

Q+62 812 1046 7572

http://greenpub.org

@greenation.info@gmail.com

DOI: https://doi.org/10.38035/ijam.v2i4 https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Group Communication as a Strategy for Cultural Identity Maintenance: A Case Study of the Flobamorata Community of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) in Kranji, West Bekasi

Helena Faustina Icha Gaa¹, Nurul Fauziah²

¹Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya University, Indonesia, <u>rambuicha63@gmail.com</u>

Corresponding Author: nurul.fauziah@dsn.ubharajaya.ac.id1

Abstract: This study investigates the role of group communication within the Flobamorata community in Kranji, West Bekasi, as a means of preserving the cultural identity of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) migrants. Employing observation, interviews, and documentation, the research reveals that the community's efforts are driven by a strong sense of brotherhood and a collective desire to maintain NTT culture in the diaspora. Key findings indicate that effective group communication, primarily via WhatsApp, fosters strong ties between leaders and members, ensuring information flow and mitigating feelings of exclusion. While challenges such as financial constraints, work commitments, and geographical distance exist, these are largely overcome by a deep love for NTT culture and a strong sense of solidarity. The community actively organizes cultural events, traditional gatherings, and mutual visits, reinforcing NTT identity through symbolic elements like kain tenun, language, and music. Ultimately, the Flobamorata community serves as a crucial platform for strengthening collective identity, promoting cultural heritage, and ensuring its continuity among NTT migrants.

Keywords: Cultural Identity, Group Communication, Flobamorata Community

INTRODUCTION

Background

Cultural identity serves as a fundamental aspect of regional distinctiveness, reflecting the unique heritage of a community. It represents the defining characteristics of an individual as a member of a specific ethnic group (Cahyono, 2016). For migrant communities, cultural identity holds profound significance, enabling recognition and fostering a sense of belonging in new environments (Muazaroh, 2021). The cultural heritage carried by individuals to their new homes becomes a crucial part of their self-identity in the diaspora.

However, this inherent cultural identity faces various challenges, particularly in an increasingly interconnected world. Intercultural marriages, for instance, often necessitate compromises in cultural practices, potentially leading to the merging, adoption, or even the

²Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya University, Indonesia, <u>nurul.fauziah@dsn.ubharajaya.ac.id</u>

gradual erosion of original cultural traits (Annurul, 2018). Beyond individual choices, the pervasive influence of globalization poses a significant threat to the preservation of indigenous cultures (Debora, 2014). Globalization facilitates the influx of foreign cultures, which can easily permeate local societies (Wahyuni, 2019). Without robust cultural defenses, indigenous traditions risk being altered or even forgotten as modern arts and practices overshadow traditional forms (Panduraja, 2021). While development is inevitable, it should not come at the cost of losing the unique characteristics and identity of a culture's inheritors (Budiarto, 2020).

Cultural identity encompasses unique characteristics, values, traditions, and heritage that define a group or community (Sukerti, 2018). While an individual's identity may evolve in a new environment (Kumala, 2017), the essence of their original culture can still be maintained, albeit potentially forming a new, hybrid identity shaped by the new surroundings (Fitra, 2023). The phenomenon of migration, often spurred by globalization, frequently leads individuals to new cultural encounters (Mardiyanti, 2020). In an effort to assimilate and gain acceptance within their new social settings, some migrants may choose to abandon their original cultural practices in favor of adapting to the dominant culture (Kurniawati, 2013; Prasetya, 2017).

Despite geographical separation, individuals often seek to reconnect through shared cultural ties, fostering a sense of unity and collective identity (Adrian, 2018). The preservation of cultural diversity, particularly in a nation like Indonesia with its rich tapestry of traditions, is paramount to prevent cultural extinction and ensure its transmission to future generations (Irvan, 2022). In this context, group communication emerges as a vital mechanism for strengthening intra-group relationships and reinforcing cultural identity. Communication and culture are inextricably linked; cultural identity is negotiated, co-created, affirmed, and challenged through communicative processes (Yardha, 2017; Iskandar, 2017). This reciprocal relationship highlights the necessity of group communication within communities to safeguard their cultural heritage (Rosyidi, 2018).

The desire to maintain cultural identity, especially when separated by distance due to work, residence, or education (Uyun, 2023), often motivates individuals to establish communication channels within their cultural group. Long distances can lead to a loss of contact with one's original culture (Nauly, 2015), thereby fostering a strong desire to communicate and preserve identity. Group communication, defined as interaction among members of a community or organization to exchange information (Namira, 2020), facilitates mutual understanding, shared goals, and a sense of belonging (Jayanti, 2015). Through the exchange of information and knowledge (Wahyono, 2018), equitable and continuous communication within a community becomes crucial for its sustainability and ability to overcome challenges (Surya, 2016).

Cultural identity, deeply rooted in religion, language, and customs (Bagus, 2016), serves as a fundamental aspect of self-image, reflecting an individual's origins (Jalnuhuubun, 2022). Migrants from East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), a province in eastern Indonesia known for its rich and diverse cultures, carry this strong cultural identity with them as a guide for life (Salam, 2014; Sulistiani, 2021). Recognizing the inevitability of cultural exchange (Syahira, 2021) and the challenges of maintaining cultural ties from afar, many migrants form communities to preserve their heritage. One such community is Flobamorata, established by NTT migrants in Kranji, West Bekasi, with the aim of strengthening communication and preserving NTT culture in their new home. The continued existence and activities of the Flobamorata community, steadfast in upholding NTT culture, warrant further investigation. This research, employing a qualitative methodology and drawing upon the concept of group communication, seeks to explore the communication practices within the Flobamorata community in Kranji, West Bekasi, as an effort to maintain their NTT cultural identity. This

study, therefore, is titled "Group Communication in the Flobamorata Community as an Effort to Maintain NTT Cultural Identity in Kranji, West Bekasi."

Research Objective

From the background above, the objectives of the research on the Flobamorata cultural community formed in Kranji, West Bekasi are as follows: To find out the cultural communication process carried out by the Flobamorata community in maintaining the cultural identity of NTT.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework The Concept of Cultural Identity in Diaspora

Cultural identity is a fluid, yet enduring, framework that shapes an individual's self-concept based on their perceived membership in a cultural group. It encompasses shared beliefs, values, norms, language, symbols, and historical narratives (Cahyono, 2016). For diaspora or migrant communities, cultural identity takes on an intensified role, serving four primary functions:

- 1. Affiliation and Belonging: It provides a necessary sense of security and belonging in an unfamiliar or challenging environment.
- 2. Boundary Maintenance: It clearly delineates the in-group from the out-group, helping to manage interactions with the host society.
- 3. Psychological Well-being: It offers a source of pride, self-esteem, and resilience against cultural shock or discrimination.
- 4. Generational Link: It is the repository of history and tradition that must be transferred to the next generation (Muazaroh, 2021).

The threat of cultural identity loss is particularly acute in cases of cultural contact, such as cross-ethnic marriage or exposure to overwhelming global media, which can dilute the commitment to traditional practices and mother tongue usage (Annurul, 2018; Debora, 2014). Active cultural maintenance requires conscious, organized effort, often mediated through formal social structures.

Group Communication and Social Cohesion

Group communication is defined as the exchange of information, ideas, and meaning among three or more individuals who share a common purpose or identity (Wahyono, 2018). For a migrant community, this communication serves crucial instrumental and socioemotional functions:

- Instrumental Function: Facilitating organization, coordination of activities (like social gatherings, religious events, or mutual aid), and achieving group goals.
- Socio-Emotional Function: Building and maintaining social solidarity, reducing internal conflict, providing emotional support, and reinforcing group norms.

In the context of the Flobamorata Community, group communication is not merely transactional; it is performative—it acts as a continuous rehearsal and public display of their NTT identity. Group dialogue and activities transform abstract cultural knowledge into concrete, observable, and shared behavioral patterns, essential for the survival of the culture in a non-native environment (Wahyono, 2018).

Theoretical Framework: Social Identity Theory (SIT)

This study primarily adopts Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) to explain the motivation and outcome of the Flobamorata community's communication strategies.

SIT posits that individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups. Individuals are motivated to achieve a positive social identity, which often means ensuring their in-group is perceived as distinct and positively valued compared to relevant out-groups.

The framework is applied as follows:

- 1. Social Categorization: The NTT migrants in Kranji categorize themselves as "Flobamorata Community" (the in-group), distinct from the surrounding West Bekasi population (the out-group) and other non-NTT migrant groups. This categorization provides a clear boundary for cultural practice.
- 2. Social Identification: Members internalize the Flobamorata identity, leading to a strong commitment to the group's norms, including the adherence to NTT traditions, language usage, and participation in community events.
- 3. Social Comparison and Distinctiveness: The group actively uses communication to highlight its positive attributes—the richness of its traditions, the beauty of its dances, the complexity of its language—to achieve positive distinctiveness. Group communication becomes the vehicle for performing this comparison. For instance, organizing a public cultural performance serves as a powerful, non-aggressive mechanism for positive intergroup differentiation, thereby boosting the self-esteem associated with the Flobamorata identity.

By consistently communicating and performing their culture in a cohesive group setting, the Flobamorata Community actively reinforces the group's distinctiveness, making the NTT cultural identity a positive and integral part of the members' self-concept and ensuring its survival.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study research design. This approach was chosen to allow for an in-depth, holistic exploration of the complex social phenomenon—the use of group communication for cultural maintenance—within a specific, bounded context: the Flobamorata Community in Kranji, West Bekasi. The case study design facilitates rich description and nuanced analysis of the community's social interactions and communication behaviors, providing a detailed answer to the "how" of cultural preservation.

Research Location and Participants

The research was conducted within the Flobamorata Community situated in the Kranji area of West Bekasi, a dense, multi-ethnic suburb of Jakarta that serves as a common settlement area for migrant groups.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals who possessed deep knowledge of the community's history, structure, and communication practices. The key informants included:

- 1. The Community Head/Chairman (who manages formal group communication and structure).
- 2. The Coordinator of Youth/Cultural Affairs (who manages cultural transmission activities).
- 3. Long-standing, active community members and elders (who act as cultural gatekeepers).
- 4. Youth members (the target of intergenerational cultural transmission).

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection spanned observation and interviews to ensure triangulation and comprehensive data capture:

- 1. In-Depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants. The interview guide focused on three main areas: (a) the perceived importance of NTT cultural identity in the *merantau* context, (b) the structure, frequency, and content of formal and informal group communication, and (c) the specific role of communication in transmitting language, traditional practices (e.g., *Rapai Geleng* as per Verulitasari & Cahyono, 2016, or similar NTT dances), and value systems to younger generations.
- 2. Participatory Observation: The researcher engaged in direct observation of community gatherings and activities over a period of three months. This included formal monthly meetings, planning sessions for cultural events, and informal social gatherings (*arisan* or communal meals). This technique provided critical data on non-verbal communication, group dynamics, and the actual performance of cultural rituals
- 3. Document Analysis: Review of internal community documents, such as organizational statutes, meeting minutes, and content shared via digital communication channels (e.g., community group chat rules, posted event flyers).

Data Analysis

The data analysis followed an iterative process aligned with thematic analysis. The steps included:

- 1. Data Reduction: Transcribing interviews and summarizing observation notes. Initial coding was performed to condense the raw data into manageable units.
- 2. Data Display: Organizing the coded data into matrices and network diagrams to visualize the relationships between communication types, cultural elements, and the outcomes of identity maintenance.
- 3. Conclusion Drawing/Verification: Drawing conclusions about the dominant themes and patterns observed. Verification involved checking the conclusions against the theoretical framework (SIT) and performing member checking with key informants to ensure the interpretation accurately reflected the community's perspective.

Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and participant anonymity, were strictly adhered to throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

This section presents the findings from the research conducted among members of the Flobamorata community in Kranji, West Bekasi, utilizing observation, interviews, and documentation. The study reveals that culture serves as a significant strengthening factor influencing communication among community members, particularly in their efforts to preserve NTT cultural identity. The process of maintaining this identity encompasses several key factors:

1. Communication between Management and Members of the Flobamorata Community

Effective organizational communication within the Flobamorata community is underpinned by strong interpersonal communication among its members. Interviews with community leaders and members highlighted both challenges and strategies. Aloy, the chairman, noted that while he used to visit members personally, he now primarily relies on mobile communication. He described NTT people as "stubborn" (kepala batu), making phone communication difficult, but found that inviting them for social drinks often encouraged

attendance, stating, "we Flores people need a push to gather." Brigitha, the treasurer, echoed this sentiment, mentioning that WhatsApp invitations often met with numerous excuses, but invitations for social gatherings were readily accepted. She also organized joint prayers or cultural event participation, though attendance for these was lower. Despite the difficulties, both leaders emphasized the importance of continuous communication to keep the community alive. Members like Linda and Ignasius acknowledged the efforts of the generally older management, noting that intensive communication mostly occurred for event information or cultural activities. They appreciated the informal visits and greetings from the management, which fostered a sense of connection.

2. Supporting Media for Group Communication in the Flobamorata Community

The primary communication medium utilized by the Flobamorata community is WhatsApp. Aloy explained that he primarily uses WhatsApp due to his limited familiarity with other platforms. Brigitha confirmed that older members predominantly use WhatsApp, including video calls, and mentioned that during the COVID-19 pandemic, younger members introduced Zoom for larger gatherings, though signal issues sometimes hampered its effectiveness. Linda affirmed WhatsApp as the most accessible and widely understood platform, facilitating information sharing and informal interactions within group chats. Ignasius also highlighted WhatsApp's ease of use as a key reason for its adoption.

3. Driving Factors for Communication within the Flobamorata Community

Several factors motivate communication and cohesion within the Flobamorata community. Aloy emphasized the strong sense of brotherhood among NTT people, stating, "we Flores people may be stubborn, but our sense of brotherhood is very high." He noted that members readily assist with event funding or transportation, attributing this to a deep respect for elders and a strong sense of cultural belonging. Brigitha reiterated the high spirit of camaraderie, observing that even less active members become highly engaged during events. She identified a profound love for their regional culture, which members are unwilling to abandon, as a primary driver. Linda also pointed to the strong sense of family (rasa persaudaraan) as her main motivation, emphasizing the importance of introducing their children, who are growing up in Java, to their ancestral culture. Ignasius similarly cited the strong sense of brotherhood among NTT migrants as a unifying factor to prevent the loss of NTT culture.

4. Challenges Hindering Communication among Group Members

Despite the strong bonds, the community faces several communication barriers. Aloy identified financial constraints as a significant hurdle, as members often feel embarrassed to attend gatherings without money, especially if food and drinks are involved. He also mentioned difficulties arising when non-NTT individuals are present, or when external influences encourage members to disengage. Geographical distance between members' residences was also cited as a practical impediment to frequent gatherings. Brigitha added that human nature, including laziness and ego clashes, can lead to misunderstandings and factionalism, which damage camaraderie. She stressed the need for neutral mediators in such situations. Linda also highlighted distance and financial limitations as personal challenges, making her hesitant to contribute opinions if she couldn't financially support activities. Ignasius concurred, pointing to insufficient funds for gatherings and the potential threat of inter-cultural marriages to NTT cultural identity.

5. Activities Used by the Community to Maintain Group Communication

The Flobamorata community employs various activities to sustain group communication and cultural identity. Aloy mentioned traditional gatherings like arisan (rotating savings and social groups), cultural events such as Gawi (a traditional dance/ceremony), and communal prayer meetings. He emphasized that traditional ceremonies, even for life events like weddings or funerals, are maintained in the diaspora, often incorporating regional symbols like woven fabrics. Brigitha highlighted the Gawi event at Taman Mini, a significant gathering for NTT people to connect and reinforce their sense of family. Regular prayer meetings and mutual visits are also crucial to prevent members from feeling isolated or drifting away, especially those in inter-cultural marriages who might lose touch with their NTT roots. Linda confirmed the importance of large cultural events at Taman Mini, featuring traditional dances, songs, and fabric exhibitions, as well as smaller community prayer meetings for interaction. Ignasius listed Gawi, arisan, prayer meetings, and mutual visits as key activities.

6. The Community's Role in Strengthening NTT Unity

Community members overwhelmingly believe that the Flobamorata community significantly strengthens NTT cultural identity. Aloy stated that the community's formation invigorated NTT people in Kranji, making them proud to showcase their woven fabrics, songs, and dances. He observed increased public interest in their cultural performances, leading to a stronger sense of unity and confidence in introducing NTT culture. Brigitha expressed joy at re-connecting with her cultural family, feeling more confident in wearing traditional attire and speaking her native language. She also hoped that younger generations would find partners from NTT to preserve their culture. Linda echoed this, feeling less alone and appreciating the community as a platform for NTT gatherings, which strengthens their cultural identity. Ignasius affirmed that the community enhances NTT culture and fosters unity among NTT people in Kranji, serving as a platform to introduce NTT culture in the diaspora.

7. Defining NTT Identity and its Recognition by Others

When asked about NTT identity, Aloy and Brigitha consistently pointed to woven fabrics (kain tenun) as the primary symbol. They noted that NTT people often incorporate kain tenun into their clothing, bags, or accessories to signify their regional origin, even though designs vary across NTT sub-regions. Linda added that the distinct accent and language are also strong identifiers, making it easy to recognize NTT people unless they were raised outside NTT. She described NTT people as direct and open in their communication. Ignasius also highlighted the kain tenun as a key visual marker and mentioned the characteristic enthusiasm for dancing to traditional music. He emphasized that even if others wear NTT kain tenun, the authentic NTT identity is discernible.

Overall Phenomenon and Conclusion of Findings

The findings reveal that the Flobamorata community in Kranji, West Bekasi, serves not only as a gathering place for NTT culture but also as a platform for its external promotion. However, the preservation of NTT identity faces ongoing challenges, including financial constraints, geographical distance, internal conflicts, and the influence of new cultures, particularly through inter-cultural marriages. The shift in residence for many NTT migrants necessitates encounters with new cultures, which can erode their original identity. Despite these challenges, the strong sense of belonging and brotherhood among NTT people drives continuous efforts to maintain their culture. Community leaders organize events and activities to ensure members remain connected to their identity. The Flobamorata community acts as a crucial unifying force, strengthening NTT identity in the diaspora. Group

communication, utilizing elements like regional language and traditional attire, is vital for maintaining this cultural identity. The consistent use of regional language in conversations and traditional clothing in ceremonies reinforces cultural bonds. The diverse and rich NTT culture, particularly its kain tenun with various motifs, remains a powerful symbol of identity. To counteract the eroding effects of new cultures and inter-cultural marriages, proactive measures such as organizing cultural events and fostering mutual visits are essential for strengthening cultural identity in the diaspora.

Research Discussion

Following the research conducted within the Flobamorata community in Kranji, West Bekasi, utilizing observation, interviews, and documentation, the findings indicate that group communication within the community serves as a crucial endeavor to maintain NTT cultural identity. This effort is primarily rooted in a profound sense of brotherhood among fellow NTT migrants, irrespective of blood ties, and a shared desire to preserve NTT culture in their new surroundings. The process of communication within the Flobamorata community, aimed at cultural preservation, encompasses several key factors:

Group Communication Dynamics

- 1. Communication between Management and Members: Group communication established between the management and members is essential for fostering and sustaining fraternal bonds among NTT migrants. This approach ensures that no member feels excluded, as the management actively strives to embrace all members and build strong interpersonal relationships within the community.
- 2. Supporting Media for Group Communication: The use of communication media, particularly WhatsApp, significantly strengthens group communication among members. This platform facilitates the sharing of information, ensuring that cultural identity is maintained and that all members remain informed, especially when direct face-to-face meetings are not feasible.
- 3. Challenges to Group Communication: Like any community, Flobamorata faces obstacles to effective group communication. These challenges primarily include financial constraints, which often prevent members from participating in community activities. Additionally, work commitments frequently take precedence, and the geographical distance between members' residences further limits consistent attendance at gatherings.

Supporting Factors for Flobamorata Community Communication

- 1. Driving Factors for Communication: The enduring strength of the Flobamorata community is largely attributable to a deep-seated sense of brotherhood and a strong love for NTT culture. These powerful sentiments are the primary motivators that encourage members to remain active and committed to the community.
- 2. Activities for Maintaining Group Communication: The community engages in various activities to foster group communication and preserve cultural identity. These include communal gatherings, traditional NTT dances (such as Gawi), cultural weeks held at venues like Taman Mini Indonesia, joint prayer sessions, and mutual visits, all of which aim to strengthen fraternal ties among members.
- 3. Community's Role in Strengthening NTT Unity: The presence of the Flobamorata community is widely recognized as a significant factor in reinforcing NTT cultural identity in Kranji, West Bekasi. It provides a vital platform for introducing NTT culture to a broader audience and serves as a crucial venue for fostering connections and camaraderie among members originating from diverse regions within NTT. Furthermore, there is an expressed

desire among some community members for their children to seek partners from within the NTT community to further ensure the preservation of their cultural heritage.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the role of group communication within the Flobamorata community in Kranji, West Bekasi, as a concerted effort to maintain the cultural identity of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) migrants. The findings underscore that the community's existence and its communication processes are deeply rooted in a profound sense of brotherhood among NTT individuals, irrespective of familial ties, coupled with a strong collective desire to preserve their ancestral culture in a new environment.

Group communication, facilitated primarily through accessible platforms like WhatsApp, plays a crucial role in fostering connections between community leaders and members, ensuring information dissemination, and nurturing a sense of belonging that actively counters feelings of exclusion. The driving forces behind this sustained communication are the deeply ingrained values of solidarity, mutual support, and an unwavering love for NTT culture, which motivate members to overcome various obstacles.

Despite these strong internal motivators the community faces significant challenges.

Despite these strong internal motivators, the community faces significant challenges, including financial constraints that limit participation, work commitments that prioritize livelihood over communal gatherings, and the geographical distance separating members' residences. Moreover, the broader influences of globalization and the increasing prevalence of inter-cultural marriages pose external threats to the preservation of NTT identity.

Nevertheless, the Flobamorata community actively employs a range of cultural and social activities—such as traditional dances (Gawi), cultural festivals, communal prayers, and mutual visits—to reinforce cultural bonds and ensure the continuous transmission of NTT heritage. These activities, along with the symbolic representation of NTT identity through elements like kain tenun (woven fabrics), distinct accents, and traditional music, serve as powerful tools for both internal cohesion and external promotion. Ultimately, the Flobamorata community stands as a vital platform that not only strengthens the collective identity of NTT migrants in the diaspora but also serves as a crucial conduit for introducing and celebrating their rich cultural heritage to the wider society.

REFERENCES

- Annurul, N. R. (2018). *Kompromi Budaya Dalam Pernikahan Beda Etnis*. Skripsi. UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta.
- Cahyono, A. (2016). Catharsis: Journal Of Arts Education Nilai Budaya Dalam Pertunjukan Rapai Geleng Mencerminkan Identitas Budaya Aceh. *Catharsis: Journal of Arts Education*, 5(1).
- Debora, P. (2014). Masuknya Budaya Asing Terhadap Nasionalisme Bangsa Indonesia di Era Globalisasi. *Jurnal Transformasi Global*, *I*(2), 1-12.
- Muazaroh, S. (2021). Komunikasi Lintas Budaya dan Identitas Kultural Masyarakat Perantauan. *Jurnal Komunikasi*, *12*(1), 1-10.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. Organizational Identity: A Reader, 56-65.
- Uyun, N. (2023). Membaca Mitos Dan Tradisi Dalam Konflik Perkawinan Beda Etnis. *Populika*, 11(1).
- Verulitasari, E., & Cahyono, A. (2016). Catharsis: Journal Of Arts Education Nilai Budaya Dalam Pertunjukan Rapai Geleng Mencerminkan Identitas Budaya Aceh. *Catharsis: Journal of Arts Education*. (Specific volume/issue information is missing in the snippet, citing as provided).

Wahyono, E. (2018). Komunikasi Kelompok (Studi Dialog Komunitas Dalam Pengembangan Masyarakat di Perkotaan). *Nyimak Journal of Communication*, 2(2).