

Multicultural Da'wah and Interethnic Communication among Madurese and Tenggerese Communities in East Java, Indonesia

Muhammad Nurhuda, Muhammad Hamdan Yuwafik

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Institut Agama Islam Sunan Kalijogo Malang, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines multicultural da'wah and interethnic communication between the Madurese and Tenggerese communities in supporting the development of local wisdom in Malang Regency, East Java, Indonesia. The study is grounded in the sociocultural diversity of local communities, encompassing differences in ethnicity, language, religion, traditions, and cultural practices that require adaptive and inclusive communication patterns. The objective of this research is to analyze how multicultural da'wah communication contributes to social harmony and the preservation of local wisdom within a pluralistic society. This study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive analytical approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The research involved eight key informants consisting of Madurese community members, Tenggerese community members, religious leaders, traditional leaders, youth leaders, and local economic actors who actively participate in intercultural interactions. The findings reveal that multicultural da'wah communication between the two ethnic groups demonstrates interaction patterns leading to cultural assimilation and acculturation. Despite having different mother tongues, namely Madurese and Tenggerese, Indonesian functions as the primary medium of communication and facilitates mutual understanding. Local wisdom values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), deliberation (*musyawarah*), tolerance, and mutual respect serve as a strong foundation for maintaining harmonious social relations. Religious and community leaders play a strategic role in facilitating intercultural communication, strengthening social cohesion, and resolving potential conflicts. Furthermore, this study contributes to the development of multicultural da'wah theory by demonstrating that local wisdom functions as a communicative bridge that mediates interethnic relations in culturally diverse communities. The study also proposes a multicultural da'wah communication model based on cultural adaptation, social inclusion, and shared local values, which may serve as a reference for sociocultural policy formulation and community-based conflict prevention strategies in multicultural regions. The gradual construction of a shared identity among the communities reinforces the perception of ethnic diversity as a social asset rather than a source of division, thereby strengthening collective belonging and social solidarity.

Keywords

Interethnic Communication, Multicultural Da'wah, Madurese, Tenggerese

Corresponding Author

Muhammad Hamdan Yuwafik

Institut Agama Islam Sunan Kalijogo Malang, Indonesia; afikhamdan@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The discourse on multicultural da'wah communication remains an enduring and significant area of scholarly inquiry in Indonesia. Communication across cultures is indispensable



in all spheres of life. Every human being inevitably engages in communication, whether through verbal expressions or non-verbal means. Cultural diversity (multiculturalism) is a natural and inevitable phenomenon that arises when different cultures encounter one another. In this process, individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds interact, each bringing their own cultural behaviors and distinctive ways of life. Diversity, encompassing cultural backgrounds, family traditions, religions, and ethnicities, continuously interacts within Indonesian society.

In a society characterized by cultural plurality, interactions among individuals are intense. Therefore, every member of society must possess adequate social competence to engage effectively with others. Through intercultural communication, individuals can understand the differences that may arise in their interactions with people from diverse backgrounds. Indonesia, with more than 17,000 islands stretching across the equator, is home to extraordinary cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. Such diversity forms what is commonly referred to as a multicultural da'wah society.

A multicultural da'wah society is defined as a community consisting of two or more groups that live side by side without full integration into a unified political entity. According to Furnivall, the primary characteristic of a multicultural society lies in the coexistence of groups that physically inhabit the same territory, yet remain socially and culturally distinct, without forming a cohesive community (Nurul Hidayat, 2019). In such a diverse society, intercultural communication occurs among individuals from different groups who possess dissimilar cultural backgrounds (including differences in religion, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or a combination of these factors) (Susanti, 2022).

Multicultural da'wah communication refers to the process of interaction between individuals or groups originating from diverse cultural backgrounds. This concept encompasses the exchange of information, understanding, and experiences shaped by differences in values, norms, language, and cognitive frameworks (M. H. Yuwafik, D. F. A. P. Lestari, 2025). In communication studies, it is frequently observed that interaction becomes more challenging when individuals engage with others who do not share their cultural background. Unlike interactions with individuals from one's own cultural group, the potential for misunderstanding increases significantly when communicating with people whose cultural frameworks differ from one's own (Anita, 2024). In such encounters, differences may arise in physical appearance, attitudes, ways of thinking, and worldviews (Rini Fitria, 2017).

The issue of multicultural communication has become increasingly significant in contemporary global society, characterized by high levels of population mobility, cross-cultural interaction, and diverse social and religious identities. According to Gudykunst and Kim, multicultural communication refers to the process of interaction between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds, requiring the ability to understand, respect, and negotiate cultural differences within social life (William B Gudykunst, 1997). In pluralistic societies, communication functions not only as a means of information exchange but also as an essential instrument for fostering tolerance, social cohesion, and community integration. Previous studies indicate that differences in language, values, social norms, and belief systems often lead to misunderstanding and conflict. Nevertheless, these differences simultaneously create opportunities for dialogue and mutual understanding among diverse communities (Anita Febiyana and Ade Tuti Turistiati, 2019).

In the Indonesian context, multicultural communication is strategically important given the country's vast cultural diversity, comprising more than 1,300 ethnic groups. Previous studies

have primarily focused on intercultural communication in urban communities, interethnic relations in metropolitan areas, or interreligious communication within conflict settings (Mulyani, 2022). Research by Rahardjo demonstrates that awareness of cultural differences and respect for other groups' identities can enhance the effectiveness of interethnic communication. (Yuwafik & Muhid, 2020) However, most existing studies concentrate on intercultural communication in general and pay limited attention to multicultural da'wah communication within rural communities characterized by strong ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity.

A significant research gap remains in the limited number of studies examining multicultural da'wah communication within communities where Muslim migrant groups interact intensively with indigenous cultural communities in their daily lives. Existing scholarship tends to focus either on da'wah practices within relatively homogeneous Muslim societies or on religious tolerance without exploring communication strategies employed in cross-cultural and cross-ethnic interactions. Consequently, little is known about how Islamic values are communicated through inclusive, dialogical, and culturally sensitive approaches while preserving the cultural identities of different ethnic groups. Within this context, the relationship between the Madurese and Tenggerese communities in Malang Regency, East Java, presents a unique and compelling subject for scholarly investigation. The Tenggerese are widely recognized as an indigenous community that strongly maintains local traditions and cultural heritage, whereas the Madurese represent a migrant Muslim community actively engaged in economic and social activities. Interactions between these groups occur within shared social spaces, including traditional markets, agricultural activities, village deliberations, religious gatherings, and everyday communal life. Despite differences in language, cultural values, communication styles, and historical backgrounds, relations between the Madurese and Tenggerese communities have remained relatively harmonious and socially stable.

The uniqueness of the Madurese–Tenggerese relationship lies in their ability to establish adaptive communication patterns amid cultural and religious differences. Madurese communication is generally characterized by directness and expressiveness, whereas Tenggerese communication tends to emphasize politeness, social harmony, and contextual meaning. Although such differences potentially create communication barriers, they have instead encouraged cultural negotiation, adaptation, and mutual understanding. This phenomenon provides valuable empirical evidence of how multicultural communication contributes to social integration and peaceful coexistence within a plural society. This study offers a significant novelty by examining multicultural da'wah communication through the lens of interethnic relations between the Madurese and Tenggerese communities in Malang Regency. Unlike previous studies that primarily discuss intercultural communication from a general perspective, this research uses multicultural da'wah as the central analytical framework to understand how Islamic values are communicated through dialogue, cultural accommodation, and *da'wah bi al-hal* (preaching through exemplary actions). Furthermore, the study provides empirical insights into communication strategies, cultural adaptation processes, and social integration mechanisms between migrant Muslim communities and indigenous cultural groups.

The urgency of this study lies in its contribution to developing a multicultural da'wah communication model applicable to Indonesia's increasingly diverse society. The findings are expected to enrich the theoretical discourse on multicultural da'wah communication, broaden the

study of interethnic relations in plural societies, and provide practical guidance for religious leaders, policymakers, and local communities in promoting social harmony through local wisdom. Therefore, the Madurese–Tenggerese relationship in Malang Regency holds not only academic significance but also substantial social relevance in strengthening social integration and religious moderation within multicultural Indonesia.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the dynamics of multicultural da'wah communication between the Madurese migrant community and the indigenous Tenggerese community in grassroots Malang, East Java, Indonesia. A qualitative approach is particularly suitable for this research because it enables an in-depth understanding of social interaction, meaning-making processes, and cultural negotiation within naturally occurring settings. Qualitative inquiry emphasizes the exploration of lived experiences, subjective interpretations, and social realities constructed through interaction (Creswell, 2014). By applying this approach, the study seeks to capture the complexities of intercultural encounters and the subtle processes through which local wisdom is negotiated in everyday communication (Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, 2018). The research design is phenomenological and ethnographic, focusing on how individuals experience and interpret intercultural communication in their daily lives. Phenomenology allows the researcher to examine participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attribute to those experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Meanwhile, an ethnographic sensibility supports the contextual understanding of communication patterns embedded within cultural traditions, social norms, and local belief systems (P., 1983). This combined orientation enables the researcher to interpret not only what is communicated but also how and why communication practices are shaped by local cultural frameworks (Geertz, 1973).

The research site is located in several grassroots areas of Malang Regency, East Java, where interactions between Madurese migrants and Tenggerese indigenous communities frequently occur. These locations include traditional markets, neighborhood settlements, village meeting halls, religious gatherings, and local cultural events. The selection of these sites is based on their role as shared social spaces where intercultural communication occurs intensively and organically. Observing communication within these everyday contexts provides a holistic understanding of how local wisdom is expressed, maintained, and negotiated in practical interactions (Hall, 1976). Research informants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure participants had relevant experience with intercultural interaction. The informants are members of the Madurese migrant community who have resided in Malang for at least 5 years, and indigenous Tenggerese individuals actively involved in community activities. Additional informants include community leaders, religious figures, youth representatives, and local traders who regularly engage in cross-cultural communication. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select participants who are information-rich and capable of providing deep insights into the research topic (Devitt, 2003). This strategy ensures that the data collected reflects diverse perspectives within both communities (Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, 2014).

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview guides, allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences while maintaining focus on key research themes. Interviews explored perceptions of cultural identity, experiences of interaction,

communication challenges, adaptation strategies, and interpretations of local wisdom values. The semi-structured format enables the researcher to probe emerging issues and clarify meanings during the interview process (Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, 2009). This technique facilitates a deeper exploration of how individuals interpret intercultural encounters and negotiate differences in values, language styles, and communication norms (W. B Gudykunst, 2005). Participant observation was conducted to directly examine patterns of interaction between Madurese and Tenggerese individuals in shared public spaces. The researcher adopted a moderate role in the community, engaging in community activities while maintaining analytical distance. Through systematic observation, the researcher documented verbal exchanges, nonverbal communication, spatial arrangements, and contextual factors influencing communication behavior. Field notes were written immediately after each observation session to preserve accuracy and detail. Participant observation enables researchers to capture naturally occurring communication practices and understand implicit cultural rules that may not be explicitly articulated in interviews. This approach is particularly useful in studying intercultural communication, where meaning is often embedded in subtle gestures, tone, and contextual cues (Hall, 1976).

In addition to interviews and observations, documentation included community records, photographs of public interactions (with consent), local regulations, and cultural event archives. These documents serve as supplementary data to contextualize findings and strengthen triangulation. Triangulation enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research by comparing multiple data sources and methods (Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, 2014). By integrating interview narratives, observational data, and documentary evidence, the study ensures a comprehensive understanding of the negotiation of local wisdom within multicultural da'wah communication contexts (Flick, 2014). Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. The process began with data transcription, followed by open coding to identify significant statements related to intercultural interaction and local wisdom negotiation. Codes were then categorized into broader themes, such as identity affirmation, adaptation strategies, conflict management, symbolic communication, and value integration. Thematic analysis allows researchers to systematically identify patterns and meanings within qualitative data while maintaining sensitivity to context (Braun, V., & Clarke, 2006). Throughout the analysis, the researcher engaged in reflexivity to minimize bias and remain aware of personal assumptions that influenced interpretation (Berger, 2015).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the study applied the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through prolonged field engagement and member checking, in which participants were invited to review summaries of interview findings. Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the research context and participants. Dependability was ensured by maintaining an audit trail documenting research procedures and analytical decisions. Confirmability was strengthened through triangulation and reflexive journaling. These strategies enhance the rigor of qualitative research and support the trustworthiness of the conclusions drawn (Creswell, 2014). Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained prior to interviews and observations. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing participants' names and safeguarding research data. Ethical sensitivity

is essential in intercultural research, particularly when exploring issues of identity, power, and cultural negotiation. Respect for local customs and cultural norms was also prioritized to ensure that the research process did not disrupt community harmony (P., 1983). Through this qualitative methodological framework, the study aims to generate a nuanced understanding of how local wisdom is negotiated and reconstructed within multicultural da'wah communication between the Madurese and Tenggerese communities. By combining in-depth interviews, participant observation, documentation, and thematic analysis, the research seeks to reveal the dynamic interplay between cultural identity, adaptation, and social cohesion in grassroots Malang. Ultimately, this methodological approach provides a comprehensive foundation for analyzing intercultural communication processes in Indonesia's pluralistic society.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Multicultural da'wah Communication between the Madurese and Tengger Ethnic Groups in Building Local Wisdom in Malang Regency

Multicultural da'wah communication is understood as a process of interaction or exchange of information between individuals or groups with different cultural backgrounds. In the context of communication studies, culture encompasses value systems, beliefs, norms, language, and patterns of interaction that develop within particular social or ethnic groups (J. Beno, A. P. Silen, 2022). Therefore, multicultural da'wah communication involves not only the exchange of verbal messages but also the ability to understand differences in social norms, body language, and cultural expressions that may vary across groups. According to Samovar and Porter, multicultural da'wah communication refers to communication that occurs between individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Al-Amin Dompou, 2023). This form of communication requires a profound understanding of diverse communicative practices and the ways individuals navigate cultural differences in their daily interactions.

Malang Regency, located in East Java Province, is one of the regions characterized by significant cultural and ethnic diversity (Muhammad Hamdan Yuwafik, 2020). Various ethnic groups, religions, and traditions coexist within its dynamic social life. Two prominent ethnic communities in this region are the Madurese and the Tenggerese. The Madurese, who are predominantly Muslim, are widely recognized for their strong adherence to traditional values and assertiveness in social life. In contrast, the Tenggerese, who are predominantly Hindu, maintain a strong commitment to preserving ancestral traditions and belief systems closely related to nature and their forebears. Effective intercultural communication between these two ethnic groups is essential for maintaining social harmony and preventing potential social conflicts.

The Madurese are widely known as a migrant ethnic group and can be found in various cities across Indonesia. Although they often constitute a minority group in their host regions, their presence is distinctive and recognizable through specific cultural characteristics. These include their language, traditional housing pattern known as *tanean lanjang*, traditional attire and accessories, as well as performing arts such as *parebasan*, *macopat*, *sronen*, *tandhak*, Madurese mask performances, and *sandhur*. Madurese communities are sometimes referred to as "Maduran," "Dura," or by names incorporating the element "dura," such as Belahan Dura (Taufiqurrahman, 2007). They are also known as "Baran," referring to settlements or villages where Madurese communities reside collectively.

In Malang, the Madurese community is among the most visible ethnic groups in the broader society. This community maintains distinctive cultural features, including language use, traditional housing, clothing styles, and performing arts. Historical records indicate that the Madurese began migrating to Malang in the 1910s, during the Dutch colonial period, when they were brought as forced laborers by the Dutch colonial government of the Netherlands Indies. They originated primarily from the regencies of Bangkalan, Sampang, and Pamekasan (Normalia, 2020). In Malang, Madurese settlements are commonly found in areas ranging from Kidal Village in Tumpang District to Ngingit Village, Gunungasri Village, and Randugading Village, the latter two located in Tajinan District.

The Tenggerese community in Malang Regency is concentrated in a single village, namely Ngadas Village. Ngadas Village, Ngadas, is an agrarian village located in Poncokusumo District, Malang Regency. It is the easternmost village in Malang Regency, approximately 45 kilometers from Malang City. Furthermore, Ngadas Village lies within the Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park (TNBTS) at an altitude of approximately 2,100 meters above sea level. This geographical setting provides the village with remarkable natural scenery, as it lies within a mountainous national park. At this elevation, the average temperature ranges between 2°C and 22°C, while annual rainfall reaches approximately 3,000–3,500 mm. These climatic conditions limit the variety of crops that can be cultivated as the village's primary agricultural commodities. Administratively, Ngadas Village is bordered by several neighboring areas. To the north, it borders Mororejo Village, Tosari District, Pasuruan Regency. To the south, it borders Ranupani Village, Senduro District, Lumajang Regency. To the west, it borders Gubuklakah Village, Poncokusumo District, Malang Regency. Meanwhile, to the east, it borders Ngadisari Village, Sukapura District, Probolinggo Regency. Ngadas Village is characterized by hilly terrain and covers approximately 381 hectares. Of this total area, around 14 hectares are designated for residential settlements, while 181 hectares are utilized for agricultural purposes. The limited availability of land has resulted in residential houses being built relatively close to one another throughout the village (Haryanto, 2019). Although Ngadas Village's inhabitants are religiously diverse, the community remains strongly committed to preserving Tengger customs and traditions.

The majority of the Madurese adhere to Islam, with a cultural life strongly influenced by *pesantren* traditions, marriage customs, and religious rituals. In contrast, the Tenggerese are an ethnic group inhabiting the area around Mount Bromo, most of whom practice Hinduism. Based on field observations and in-depth interviews conducted during the research on Multicultural Da'wah and Interethnic Communication among Madurese and Tenggerese Communities in East Java, Indonesia, one of the most significant arenas of multicultural interaction between the Muslim Madurese community and the Tenggerese community was found in the implementation of the Karo Ceremony (*Upacara Karo*). This ceremony represents the largest traditional festival of the Tenggerese people and is celebrated annually during the month of Karo according to the Tenggerese calendar, which is derived from the Saka calendar system. The celebration lasts approximately fifteen days and serves as a crucial social and cultural event aimed at strengthening community solidarity, preserving cultural identity, and fostering harmonious relations among people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. The Karo Ceremony begins with collective prayers led by traditional leaders or Tengger

shamans (*dukun adat*), followed by a series of rituals including the preparation of special offerings known as *sesanding*, family visits, cultural processions, traditional performances such as the Sodoran Dance, and various communal gatherings involving all members of the village community. The Tenggerese people regard this celebration as an expression of gratitude to God, a form of respect toward ancestors, and a means of transmitting social values such as mutual cooperation, solidarity, and communal harmony to younger generations.

From the perspective of multicultural da'wah, the study revealed that Muslim Madurese residents living within Tengger communities do not perceive the Karo Ceremony as a threat to their Islamic identity. Instead, they regard the event as an important opportunity for intercultural communication and social integration. Various forms of multicultural da'wah were identified during the celebration, including participation in community service activities, assisting with logistical preparations, maintaining security and order during cultural events, providing food and refreshments for neighbors hosting ceremonial activities, and engaging in social visits that strengthen interethnic relationships. Muslim religious leaders also utilize the occasion to demonstrate the principles of *da'wah bil hal* (preaching through exemplary actions) by practicing tolerance, cooperation, respect, and social responsibility. Rather than delivering confrontational religious messages, da'wah is manifested through everyday interactions that reflect Islamic values such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *ta'awun* (mutual assistance). These findings indicate that multicultural da'wah serves as an effective bridge for intercultural communication in pluralistic societies, enabling religious and ethnic differences to become sources of social enrichment rather than sources of conflict.

Interviews with Islamic religious leader Khoirul, conducted in August 2025, revealed that Muslim residents commonly attend social gatherings associated with the Karo celebration after the completion of the main ritual activities. According to him, Muslim participation is not intended to engage in the religious aspects of the ceremony but rather to demonstrate respect and solidarity toward their Tenggerese neighbors and relatives. This practice reflects a healthy process of cultural negotiation between religious identity and social identity. Similarly, Tengger traditional leader Khorudin explained that the Karo Ceremony is a sacred ancestral tradition that emphasizes brotherhood, social harmony, and mutual respect. Consequently, all residents living in Tengger areas—whether Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, or adherents of other faiths—are welcome to participate in the celebration's social and cultural dimensions, provided they respect local customs and traditions.

Field observations conducted during the 2025 Karo Ceremony indicated that the celebration commenced on the fifteenth day of the Karo month in the Tengger calendar, which generally falls between July and August in the Gregorian calendar, depending on the annual calculation of the traditional calendar. The opening activities included reciting traditional prayers and mantras (*mekakat*), followed by the Sodoran Dance, which symbolizes the origin and continuity of human life. Subsequent events included cultural parades, family reunions, communal meals, artistic performances, and collective social gatherings involving all members of the village. In Tengger villages such as Ngadas, Tosari, and Ngadisari, these activities lasted approximately 15 consecutive days, creating an intensive space for interaction among different ethnic and religious groups. Through these communal activities, multicultural da'wah emerged naturally through interpersonal communication, cooperative economic practices, mutual assistance, and respect for religious diversity. The findings demonstrate that the Karo

Ceremony functions not only as a traditional ritual but also as a dynamic medium of cultural communication that promotes tolerance, strengthens social cohesion, and facilitates inclusive forms of da'wah within East Java's multicultural society. (Ema Rahmawati and Bambang Suseno, 2021).

Although both groups practice their respective religions, they share a strong belief in ancestral spirits and supernatural beings. The Tenggerese, in particular, believe that their village is protected by spiritual entities, including ancestral spirits, guardian spirits of agricultural fields, and guardian spirits of water sources. To maintain peace and balance, they emphasize harmonious relationships with nature through customary rituals conducted in sacred shrines, ancestral graves, *danyang* (sacred guardian sites), water springs, and private residences (Bahrudin and Zurohman, 2022).

The striking cultural differences between the Madurese and the Tenggerese create various communication challenges, one of the most prominent being language differences. The Madurese use the Madurese language, whereas the Tenggerese speak Tengger Javanese, a distinct dialect with variations in pronunciation, vocabulary, and structure compared to mainstream Javanese. Although both groups can communicate in Indonesian, differences in local languages often complicate daily interactions. Research by Deanty Rumandang Bulan indicates that, while Indonesian serves as a bridging language, limited understanding or incorrect use of local terms and dialects may lead to misunderstandings (Antari, 2019).

Beyond linguistic differences, divergent cultural values significantly influence communication styles. The Madurese are generally recognized for a more direct and open communication style. They tend to express opinions firmly and explicitly. Conversely, the Tenggerese prioritize politeness and social harmony in verbal interactions. They communicate more cautiously and often use softer language to avoid confrontation. When these differing communication styles are not effectively managed, they may generate tension or even conflict. One of the most fundamental distinctions between the Madurese and the Tenggerese communities concerns their linguistic practices. Although Tengger Javanese shares structural similarities with standard Javanese, it exhibits distinctive variations in pronunciation, lexical choice, and pragmatic expression. These linguistic differences may influence patterns of interethnic communication, despite both communities' proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia, the national lingua franca. Madurese speech is frequently perceived as more direct in its syntactic construction and communicative style. In contrast, Tengger Javanese interaction places considerable emphasis on politeness norms and social hierarchy, often incorporating *krama* (high-register speech) in everyday discourse. For example, when addressing elders, Tenggerese speakers tend to use highly deferential, carefully structured linguistic forms. By comparison, Madurese speakers may adopt a more direct communicative approach. These differences not only reflect linguistic variation but also illustrate the socio-cultural values embedded within each community's communicative conventions.

The Madurese communication style is widely perceived as direct, transparent, and relatively unembellished. In many social contexts, they prefer to convey messages explicitly rather than resort to indirectness. This pattern is observable in various aspects of social life, including family interactions and community events. For instance, during traditional ceremonies such as weddings or circumcision rituals, discussions concerning preparation and

procedures are typically conducted openly and candidly (Normalia, 2020).

In contrast, the Tenggerese exhibit a more refined and cautious communication style. Their communicative behavior is deeply shaped by values emphasizing politeness and social equilibrium. They frequently employ formal or refined language forms when interacting with elders or respected community figures (Haryanto, 2019). Moreover, indirect expressions and metaphorical language are often utilized to prevent confrontation and preserve interpersonal harmony. Despite the distinctive characteristics of each local language, daily interactions in Malang Regency frequently rely on Indonesian as a *lingua franca* to facilitate interethnic communication. While Indonesian effectively serves as a unifying medium, it does not entirely eliminate the cultural nuances embedded in each ethnic group's communicative patterns, which occasionally complicate social interpretation (Amalyasari, 2019).

Differences in social values and norms further influence communication between the Madurese and the Tenggerese. Madurese culture strongly emphasizes social hierarchy, particularly within familial and community contexts. Although direct speech is common among peers and younger people, strict etiquette governs interactions with elders or those of higher status. Social structure within Madurese communities is highly organized, and this organization is reflected in communicative behavior (Suyyirah, Maimun, & Maysurah, 2025). Similarly, the Tenggerese prioritize harmony and balance in social relationships, especially within family and communal roles. Their communication norms are strongly influenced by Hindu teachings, which stress respect for elders, adherence to customary law, and maintenance of social decorum. Consequently, daily interactions emphasize soft language and avoidance of expressions that might provoke disagreement or tension.

Religion plays a significant role in shaping communicative practices within both communities. The Madurese are predominantly Muslim, and Islamic teachings substantially influence their social norms, including patterns of speech and interpersonal conduct. Religious values inform not only ritual practices but also everyday interactions. In contrast, the Tenggerese community is predominantly Hindu, and Hindu cosmology significantly shapes their communicative conventions. Religious discourse within Tenggerese society often incorporates symbolic language and references to ancestral traditions, nature, and spirituality (Bahrudin and Zurohman, 2022). Their belief system, which includes reverence for deities and ancestral spirits, encourages careful, respectful speech, particularly in ritual contexts, sacred spaces, or communal ceremonies. These distinctions suggest that religious frameworks shape distinct communicative orientations within each community. While both groups demonstrate respect in social interaction, the forms and expressions of that respect are mediated by distinct theological and cosmological traditions. Consequently, religion functions not only as a belief system but also as a sociocultural force that structures patterns of communication and interpersonal relations.

Despite these differences, positive communication practices between the Tenggerese and Madurese communities in Malang are evident in their ability to establish friendships and professional relationships. This constructive communication is supported by the shared need for social integration and cooperation. Effective socialization reduces the potential for interethnic conflict and strengthens communal cohesion (Akhmadi, 2019). Language plays a central role in sustaining multicultural *da'wah* communication in Malang. Although Indonesian functions as the official and primary language of interaction, many individuals

continue to use local languages in daily life.

3.2 Multicultural da'wah Challenges between the Madurese and Tenggerese Communities in Building Local Wisdom in Malang Regency

The effectiveness of communication largely depends on the communicator's ability to understand and respond appropriately to situational contexts (Al-Amin Dompou, 2023). Different situations generate different responses from message recipients. Communication processes are not always successful or effective; numerous barriers may arise when communicators lack adequate communicative competence. Among the most significant barriers are cultural differences and divergent socio-cultural backgrounds. In the multicultural da'wah society of Malang, exclusive religious attitudes where truth and salvation are acknowledged unilaterally may potentially generate friction among ethnic groups.

Linguistic differences and dialectal variations constitute a primary obstacle to communication in multicultural da'wah between the Madurese and Tenggerese communities in Malang Regency. The implementation of these differences is reflected in language use, which may lead to misunderstandings. For example, when addressing elders, the Tenggerese tend to use highly structured, respectful language, whereas the Madurese are more inclined to communicate directly with minimal linguistic mediation. The Madurese language is generally characterized by straightforward and assertive sentence structures, while Tengger Javanese is more refined, frequently incorporating *krama* (polite speech levels) in everyday conversations. These linguistic contrasts may complicate interaction, particularly when cultural sensitivity is limited.

Another significant barrier is the persistence of stereotypes and social prejudice. Stereotypes represent one of the most critical challenges in multicultural da'wah communication. Both the Madurese and Tenggerese communities in Malang Regency hold certain perceptions about one another. Such stereotypes are often shaped by historical experiences, circulating societal narratives, or inaccurate information. For instance, the Madurese are sometimes perceived as harsh, emotional, or prone to conflict, whereas the Tenggerese may be viewed as closed, isolated, or excessively mystical due to their strong adherence to traditional beliefs. These generalized perceptions can negatively affect interethnic relations, as individuals who feel stereotyped may experience marginalization or discriminatory treatment.

Differences in social values and norms further intensify the challenges of intercultural communication. Each ethnic group in Malang maintains distinct norms governing how opinions are expressed and how interpersonal interactions are conducted. Within Madurese culture, strong emphasis is placed on social hierarchy, particularly within family and community structures. Direct communication is common among peers and younger individuals; however, strict etiquette governs interactions with elders or individuals of higher social status. Intergenerational relationships and social positions are clearly structured, and this structure is reflected in communicative behavior.

Conversely, the Tenggerese prioritize harmony and balance in social relationships, particularly in family and communal roles. Their communication norms are deeply influenced by Hindu teachings that emphasize politeness, respect for elders, and reverence for customary

traditions. Consequently, Tenggerese daily communication tends to favor soft expressions and the avoidance of words that may provoke disagreement or social tension. When these contrasting normative frameworks intersect, misinterpretations may occur if mutual understanding is insufficient.

The rapid development of technology and social media in Malang, as in many other regions, presents a dual impact on multicultural da'wah communication. On the one hand, digital platforms create opportunities for more inclusive interaction, enabling individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds to exchange information and communicate beyond geographical boundaries. On the other hand, social media can also function as a vehicle for racial discrimination, misinformation, and the reinforcement of negative stereotypes. The findings of this study reveal that social media does not always function as a medium for social integration; under certain circumstances, it becomes a space for the reproduction of stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and symbolic conflicts among cultural groups. As one of Indonesia's major educational cities, Malang hosts students from diverse ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, including Javanese, Madurese, Papuan, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Nusa Tenggara, and Balinese communities. Such diversity constitutes significant social capital for the development of multicultural communication. However, the rapid advancement of digital technology and the widespread use of social media have simultaneously introduced new challenges, including the dissemination of negative stereotypes, hate speech, disinformation, and social polarization, all of which may hinder intercultural integration.

One of the most prominent issues identified in multicultural communication studies in Malang concerns the experiences of Papuan students who continue to encounter various forms of stereotyping and social prejudice, both in face-to-face interactions and within digital environments. Research conducted between 2024 and 2025 indicates that many Papuan students are frequently subjected to negative labeling, being portrayed as difficult to adapt, aggressive in character, or even associated with conflict and separatist narratives originating from Papua. These stereotypes are often reinforced by social media discourse, unbalanced media coverage, and discriminatory comments circulating across digital platforms. Consequently, Papuan students experience heightened levels of social anxiety and communication uncertainty, which negatively affect their ability to establish interpersonal relationships with local communities and students from other regions. These findings suggest that social media can function as a mechanism for the reinforcement of ethnic prejudice when information is disseminated without adequate verification and intercultural understanding.

In addition to stereotypes directed toward Papuan students, the study also identified the persistence of social prejudice against members of the Madurese community residing or pursuing higher education in Malang. In several instances, Madurese ethnic identity continues to be associated with stigmatizing perceptions that portray the group as harsh, temperamental, or prone to social conflict. Such stereotypes are largely socially constructed narratives that have evolved historically and are further perpetuated through social media discussions and everyday conversations. Several Madurese students reported experiencing discriminatory treatment in the form of stereotypical jokes, negative labeling, and subtle social exclusion within particular social environments. Although these forms of discrimination are not always overt, they can undermine individual self-confidence and impede effective intercultural communication. From a multicultural communication perspective, these findings demonstrate

that ethnic identity frequently becomes the basis for prejudice formation when individuals rely more heavily on stereotypes than on direct intercultural interaction. As a result, social relations among groups become increasingly vulnerable to misunderstanding and symbolic conflict, thereby weakening social cohesion within multicultural communities.

Furthermore, research conducted among university students in Malang during 2025 revealed that the intensity of social media usage is positively correlated with the spread of hoaxes and disinformation. University students, as highly active users of digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X (formerly Twitter), frequently become both recipients and disseminators of unverified information. The findings indicate that limited digital literacy is a major factor contributing to individuals' susceptibility to believing and sharing information that provokes hatred and discrimination against particular groups. Within the context of multicultural communication, hoaxes often involve issues related to religion, ethnicity, race, and political affiliation, thereby possessing significant potential to generate intergroup conflict. False information may reinforce existing stereotypes and shape negative perceptions toward specific communities, even among individuals who have never interacted directly with members of those groups. Consequently, social media serves not only as a communication channel but also as a contested arena of narratives that can influence societal perceptions of cultural diversity.

Another important phenomenon identified in this study is the increasing prevalence of hate speech and social polarization within student social media environments. Research conducted in 2026 demonstrated that university students constitute one of the most active groups of internet users and are therefore highly exposed to hate speech targeting religious, ethnic, racial, and other social identities. The majority of respondents reported encountering discriminatory comments, derogatory remarks directed at particular groups, and content containing elements of intolerance across various social media platforms. The presence of such content not only causes psychological discomfort but also threatens the quality of intercultural relationships established in academic and community settings. In the context of Malang as a multicultural educational hub attracting students from Papua, Madura, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Bali, Nusa Tenggara, and other regions of Indonesia, the proliferation of hate speech has the potential to weaken social integration and obstruct the development of healthy multicultural communication. Without strengthening digital literacy, multicultural education, and ethical awareness in digital communication practices, social media may continue to serve as a vehicle for reproducing prejudice, discrimination, and social conflict, ultimately jeopardizing harmony within a pluralistic society. Therefore, collaborative efforts among educational institutions, government agencies, community leaders, and social media users are essential for fostering an inclusive, tolerant, and diversity-oriented digital communication culture in Malang.

In addition, the findings regarding stereotypes, discrimination, hate speech, disinformation, and social polarization in Malang demonstrate the increasing urgency of conducting research on *Multicultural Da'wah and Interethnic Communication among Madurese and Tenggerese Communities in Malang, East Java, Indonesia*. As a region characterized by cultural diversity, Malang is home not only to indigenous Javanese communities but also to Madurese migrants, the Tenggerese indigenous community, Papuan students, and various other ethnic groups. While such diversity represents valuable social capital, it also poses challenges for

maintaining social harmony amid the rapid expansion of digital communication technologies. Recent studies indicate that ethnic stereotypes, prejudice, racial discrimination, and communication barriers continue to affect intercultural relations in educational and social environments. Papuan students in Malang, for example, frequently encounter culture shock, negative stereotypes, and communication anxiety, all of which hinder their adaptation and social integration processes.

These phenomena highlight that cultural differences alone do not necessarily generate conflict; rather, conflict often arises from ineffective communication, misinformation, and the persistence of negative perceptions among social groups. Similar conditions may potentially affect relations between Madurese and Tenggerese communities, who possess distinct cultural backgrounds, religious orientations, communication styles, and social values. The Madurese community is generally characterized by a strong Islamic identity, direct communication patterns, and a hierarchical social structure, whereas the Tenggerese community is known for its cultural pluralism, local wisdom traditions, and a communication style emphasizing harmony and social cohesion. Without effective mechanisms for intercultural communication, these differences could become sources of misunderstanding, prejudice, and social distance. Conversely, when managed through constructive communication and multicultural da'wah, cultural differences can become resources for social integration and mutual understanding.

In this context, the concept of multicultural da'wah becomes highly relevant as an alternative approach to fostering intercultural harmony. Unlike conventional da'wah that primarily focuses on religious transmission, multicultural da'wah emphasizes tolerance, mutual respect, empathy, dialogue, and cultural accommodation. Through this approach, religious values are communicated in ways that appreciate cultural diversity rather than negate it. The relevance of this perspective is increasingly evident in contemporary society, where social media frequently amplifies stereotypes, spreads misinformation, and reinforces group polarization. Research on multicultural da'wah among Madurese and Tenggerese communities, therefore, contributes not only to the development of Islamic communication studies but also to practical efforts aimed at preventing social fragmentation in multicultural societies.

Furthermore, the study is of particular significance because the Tenggerese community is one of the most distinctive indigenous cultural groups in East Java, maintaining unique traditions such as the Karo Ceremony, the Kasada Ritual, and various forms of local wisdom that continue to shape social life. The interaction between Madurese Muslim communities and Tenggerese cultural communities provides an important empirical context for understanding how intercultural communication, religious values, and local traditions can coexist within a pluralistic society. Previous studies have demonstrated that intercultural communication barriers often arise from stereotypes, prejudice, uncertainty, language differences, and ethnocentric perceptions. Effective communication, empathy, and cultural adaptation are therefore essential in overcoming such barriers and fostering sustainable social relationships.

Consequently, this research is important both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it enriches the discourse on multicultural da'wah, intercultural communication, and social integration within culturally diverse societies. In practice, it offers a model for promoting harmonious relations among communities with diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. In an era where digital media often intensifies social polarization and identity-based conflicts, understanding how Madurese and Tenggerese communities negotiate

differences through communication, local wisdom, and multicultural da'wah becomes increasingly important. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the development of inclusive communication strategies that strengthen tolerance, reduce prejudice, and promote social cohesion within Indonesia's multicultural society.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the communication patterns between the Madurese and Tenggerese communities in Malang Regency reflect dynamic processes of assimilation and acculturation. These processes are evident in various aspects of everyday life, where both ethnic groups continuously engage in social interactions while maintaining their respective cultural identities. Assimilation occurs through the adoption of certain cultural elements from one another, whereas acculturation is manifested in the emergence of new forms of social and cultural interaction that blend traditions without eliminating the original characteristics of each ethnic group. As a result, communication between the two communities has developed in a manner that promotes social harmony while preserving cultural diversity. Language plays a central role in facilitating intercultural communication between the Madurese and Tenggerese communities. Although each group possesses its own native language, namely Madurese and Tengger Javanese, Bahasa Indonesia functions as the primary medium of communication and serves as an effective bridge across cultural differences. Beyond using the national language, members of both communities frequently make efforts to learn and use simple expressions in each other's local languages. Such linguistic adaptation not only strengthens interpersonal relationships but also minimizes misunderstandings and fosters mutual respect among individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

The study further reveals the significance of informal communicative spaces in promoting intercultural understanding. Social settings such as traditional markets, coffee stalls, agricultural activities, community gatherings, and cultural celebrations provide opportunities for members of both ethnic groups to interact naturally and intensively. These informal environments encourage open communication, facilitate the exchange of experiences, and contribute to the gradual reduction of stereotypes and prejudices. Through repeated social encounters, interpersonal trust develops, allowing relationships to grow organically and strengthening social cohesion within the broader community. Another important finding concerns the role of local wisdom as a foundation for harmonious coexistence. Both the Madurese and Tenggerese communities share values deeply rooted in Indonesian culture, including *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), *musyawarah* (deliberation), solidarity, and mutual respect. These shared values function as a common cultural platform that enables differences in ethnicity, religion, and tradition to be accommodated constructively. Rather than becoming sources of division, cultural differences are managed through collective norms that prioritize social harmony and communal welfare.

The research also highlights the crucial contribution of community leaders, religious figures, and customary authorities in maintaining peaceful interethnic relations. These respected individuals act as mediators, facilitators, and role models, encouraging dialogue, promoting tolerance, and helping resolve potential conflicts before they escalate into broader social tensions. Their leadership ensures that local wisdom, cultural values, and the principles of multicultural da'wah remain integral to everyday social interaction. Through their guidance, intercultural communication is

continuously nurtured within a framework of mutual understanding and respect. Despite the generally harmonious relationship between the two communities, several challenges persist. Stereotypes, cultural misunderstandings, and differences in communication styles occasionally create barriers to interaction. However, the findings demonstrate that both communities possess strong adaptive capacity, enabling them to address such challenges effectively. Through open dialogue, cultural accommodation, and a willingness to understand differing perspectives, both ethnic groups consistently prioritize collective interests and social harmony over divisive sentiments. This adaptive behavior reflects a mature form of intercultural competence that supports sustainable coexistence within a multicultural environment.

Ultimately, the sustained interaction between the Madurese and Tenggerese communities has contributed to the gradual formation of a shared civic identity as members of Malang Regency. While ethnic identities remain important aspects of cultural heritage, they no longer function as barriers to social integration. Instead, cultural diversity is increasingly perceived as a valuable collective asset that enriches community life and strengthens social solidarity. This emerging shared identity reinforces a sense of belonging among community members and serves as a foundation for an inclusive, multicultural da'wah society. Through continuous intercultural communication, mutual respect, and collaborative social engagement, the Madurese and Tenggerese communities demonstrate that diversity can become a source of unity, resilience, and sustainable social harmony in contemporary Indonesian society.

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