



The role of interpersonal communication in resolving social conflicts in the taman mutiara indah community, serang city

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Abstract: The role of interpersonal communication in resolving social conflicts in society, with a focus on how direct interaction between individuals can reduce tension and rebuild harmonious social relationships. The main problem studied is the low effectiveness of conflict resolution due to a lack of openness and empathy in communication between residents. The theories used include interpersonal communication theory (Devito) and conflict resolution theory (Deutsch), which emphasize the importance of empathy, openness, and trust as the basis for effective communication. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with a case study approach in communities that have experienced social conflict. Data were obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation to describe interpersonal communication patterns in the mediation and conflict resolution process. The results of the study indicate that open, honest, and empathetic interpersonal communication can accelerate the peace process, increase mutual understanding, and foster trust between conflicting parties. In conclusion, interpersonal communication has a strategic role as a means of rebuilding social cohesion and strengthening community solidarity in facing conflict, thus becoming an important foundation for creating a peaceful and sustainable social life.

Keywords: Conflict Resolution; Interpersonal Communication; Social Conflict.

1. Introduction

The operational definition of social conflict in the context of the Taman Mutiara Indah community is understood as a series of social interactions characterized by conflicting interests, values, or perceptions between individuals or groups of residents—whether between residents and residents, residents and neighborhood administrators, or residents and external parties—that emerge openly in the form of complaints, rejections, or collective action. The types of conflict analyzed include horizontal conflict (between residents) and vertical conflict (between residents and environmental managers or authorities), with the main actors being affected residents, RT/RW administrators or area managers, and other related parties. The duration of the conflict is measured based on the time span from the first identification of the conflict until efforts to resolve it or reduce the intensity of the conflict, both short-term and long-term. The impact of the conflict is assessed through changes in social relations, levels of cohesion and trust of residents, disruptions to environmental order, and implications for the quality of life and social participation of the community, so that the focus of the conflict analysis is clear, systematic, and measurable. The most specific research gap lies in the lack of studies that deeply examine the dynamics of emotions, local power relations, and everyday interpersonal communication practices in micro-community-based social conflict resolution processes, as previous research generally focuses on institutional frameworks, formal policies, or large-scale conflicts. The novelty of this article lies in the contextual analysis that integrates the roles of emotions, informal mediators, and community communication patterns within a single empirical framework, particularly in local communities in Indonesia, which have rarely received attention in the international literature. Social conflict is an unavoidable phenomenon in a pluralistic society. Every social group, whether in rural or urban areas, has different values, interests, and outlooks, which have the potential to cause social friction. Conflict arises as a logical consequence of interac-

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tions between individuals and groups with differing goals(Bao et al., 2016). However, what distinguishes a stable society from one vulnerable to social disintegration is their ability to manage conflict constructively. In this context, interpersonal communication plays a crucial role as a primary instrument in building shared understanding, strengthening social relationships, and resolving differences without violence. Interpersonal communication is a form of communication that occurs between two or more people in a face-to-face situation, where messages, emotions, and meanings are exchanged directly. In the communication theory proposed by Joseph A. Devito (2013), interpersonal communication functions not only as a means of exchanging information but also as a bridge in building intimacy, trust, and cooperation between individuals. Through interpersonal communication, individuals can understand the feelings, hopes, and perspectives of others, thereby creating empathy and understanding, which serve as the primary basis for conflict resolution. Therefore, when social conflict occurs, the success of achieving resolution is largely determined by the extent to which the parties involved are able to communicate openly, honestly, and with mutual respect(Febrianti et al., 2025).

The phenomenon of social conflict in Indonesia can be found in various forms, ranging from inter-community disputes, land disputes, differences in political views, to religious and ethnic-based conflicts(Efrat, 2024). Many of these conflicts escalate into serious problems due to communication breakdowns between the disputing parties. For example, misunderstandings in conveying messages, differing interpretations of someone's words or actions, and an inability to listen empathetically often exacerbate the situation. In the context of Indonesia's pluralistic society, differences of opinion should be managed through inclusive and dialogical communication, rather than violence or social exclusion(Omelchenko, 2024). According to the conflict resolution theory developed by Morton Deutsch (1973), effective conflict resolution requires emotional engagement and collaborative communication. Communication that emphasizes empathy, openness, and respect for differences will produce fairer and more sustainable solutions. This aligns with the concept of a win-win solution, where all parties feel heard and valued. In practice, interpersonal communication is key to opening a space for dialogue to find common interests and rebuild trust between conflicting communities(Jarvis et al., 2025).

Sociologically, social conflict can be seen as part of normal social dynamics. According to Lewis A. Coser (1956), conflict is not always destructive; it can also be a vehicle for social change and strengthen social structures if managed well. However, a key prerequisite for productive conflict management is effective interpersonal communication skills. In societies with hierarchical social structures like Indonesia, conflict is often exacerbated by one-way communication, the dominance of power, or the use of confrontational language. Therefore, developing a culture of dialogical, empathetic, and respectful communication is a strategic step in creating social harmony(Svyntozelska et al., 2025).

The role of interpersonal communication cannot be separated from the cultural context. In Indonesian society, which upholds the values of deliberation, mutual cooperation, and politeness, interpersonal communication serves as a social glue that maintains balanced relationships between citizens. When traditional communication principles such as etiquette are violated, By applying communication, mutual respect (tepo se liro), and deliberation to reach a consensus (musyawarah mufakat) in conflict situations, the potential for escalation can be minimized. Thus, the local wisdom embodied in traditional Indonesian communication patterns actually contains important values for modern conflict resolution(Garfield & Glowacki, n.d.).

In the context of social development, interpersonal communication has a strategic dimension. Governments and social institutions often rely on communication approaches to mediate conflicts within communities. For example, in land disputes between residents and the government, mediation, which prioritizes personal communication between representatives of both parties, is often more effective than legal intervention alone. This is due to the nature of interpersonal communication, which can touch on emotional and human aspects, not just rational ones(Nexus, 2024). Through intense and open conversations, conflicting parties can understand each other's perspectives and find

mutually beneficial solutions. Previous research has found that interpersonal communication plays a central role in the post-conflict reconciliation process. For example, research conducted by Rahardjo (2019) in the Maluku region showed that inter-community dialogue following religious conflict was a key factor in restoring social relations and rebuilding trust between communities. Face-to-face communication allows for empathy and understanding that cannot be achieved through formal or institutional communication. This finding reinforces the view that interpersonal communication is not merely a technical tool, but rather a profound and humanistic social process(Rahayu et al., 2023).

However, in reality, interpersonal communication is not always effective. Many barriers can disrupt the communication process, such as prejudice, social stereotypes, mistrust, or dominance of one party over another. In conflict situations, heightened emotions and defensiveness often hinder the ability to listen objectively(Sutanto et al., 2023). According to Devito, effective communication depends heavily on active listening skills, clarity of message, and a willingness to empathize. Therefore, interpersonal communication education and communication skills development are crucial to strengthening communities' capacity to resolve conflict. From a psychological perspective, interpersonal communication plays a role in reducing emotional tension and repairing interpersonal relationships damaged by conflict(Factors et al., 2023). Through open conversations, individuals can express feelings of anger, disappointment, or hurt in a constructive manner. According to Carl Rogers (1951), the client-centered communication approach emphasizes the importance of empathy and unconditional acceptance in the communication process. When someone feels heard and accepted, the tendency to be aggressive decreases. In a community context, this principle is relevant for building a post-conflict social reconciliation process(Yulikhah et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, from a social communication perspective, the success of conflict resolution is also influenced by the presence of trusted communicators. Religious leaders, traditional leaders, and community leaders often act as mediators, bridging communication between conflicting parties(Juliana & Erdiansyah, n.d.). The effectiveness of interpersonal communication in this context depends on the communicator's credibility and ability to convey a message of peace persuasively. Therefore, interpersonal communication training for local leaders is a crucial aspect of conflict resolution strategies(Manuscript, 2013). Community-based conflict resolution. This research is based on the idea that interpersonal communication is not merely a means of conveying messages but also a social mechanism for rebuilding relationships damaged by conflict. In societies experiencing rapid social change due to globalization, urbanization, and the development of information technology, direct interaction between individuals is diminishing. Digital communication often replaces face-to-face communication, potentially giving rise to new misunderstandings. Therefore, restoring the importance of interpersonal communication is crucial for maintaining social cohesion and community solidarity(Scholar et al., 2021).

The research problem can be broken down as follows: (1) what role does interpersonal communication play in the process of resolving social conflicts in society? (2) what factors support or hinder the effectiveness of interpersonal communication in resolving conflicts? And (3) how strategies for strengthening interpersonal communication can be implemented to foster social harmony(Venter et al., 2019). The objectives of this research are to analyze the strategic role of interpersonal communication in the process of social conflict resolution, identify the obstacles faced by communities in communicating effectively, and formulate a communication model that can be applied in efforts to build sustainable social peace. This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, the research findings can enrich the body of communication science, particularly in the field of interpersonal communication and social conflict resolution(Tholia et al., 2022). Practically, the research findings can serve as a reference for the government, social institutions, and the community in designing more effective communication strategies to prevent and resolve social conflict. Furthermore, the results of this research can also be used as teaching materials in communication education, so-

ciology, and public administration, particularly in the context of managing social relations in multicultural societies. By understanding the importance of interpersonal communication in conflict resolution, it is hoped that society can develop more open, inclusive, and peace-oriented communication patterns. Conflict should not be viewed as a threat, but as an opportunity to improve relationships and strengthen social structures (Widiarti, 2017). Within this framework, interpersonal communication functions as a medium for social transformation—transforming conflict into understanding, division into unity, and tension into constructive cooperation. Therefore, this research confirms that the success of conflict resolution is determined not only by formal policies or positive laws, but also by the quality of interactions between individuals in everyday life (S. Mohammed et al., 2023).

2. Materials and Methods

Community leaders, religious leaders, and local officials act as communicators and intermediaries by facilitating dialogue, conveying the aspirations of all parties in a balanced manner, mitigating emotional escalations, and translating conflicting interests into mutually acceptable agreements. Their credibility is built on social and formal legitimacy, a track record of integrity, emotional closeness to the community, a neutral stance, and consistent, justice-oriented persuasive communication skills. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with the aim of in-depth understanding of the role of interpersonal communication in resolving social conflicts in society. This approach was chosen because it is able to describe the process, meaning, and dynamics of natural interactions between individuals in a complex social context. Research data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation of residents, community leaders, and mediators involved in conflict resolution in a specific community environment. Purposive sampling technique was used to identify informants who were considered to have direct experience in the social mediation process. Data analysis was carried out through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. Data validity was strengthened by triangulation techniques of sources and methods, so that the results of this study can provide a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of interpersonal communication as an instrument for social conflict resolution in society (Sembiring et al., 2025).

3. Results and Discussion

The shift from digital communication, such as private chats and WhatsApp groups, to face-to-face communication has resulted in increased message clarity, empathy, and opportunities for direct clarification, helping to reduce conflict escalation, which was previously fueled by one-sided interpretations in the digital space. Research findings indicate that indirect communication tends to lead to misunderstandings due to limited nonverbal context, the use of emotional language, and the amplification of opinions within groups, which actually exacerbates prejudice and prolongs conflict. Emotions such as anger, disappointment, and suspicion play a significant role in hindering dialogue by encouraging defensiveness, reducing trust, and making parties more focused on self-justification than on finding shared solutions. To reduce emotional tension before negotiations, mediators use empathetic communication techniques such as active listening, reframing negative statements into substantive issues, providing space for emotional venting, and maintaining a neutral stance to create a safe and conducive atmosphere for constructive dialogue. Research results indicate that interpersonal communication plays a central role in the process of resolving social conflicts in society. Based on data obtained through interviews and observations, it was found that successful conflict resolution is largely determined by the quality of communication between the conflicting parties. When communication is open, honest, and empathetic, the potential for misunderstandings is minimized and the desire to find shared solutions is greater. In the cases studied, face-to-face communication was the primary means of defusing tensions because it allowed for the expression of emotions, clarification of messages, and the for-

mation of shared meanings that cannot be achieved through indirect communication(Habibi et al., 2023).

Field observations indicate that communities with a culture of dialogic communication tend to achieve peace more quickly than those with closed or confrontational communication patterns. For example, in conflicts between residents at the neighborhood or village level, the practice of deliberation and mediation conducted in person by community leaders or local mediators has proven effective in reducing conflict escalation. Through intense interpersonal communication, disputing parties can express their feelings and interests more honestly, while the mediator plays a role in mediating differences without taking sides. Thus, interpersonal communication serves as a means of rebuilding social trust, often lost due to conflict. Furthermore, research findings indicate that empathy and active listening skills are key to successful interpersonal communication. Individuals who are able to listen attentively and understand the other person's perspective are more likely to create a conducive atmosphere for dialogue. Conversely, when communication is tinged with negative emotions such as anger, suspicion, or self-righteousness, the conflict resolution process is hampered. In some cases, conflicting parties require facilitation from a third party with strong interpersonal communication skills to open a peaceful dialogue(Xie & Derakhshan, 2021).

In a socio-cultural context, this research also found that local values such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong), deliberation (musyawarah), and tepo seliro (tolerance) remain an important foundation for interpersonal communication practices in Indonesian society. These values strengthen a spirit of togetherness and serve as ethical guidelines for speech and action during the conflict resolution process. This aligns with Coser's (1956) view that social conflict can have a positive function if accompanied by constructive communication mechanisms oriented toward restoring social relations(Nugraheni et al., 2025). From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study support Devito's (2013) interpersonal communication theory, which asserts that effective communication must be based on openness, empathy, supportiveness, equality, and positivity. These five aspects appear dominant in every successful social mediation process. Communication that emphasizes honesty and respect for others can create an atmosphere that encourages active participation from all parties. Thus, interpersonal communication is not only a means of conveying messages, but also a social mechanism that builds mutual understanding and togetherness(B. Mohammed, 2023). The research also indicates that the success of interpersonal communication in resolving conflict is greatly influenced by the presence of trusted community figures or communicators. Religious figures, traditional leaders, and village officials often play a crucial role as liaisons between conflicting parties(Unless et al., 2015). They serve as mediators with social credibility and strong communication skills. Through a personal approach, these figures can defuse the situation and facilitate a calming dialogue. In this context, the presence of a mediator serves not only as a mediator but also as a symbol of neutrality and social justice, fostering trust among residents. However, this study also found a number of obstacles to interpersonal communication in resolving social conflicts. Some of the obstacles that frequently arise include differences in social status, poor emotional communication skills, and feelings of suspicion and past resentment that hinder open dialogue. In such conditions, conflicting parties tend to maintain their respective positions without attempting to understand the perspective of the other party. These obstacles indicate that successful interpersonal communication depends not only on good intentions but also on well-trained communication skills and a high level of social awareness. From the above findings, it can be concluded that interpersonal communication(Sciences, 2023)

4. Conclusions

The main limitations of this study include its focus on a single community context, the predominance of interview-based qualitative data that is prone to subjectivity, and the limited timeframe for capturing long-term conflict dynamics. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the scope of locations and actors, combine qualitative and

quantitative methods, and examine the influence of digital media and local cultural variations on the effectiveness of interpersonal communication in resolving social conflict. The main limitations of this research lie in the limited scope of the case study within a single community, the reliance on qualitative data based on subject perceptions, and the limited observation timeframe that did not fully capture the long-term dynamics of the conflict. Further research is proposed to expand the research locations and methods through comparative and mixed methods approaches, as well as explore the role of other variables such as local culture, digital media, and mediator capacity to deepen understanding of the effectiveness of interpersonal communication in resolving social conflict. Interpersonal communication plays a crucial role in resolving social conflicts in society. Through open, honest, empathetic, and respectful communication, conflicting parties can rebuild trust and find peaceful solutions together. Interpersonal communication serves not only as a means of exchanging information but also as a means of restoring social relations and strengthening community cohesion. Local values such as deliberation, mutual cooperation, and tolerance strengthen the effectiveness of communication in the social mediation process. Therefore, improving interpersonal communication skills is a key factor in creating a harmonious, inclusive, and sustainable social life amidst a diverse society.

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