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Social Conflict Management through Multicultural Approach and Policy in Preventing and Overcoming the Social Disintegration

ABSTRACT: Indonesia is a diverse country in terms of ethnic groups and languages. However, this diversity would negatively be a threat to the existence of Indonesia. The ability of the nation-state to manage and prevent the emergence of potential threats are efforts that needs to be pursued. One of the approaches that might support the efforts is by recognizing the importance of promoting people awareness that multiculturalism is a reality that must be faced. Therefore, multiculturalism should be the basis for any implementation of the state policies. In order to enhance social resilience, the policy can be implemented through strengthening and empowering the social structures, social institutions, and social networks. It should be designed in an integrated system ranging from the scope of national to villages. With regards to the curative activities carried out for the victims of social conflicts, it should be directed toward short, medium, and long terms emergency measures; so, as the victims are able to meet their basic needs. In terms of the main executors (agents of change), the policy implementation should be directed toward any effort aimed at developing advocacy on the levels of individual, family, and group as well as community. The improvement and development of social resilience needs to be pursued in order to enhance the ability of communities to utilize resources and manage variety of public interests and social conflicts. With these efforts, the historical facts that Indonesia is consisted of various ethnic groups, languages, and diverse cultures can be truly become a positive potential to improve the development of nation, and not vice versa.

KEY WORDS: Social conflict, social integration, social disintegration, multicultural, policy implementation, and Indonesian society.

INTRODUCTION

In a globally integrated world, either international, regional or national levels, huge migration flows occur along with its continuously changing the political and cultural landscapes. According to James D. Fearon (2003), cultural diversity has become a norm. In certain countries, on average, they have about five ethnic groups of more than one percent of their population, and half of the countries in the world have between three and six ethnic groups (Fearon, 2003).

At the end of the 20th century, there was an increase in the number of people migrated due to economic or political reasons. Living in a new area, these people are often uprooted, isolated, and sometimes difficult to assimilate with new communities causing them to be in a state of anomie. The presence of newcomers

in a region adds to the cultural diversity of the region, particularly with regards to lifestyle, values, customs, identity, attitudes, beliefs, and others.

This diversity requires people to be able to live with differences in mode of thoughts that often lead to anxious feeling. In order to address this anxiety, new social skills and even new attitudes are essential. Living in a diverse society without proper attitudes and social skills will make social conflict easily be triggered.

Ethnic and cultural diversity within communities greatly influence public service institutions. Public agencies have an authority to manage the public resources for the benefits of all community groups. However, the issue of resources distribution is emerged, especially when the resources are limited. In

this situation, public agencies are demanded to make proper choices and wise decisions on how to distribute the resources fairly. The distribution of state resources by the public service agencies is closely linked with and very likely to be a source of conflict among ethnic groups.

In recent years, in many countries, the climate of freedom brought by globalization increases ethnic or certain groups movements to show their identity. The strengthening of group identities (ethnic, religions, or other primordial groupings) becomes political and social power can be seen as ways people chose to disclose their feelings and thoughts, and ways to give meaning to the people's lives.

Grouping people based on their ethnicity is part of the history of society. The history is partly shaped by ideological conflicts, but more often based on economic competition, especially competition to get a job (Dolgoft, Feldstein & Skolnik, 1993; and Widerquist & Lewis, 2005). Ethnicity and other form of primordial groupings are common symptoms in society, which are elements of identity formation for the individuals and families.

Ethnicity and culture refer to practices, traditions, and beliefs held and originated from a group or community. It can be the majority (in terms of population) or not the majority (Tigno, 2011). Ethnic-based group identities may serve as a force to resist national interests trying to forcefully uniformize the diversity. Identifying self to a particular ethnic group can also serve as a counterweight to the feeling of alienation due to advances in technology and people's living conditions. However, ethnic-based groupings can both function as a major supporter of cooperation and major source of conflict and division among people in society (Dolgoft, Feldstein & Skolnik, 1993).

Today's more widespread conflicts causes many people worry, because it threatens social integration and even national integration. The experts also argue that multiculturalism is not easy to be united for there are many fundamental differences in almost all aspects of life such as economic, social, political, cultural and religious. As stated by Handel Kashope Wright, Michael Singh & Richard Race

eds. (2012), multicultural could represent a threat to social cohesion and the "primacy of the nation". Multicultural is considered a threat to the government and society based on a perception that multicultural rights reduce loyalty to the nation as demanded by the government. Another assumption is that multicultural policies are likely to lead to the weakening of national consensus and expand cultural division.

Indonesia has experienced the social conflicts caused by cultural conflicts, ethnic, ethnicity, and religion. Conflict in Sambas, West Kalimantan, conflict between ethnic Madurese, Dayak, and Malay; riots in Sampit, also in West Kalimantan; in Maluku; and in Poso, Southeast Sulawesi are among the examples of social conflicts in Indonesia (Purnama & Hendarta, 2003). Social conflict are basically common symptoms occurring in many countries around the world.

However, the number of conflicts occurred in Indonesia, both vertically and horizontally, can be assessed as a social disaster causing physical damage and human casualties as well as a large number of many refugees. However, at the same time, there are regions in Indonesia where there are people who have significant different in terms of cultures, but they can live in harmony and peace dynamically. Despite the conflict, these communities can overcome the difference in a proper way.

Indonesia is a unitary state composed of many tribes and diverse groupings. Ethnic diversity produces cultural diversity. As a law-based democratic state, Indonesia fully supports the cultural diversity as reflected in the slogan of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). The slogan offers exchanges and agreements on various aspects of life (social, cultural, and political) among different groups.

In such conditions, the degree of social integration can be optimally achieved. Social integration and social stability, will result in national stability, needed for sustainable development in order to achieve national objectives. Social integration and social conflict are two unseparable conditions, theoretically and empirically. Integration and conflict is a social reality that is always present

in the community as an important part of social change (Harris & Reilly eds., 2000).

The desired social change improves quality of social welfare. Social conflicts destroy lives and reduce the degree of social welfare of individuals, groups, and communities. Therefore, social conflicts need to be addressed to rediscover the “dynamic” of social integration necessary for creating the social welfare conditions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

First, on the Social Conflict. Conflicts can occur between individuals, between individuals and society, between groups within a single system, and even between nations. The more open a society, the higher the chances for an open conflict, but it also tends to change the direction towards adjustment and integration. More democratic society means more tolerant towards social conflict and greater readiness to institutionalize mechanisms for disclosing feelings and thoughts as well as the enforcement of legal process. Without conflicts, powerless groups have little opportunity to make changes and improve their life. At the same time, conflicts also lead to polarization, oppression, and an end in itself.

Some social scientists assert that power is the key concept explaining why social conflict is occurred. The nature of power structure and distribution are believed to be the cause of social conflicts. Most of the perspectives on conflict assume that ongoing struggle for power involving groups in the society is mainly to control scarce resources (Kirst-Ashman, 2008). Certain groups of people are in unfortunate circumstances, while others have special rights to access social, economic, and political resources; and, often, they use it dishonestly and unfairly.

Distribution and utilization of power are two very important concepts to understand any social system. Truly democratic societies are characterized by power sharing. However, power tends to be distributed unfairly and a constant source of division. Conflicts occur because of various groups of power seek to maintain or prioritize their own values and interests. From the perspective of sociology

of conflict, differences in access to power and status lead to perpetuation of injustice. Dominant groups often exploit or degrade other less powerful groups forcefully in order to gain control. The competition for jobs, particularly when jobs are scarce, often creates negative attitudes and social conflicts.

Second, on the Multiculturalism and Social Integration. Multiculturalism has emerged as one of the key questions in this century for community and government. The key question is how the people of all tribes (ethnics) backgrounds, with different life experiences, can live together democratically as neighbors. In many countries, there has been an increase in cultural diversity, a concept that refers to the recognition of tolerance and respect for differences that can create a condition in which all community members feel valued and comfortable in the midst of society.

Multiculturalism includes the principle of diversity, openness, and tolerance. Caleb Rosado (1997) and J.V. Tigno (2011) stated that multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and appreciates the presence of various different groups in social organizations or societies, acknowledge and appreciate their differences, and allow them to contribute positively in the context of an inclusive and empowering culture. Multiculturalism is about the arrangement of ethnic and cultural differences in a framework of possessed and shared core values allowing citizens to coexist complementatively rather than competitively. Multiculturalism is also associated with the obedience to the law and adherence to the democratic processes and institutions.

Multiculturalism will be a reality when a society embraces all diverse groups of different cultural identities, coexists and cooperates within the framework of a broader national life. Therefore, multiculturalism is a prerequisite for social integration. Multiculturalism is shown in the form of recognition and respect for difference, internalized and implemented so that it can handle any issues that lead to separatism and social disintegration. Recognition and respect for cultural diversity strengthen national unity.

In general, people in many countries today are heterogeneous, consisting of a variety of social backgrounds, economic, political, cultural, and technological levels. Diversity of people inhabiting a particular region could trigger a conflict that requires efforts and conditions allowing society to live harmoniously and be contributive. Social integration is a condition necessary for the establishment of a harmonious relationship among people.

Robert Ezra Park & Ernest W. Burgess (1921) argued that social integration is a process of mutual influence (interpenetration) and melting (fusion) between individuals and groups, so that they understand and acquire memory, feelings, and attitudes among individuals or groups by sharing their experience and history; and, then, insert themselves into the lives of individuals and cultural groups. Other experts, Taylor H. Cox, Sharon A. Lobel & Poppy Lauretta McLeod (1980), focusing on the process of social interaction, explains that integration is not an end, but a process of internalizing aspects or elements of an active and coordinated community in order to accord with the goals and activities of the dominant group in society.

In a meaningful social integration, all members have an equal opportunity to utilize resources and face challenges and overcome the barriers. Material, emotional, social, cultural, and organizational resources can be found and utilized in individuals, families, social networks, societies, and in the wider social institutions such as religious, social, or governmental institutions.

An integrated citizens tend to support other residents, although there are people amongst the citizens who consider themselves do not need any help from others. Efforts to realize integrated citizens demand social value systems that emphasize techniques of avoiding conflict, and continuously strive to maintain the unity and mutual assistance in various activities. The processes towards social integration also require a system of social, economic, political, procedures, and support that seek to improve the welfare of all members of society.

Social integration will be a reality if it is

supported by following conditions, among the most important are: (1) Citizens committed to act effectively; (2) Citizens have a vision that embraces all sectors and emphasizes the interconnectedness among sectors of life; (3) Opportunities are available for people to express the perspectives and expectations; (4) Constructive channels are available for people to resolve conflict successfully; (5) Systems and mechanisms to facilitate social interaction and ideas or feelings exchanges are developed; (6) Open channels are developed for people to communicate; and (7) Communities are able to manage the relationship with the outside community (Al-Muchtar & Suwirta, 2008).

In line with this, K.K. Kirst-Ashman (2008), a social scientist, states that an integrated community is characterized by: (1) Community members are mutually involved in various activities; (2) Community members consider themselves as part of the community and also enjoy each other and feel close or social cohesion; and (3) Community members engage with the wider public sphere, such as a district, county or city government, even with provincial and national.

Social integration and social conflicts are just like two sides of a coin. There is no discussion about social conflict without quoting social integration and vice versa. Integration and conflict are essential parts of human relationships. Humans have an instinct to stay in touch with each other. A continuing relationship is resulted in the so-called social interaction patterns. The interaction patterns are resulted in views on ethics: good and bad, right and wrong. The views expressed are human values, which in turn greatly influence people's manner and pattern of thoughts. There is a human tendency to judge others' behavior or others' cultural elements by using measures of their own culture. In this process, stereotypes are often used. It is closely related to the issue of the identity of a group or tribe.

Interactions producing the views of good and bad occur within a social system or in the simplest terms occur in the community. The views of good and bad can be seen as a form of social values and norms governing the behavior of people in society. Society as a

social system has power to control behavior of its members.

Durkheim states that society is an objective and independent reality, free from the individuals as its members. Society is not merely a sum of individuals, but a system formed from the relationships among them showing a certain reality which has its own characteristics. Uniformities of behavior found in certain societies are better seen as a product of society, rather than a genuine trait of every member of society (cited in Lukes ed., 1982).

Social systems mainly refer to ways of how social life regulated and organized. It can point to the public on a large scale or to a certain sector of society. Changes and developments in a particular aspect of social activity can produce changes and developments, or cause reactions in other aspects of life. A social system is essentially nothing but a system of actions. It is formed of the social interaction occurring between different individuals, who grew up upon the general standards assessment agreed upon by the members of the community. The most important common assessment standards are known as social norms; and those social norms create social structure.

The arrangement of social interactions among the members of society occurs because their commitment to social norms generates power to overcome differences in opinion and interests. It allows them to find harmony at a certain level of social integration. Socialization and social control are two most important social mechanisms to control and direct the desires of the community members to sustain the continuity of a social system.

Society can be seen as a social system which is integrated by the existence of an agreement approved by all elements of society. Something that is agreed upon by all elements of society has the power to resolve differences of opinion and interests. Society as a social system is functionally integrated into a form of equilibrium. According to Nasikun (2005), this school of thought is often referred to as integration approach, order approach, the equilibrium approach, or more popularly referred to as the structural-functional approach.

Consensus on values among members of a particular society is the most important factor to integrate a social system. According to the view of structural functionalism, in every society there are always certain basic purposes and principles that are accepted as an absolute right. Those value systems are not only play its role as the source of the development of social integration, but also at the same time as an element stabilizing the cultural and social system (Soekanto, 1986:127; and Nasikun, 2005:11-15).

CONDITIONS OF THE EXPECTED SOCIAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

About the Implementation of the Policy of Social Conflict Management. To optimize the management of conflicts occurring in various regions in Indonesia, it is necessary to return to some steps and reinforcements through various policies. Social capital of the community should be regarded as an important element in the efforts of enhancing social resilience through strengthening and empowering the social institutions and traditional networkings. Social capital is often described as social capacities to meet of life and maintain social integration.

Social capital involves networks, norms, social trust, and social beliefs that drive social collaboration. Social capital has four dimensions: (1) *Integration*: a strong bond among family members, neighbors, and surroundings based on kinship, ethnicity, and religion; (2) *Lingkage*: another community ties outside their originate communities, for example, networks and associations that are authorized beyond kinship, ethnicity, and religion; (3) *Organizational integrity*: the effectiveness and ability of state institutions to function, including the effectiveness and ability to create legal certainty and enforce regulations; and (4) *Synergy*: the relationship among leaders and other government agencies and the communities (Dasgupta & Serageldin eds., 2000; and Poloma, 2003).

In this case, the focus is whether the state provides ample space for its citizens to participate. In social capital, there is social cohesion. The stronger the social capital, the wider possibility for conflict to be avoided

and vice versa. A strong social cohesion is characterized by inclusion, the rule of law, democracy, equal access to opportunities, efficient bureaucracy, and open society.

The enhancement of social resilience, operationally, implemented systemically to generate a dynamic social integration. Strengthening social resilience, aiming at achieving dynamic social integration, is built within a system design as follows:

First, at the national level, there should be institutions of social integration that perform following duties: coordinating and formulating policy and social integration programs; establishing, supervising, and developing similar institutions at the provincial levels; and the policy is focused on recovery and prevention.

Second, at the provincial level, there should be institutions that are in charged of: coordinating, formulating policies and programs of social integration at the provincial level; providing input and recommendations to the national institutions for the betterment of national policy and programs; performing research and evaluation on social integration at the provincial level; and establishing, supervising, and developing similar institutions at the districts/cities.

Third, at the districts/cities level, there should be institutions that in charge of: coordinating and implementing policies, programs, and activities of social integration at the levels of regencies/municipalities; providing input and recommendations to provincial institutions in terms of study materials and formulation of policies and programs to the provincial level; performing social integration assessment district/city level; and establish, supervise, and develop similar institutions at the district level.

Fourth, at the regional level, there should be facilitators who are in charged of: coordinating, conducting social conflict management, maintaining and enhancing social integration; undertaking efforts to develop dynamic social integration in the region; establishing, monitoring, and maintaining the administrative facilitators; and advising the agency at the district/city level policy formulation, programs and

activities on conflict, and maintaining and enhancing the social integration.

Fifth, at the village, there should be officials who are in charged of: assessing the potential (values, norms, attitudes, and behavior) with regards to conflicts and social integration; a negotiator and mediator capable of handling conflicts that exist in the community; developing leaders/local participants as voluntary negotiators/mediators of conflict and social integration developers; developing a consensus upon the differences that exist in the community; and providing input and recommendations to the district level institutions based on the result of assessment of the potential for conflict and social integration as well as experiences as a facilitator (Brusco, 1982; and Al-Muchtar & Suwirta, 2008).

The basic principle that should be implemented by each institutions are democratic, participatory, transparency, openness, and non-discriminatory with the planning system that combines *top down* and *bottom up* aspirations. Efforts of rescuing, recovering, and social empowering of the victims of social disasters should be directed at short-term emergency measures and further medium and long term remedial action, so that the victims of social disasters can be survived, recovered, and able to meet basic needs. Few things need to be stressed:

First, in addressing psychosocial problems, priority should be given to vulnerable groups like women, children, elderly, and people with disabilities. Changes in new social roles played by these social group are common. Before social disasters occurred, most of them are not prepared to implement the new social roles.

Second, special interventions should be performed to individuals, families, groups, and communities to restore their social functionings. Problem solving at the level of individuals and families as well as groups are often closely associated with psycho-social problems.

Third, at the community level, efforts of community development or empowerment should be directed to restore its social functions and build community as a social system.

Fourth, empowerment should be aimed at building their independence by strengthening the potential they have. In this framework, positive steps need to be taken like creating good economic climate and social atmosphere and opening access to the opportunities so that they can be more empowered. Strengthening and empowering efforts are targeted to individuals and members of society to realize the values of hard work, thrift, transparency, and responsibility (Brusco, 1982; and Al-Muchtar & Suwirta, 2008).

The implementation of policies, in dealing with social conflicts, are also directed towards development of mentoring programs for trained social workers. There are main tasks that can be played by social workers as a facilitator, namely: (1) Helping individuals and families to cope with situations and problems of adjustment to new social environments; (2) Helping individuals to implement new social roles, such as a mother who had to act as head of the family, the elderly, the orphaned child, youth who are forced to take care of her sisters who became orphans; (3) Helping individuals to trace and reunite with their biological and cultural family; (4) Ensuring services accessibility to children, elderly, and disabled; (5) Coordinating vocational training and opening new business opportunities; (6) Helping individuals who experienced discriminatory treatments and violence; (7) Helping vulnerable groups of children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and women to involve/participate in formulating and defining decisions that affect their lives; (8) Establishing and developing self-help groups to provide mutual support, share experiences and strengths. These are especially for those who carry out new social roles, victims of violence, victims of abuse, and sexual exploitation; (9) Digging and mobilizing the potentials and relevant resources (internal and external) for helping individuals and families to improve their social adjustment and social functioning; and (10) Organizing counseling services and play therapy (Soetomo, 1995; Pardini, 2006; and Zainal Abiddin, 2006).

At the community level, efforts that can be performed by the social workers

are: (1) Helping community to locate and coordinate different relevant and necessary sources to improve social functioning of the community; (2) Reviving, creating, and developing social capital, namely the ability of citizens to address public issues in democratically, including strengthening the norms and networks; (3) Reviving local social organizations/institutions of society, so that society as a social system can carry out its role and function properly; (4) Facilitating consensus on values and goals to create social integration. Included in this task is to be a negotiator and mediator; and (5) Mobilizing internal and external resources to renew community and rebuild social infrastructure (Soetomo, 1995; Pardini, 2006; and Zainal Abiddin, 2006).

About the Policy Implementation Regarding to Public Roles. Government policies and programs, in addressing the issues of social conflict, are aimed at developing and improving the social resilience. It is intended to enhance the ability of communities to manage and utilize resources, different interests, and social conflicts among social groups.

So far, the involvement of elements of the community, in addressing social conflict, is facilitated through negotiations forums. Their involvement has not yet entered the further area of community development, and the creation of community cadres who are specifically trained to address social conflicts.

The key figures, representing certain groups in society, have a very important meaning, but policy formulations are needed to optimize public roles in clearly and systematic ways, so that there is a clarity on things that are allowed and must be done and not to be done in overcoming a conflict and strengthening the social integration, conflict rehabilitation, and intervention, including the efforts of developing social resilience.

To control social conflicts, there are a number of principles or basic guides that should be referred in order to develop a harmonious society to achieve social integration (Berry, 2003; and Suharto, 2006).

First, strengthening social relationship among citizens. Strengthening the closeness and the intimacy of the interrelationship

among citizens is a series of strengthening the social interaction in the community by encouraging people to live together, facilitating communication among citizens through interactive and sincere dialogue, mutual understanding, and cooperation. People need to be involved in various activities together. The process of strengthening social interactions are expressed in terms of people's participation. It creates mutual dependence among people to complete the tasks and provides wider opportunities for the formal and informal interactions to occur. Social interactions are process of creating the intimacy of relationship, emerging the feelings of mutual trust, and creating a sense of common purpose.

Second, non-violence. Non-violence principle is used to solve the problem based on consensus. This principle refuses polarization in the community, criticizes all unjust treatments and unfair social structures. This principles are oriented towards consensus-based problem resolution and feelings of inclusiveness. It rejects problem resolution based on competitiveness and avoids alienation and exlution.

Third, inclusiveness. Using the principle of inclusiveness means problem resolution by treating everyone with similar respect despite different views. It provides opportunities for the parties involved to change their stand points, perspectives, or views on an issue without "losing their face". Prioritizing dialogue and increasing mutual understanding are essential. Trying to understand others's viewpoints and respect the people's rights to maintain a position. People can learn from others who have different perspectives. It is important to see each other as potential allies and friends, and treat each other as a real friend with dignity and respect. Showing appreciation and valuing others as fellow human beings and cooperating with them rather than competing.

Fourth, consensus. In resolving the issues of relationships among citizens, consensus-based decision making should be prioritized. Consensus-based approach seeks to reach an agreement. It aims at achieving the ownership and participation of all groups or communities

involved. They feel that the problem is theirs and they are part of the solutions. Consensus is not the same as compromise. Consensus means that a group of people or a society feel bound, involved, responsible, and committed to a process of finding solutions. Consensus means all people can accept the decisions, feel part of the decisions, and the decisions are in line with their interests.

Furthermore, the steps or processes of conflict resolution necessary to do. The establishment of supporting institutions for the conflict transformation in the form of committees or commissions in areas of conflict or potential conflict to prepare reconciliation. The establishment of committees or commissions to maintain, enhance the dynamic social integration, and prevent deep-rooted conflicts and worse social disaster.

Relocation of refugees is also important. The victims of social disasters are often scattered in many places. Most of them are in the extremely vulnerable social, political, and economic positions, even some of them are not able to access the resources to meet their basic needs. Thus, it is necessary to relocate them to a safer and better place in terms of accessibility to resources.

Empowerment programs for the refugees is needed. Social empowerment programs for the refugees of victims a social disaster are often interpreted as efforts of increasing vocational skills. This is not wrong, but the goal should be focused on building the people's real independence. Independence should appear in social sectors in various forms of self-help communities.

Socialization of multiculturalism and pluralism is necessary. It can be carried out through a series of training and education programs by strengthening the local institutions. It is also important to extract and disseminate the universal values and norms to reinforce universal social integration.

Lastly, the assimilation or integration programs is very critical. This program is an attempt to get the conflicted parties mutually interdependent, so that the existing seeds of conflict at the individuals of both groups gradually disappear (Narwoko & Suyanto, 2004; and du Bois & Miley, 2005).

CONCLUSION

This is probably not the first study for discussing about the social conflicts. Viewing from the context of social welfare, this study is only an introduction for providing insights to the readers and decision makers about social conflicts and its relationship to need for the social integration to maintain, restore, and improve the social welfare of the community.

On the one hand, this study may merely be a supplemented materials for policy makers to formulate policies, programs, and activities in addressing conflicts and promote "dynamic" social integration. "Dynamic" may mean that it is necessary for the policy makers to always aware to the dynamic of social changes.

Thus, this study can serve as an introduction to the next studies, including needs assessment, research, and experimentations to optimize the impacts of strategies of social conflict management. The strategy is referred to ways to achieve the outlined goals, including: (1) social conflicts and the consequences are resolved; and (2) the dynamic of social integration is maintained and increased. This method includes comprehensive, integrated, and sustainable policies, programs, and activities.

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