverse material objects to enhance social resilience. This implies that larger sample sizes and global perspectives are needed to better understand ethnic conflict resolution mechanisms in varied settings.

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