The Role of Cultural Identity to Build Social Cohesion: Challenges, Implications, and Integration Strategies in Multicultural Societies

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ABSTRACT – Cultural identity is crucial for building and strengthening social cohesion in multicultural societies. This research aims to analyze the relationship between cultural identity and social cohesion and identify the main challenges that can hinder social integration. The literature review approach examines various theoretical and empirical perspectives from reputable international journals. The results show that cultural identity can serve as a unifying factor that strengthens the sense of social attachment and solidarity in diverse communities. However, there are a number of issues that hinder the contribution of cultural identity to social cohesion, including social polarization, economic inequality, and a lack of inclusive policies that accommodate cultural diversity. In addition, social changes due to globalization further complicate the dynamics of intercultural interactions. Therefore, it is important to further examine the relationship between cultural identity and social cohesion to develop more effective strategies for dealing with diversity. The implications of this research highlight the need for policies that support inclusive cultural integration, an education system that promotes multiculturalism values, and the strengthening of intercultural dialogue to create a harmonious society. Collective awareness of the importance of cultural identity as a cohesive element of society is expected to strengthen social stability and build more harmonious relationships among different groups.

Keywords: Cultural identity, social cohesion, multiculturalism, inclusive policies, social integration, globalization, solidarity.

A. INTRODUCTION

Cultural identity has a very important role in shaping the social structure of society. Cultural diversity within a country or community is often the social adhesive that strengthens social cohesion. Conversely, if not managed properly, cultural differences can lead to social fragmentation that has the potential to weaken the stability of society. According to research conducted by Holtug (2017), the shared identity of a community tends to strengthen trust and solidarity among its members. However, in certain situations, cultural diversity can also trigger social segregation, especially if there are inequalities in the recognition and respect of these cultural differences (García-Alonso & Wahhaj, 2021).

In particular, in many multicultural countries, cultural identity has become a major factor in social and political dynamics. For example, in Nigeria, with more than 250 different ethnic communities, cultural differences often pose a challenge to building national unity. Ethnic tensions and appeals for territorial separation show that social cohesion remains a complex issue. Research by Balogun and Obosi (2018) shows that without efforts to build collective identity consciousness, cultural diversity can weaken social cohesion and hinder national development.

In Western countries, the immigration phenomenon also shows how cultural identity plays a role in the dynamics of social cohesion. In the UK, for example, the increasing immigrant population has posed challenges to building a shared identity. According to Zriba's (2019) research, the increasing cultural diversity in the UK has led to debates on how to maintain social unity without disregarding minority cultural identities. This suggests that while cultural identity can strengthen social cohesion, without proper integration strategies, cultural diversity can also pose challenges to building a harmonious society.

Although cultural identity can strengthen social cohesion, there are various problems that hinder this process. One of the main challenges is how cultural differences in a society often trigger social fragmentation, especially when there are no effective mechanisms to bridge these differences (Holtug, 2021). In many cases, communities with different cultural backgrounds tend to experience social segregation more easily than building strong solidarity. Although cultural diversity can produce a bridging identity—an identity that allows individuals to adapt within a wider group—an excessively high or rapid rate of immigration can lead to increased social segregation (García-Alonso & Wahhaj, 2021).

Another problem is the lack of policies that support inclusive cultural integration. Some countries face challenges in formulating policies that can accommodate cultural diversity without creating social polarization. Research by Khylko and Khylko (2021) highlights how inequalities in access to public services, education, and the economy can exacerbate social distrust among different cultural communities. This situation weakens social cohesion because individuals feel that their cultural identity is not recognized or respected by the prevailing system.

In addition, in a society undergoing social transformation due to globalization, there is a challenge to maintain a balance between the preservation of cultural identity and the demands of modernization. Research by Klein and Tremblay (2016) found that the pressure of modernization can lead to rapid cultural change and make certain communities feel a loss of their cultural roots. This phenomenon often triggers feelings of social alienation that hinder efforts to build sustainable social cohesion.

Cultural identity can also be a political tool used to reinforce social divisions. In the case of the 2017 Jakarta elections, for example, identity politics was used as a campaign strategy to gain support from certain ethnic communities, ultimately weakening social cohesion and deepening divisions in society (Hamidah, 2018). A similar phenomenon has also occurred in various other countries where cultural identity is used as a tool to assert the dominance of certain communities over others. The use of cultural identity as a political tool can damage unity.

In addition to social and political factors, problems in social cohesion can also arise due to the lack of space for intercultural dialogue. Research by Baillie (2018) highlights how the debate over historical monuments in South Africa reflects the difficulty of reaching agreement on how history and cultural identity should be interpreted in a pluralistic society. The lack of space to build a common understanding keeps society divided and makes it increasingly difficult to achieve the expected social cohesion.

Observation of the role of cultural identity is very urgent to understand the dynamics of social cohesion in the era of globalization. Research by Pocecco (2016) reveals that the experience of cultural diversity on an individual basis contributes significantly to a sense of belonging and social attachment. This fact supports the importance of study so that each element of cultural identity can be appreciated as the main support for building solidarity between communities in society.

The urgency of this research also arises from existing scientific gaps, where previous studies have focused more on the negative impact of cultural fragmentation without paying attention to the potential integration of cultural identities that support social cohesion. Research by Pasco et al. (2021) emphasizes that the presence of social support in the immediate environment plays a major role in the formation of a strong ethnic identity, resulting in more intense involvement in social life. Thus, this study offers an innovative approach to analyzing the role of cultural identity as a bridge that encourages cooperation between communities.

In addition, observation of the role of cultural identity is important as a basis for formulating policies that support the development of social cohesion. A study by Pecherskaya (2020) shows that mental strength and unity of values can serve as key indicators for measuring the success of social integration, thus opening up opportunities for more targeted strategies to overcome the challenges of social division. This urgency emphasizes the need for studies that provide an understanding of the relationship between cultural identity and social cohesion to support the formulation of effective public policies.

This study aims to examine the role of cultural identity in building social cohesion in diverse societies. Cultural identity is a fundamental element that can strengthen a sense of belonging and social attachment within a community, but at the same time it can also be a

factor that reinforces segregation if not managed properly. Therefore, this study seeks to analyze how cultural identity can contribute to social cohesion and the factors that can hinder or strengthen this relationship.

In addition, this study aims to identify the main problems that arise in the process of cultural integration in multicultural societies. The lack of policies that support inclusive cultural integration, as well as the impact of globalization on local identities, are challenges that need further analysis. By examining these various challenges, this study is expected to provide a better understanding of the obstacles that prevent the formation of strong social cohesion.

This study aims to highlight the urgency of observing the relationship between cultural identity and social cohesion. By understanding this relationship, it is hoped that it can contribute to the development of more effective policies to strengthen social solidarity. This study also seeks to fill gaps in previous studies by emphasizing the importance of a more balanced approach to assessing the impact of cultural identity on society as a whole.

B. METHOD

In research on the Role of Cultural Identity in Building Social Cohesion, the approach used is a literature study. This approach involves the collection and analysis of relevant written sources to understand how cultural identity affects social cohesion in multicultural societies. According to Kumar (2011), a literature review allows researchers to identify, evaluate, and synthesize findings from previous research in order to build a strong theoretical basis for the research being conducted.

The research process began with a comprehensive literature search to gather relevant sources. Booth et al. (2008) emphasize the importance of a systematic search strategy, including the use of appropriate keywords and access to leading academic databases, to ensure that the collected literature covers a variety of perspectives and findings related to the topic under study. In addition, Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest using clear inclusion and exclusion criteria to select the most relevant and high-quality literature.

After the literature has been collected, the next step is a critical analysis of the content of each source. This involves evaluating the methodology used, the validity of the findings,

and the relevance of the information to the research question. Kumar (2011) underlines that this critical analysis is important to identify gaps in existing knowledge and determine the direction of further research. In addition, Booth et al. (2008) emphasized the need to synthesize findings from various studies to develop a comprehensive understanding of the role of cultural identity in social cohesion.

The results of this literature analysis are then used to formulate the conceptual framework and research hypothesis. Creswell and Poth (2018) state that a conceptual framework built on a synthesis of the literature helps to guide research design and data interpretation. Thus, the literature study approach provides a solid theoretical basis and informs the entire research process, from question formulation to data analysis and drawing conclusions.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Cultural Identity in Building and Strengthening Social Cohesion in Multicultural Societies

Cultural identity plays an important role in building and strengthening social cohesion in multicultural societies. The existence of a strong cultural identity allows individuals and communities to have a higher sense of belonging, thus strengthening social solidarity (Darmawan et al., 2021). According to research by Pocecco (2016), daily experiences in a multicultural society can strengthen social cohesion by forming a shared understanding of existing diversity. Cultural identity also provides a foundation for society to develop a broader sense of togetherness amid differences in ethnicity, religion, and nationality.

The role of cultural identity in building social cohesion is increasingly evident in social interactions involving various cultural groups. A study by Tancher (2019) highlights that individual involvement in diverse cultural life can create a deeper sense of belonging to society as a whole. This strengthens social relationships because individuals from different cultural backgrounds can share values and norms that support social stability (Darmawan, 2017). Thus, communities that respect diverse cultural identities tend to be more stable and cohesive.

Furthermore, a positive attitude towards cultural diversity in a multicultural society also contributes to social cohesion. Hamamura (2017) found that attitudes towards cultural diversity in a society depend on how social

identity is constructed and accepted by the dominant community. If the majority community adopts an inclusive approach to the cultural identity of the minority community, social cohesion will increase due to the creation of a sense of equality and togetherness. An inclusive approach allows each community to feel valued and recognized, which leads to increased harmonious social interaction between different communities.

The importance of cultural identity in supporting social cohesion can also be seen from the concept of bridging identity. This concept shows that when individuals are able to connect their cultural identity with other communities, the potential for social segregation can be reduced. Communities with a medium level of immigration tend to have a stronger bridging identity, which increases social cohesion compared to communities that are too homogeneous or too heterogeneous (García-Alonso & Wahhaj, 2021).

In addition to the social aspect, multiculturalism policies also play an important role in strengthening social cohesion by recognizing and supporting cultural diversity. This policy aims to create a legal and social framework that recognizes the rights of different cultural communities and provides space for them to develop and participate in society. According to Watters et al. (2020), policies that support multiculturalism can increase a sense of national belonging and trust between cultural communities. This shows that policies that recognize diverse cultural identities can be a major factor in maintaining social harmony amid cultural plurality.

In addition to policy factors, the educational approach also has a significant influence on strengthening social cohesion through cultural identity. Białostocka's research (2017) shows that dialogic education can help build tolerance and understanding of cultural diversity, which ultimately strengthens social cohesion. With an education system that promotes inclusiveness, people can better understand and appreciate existing diversity.

Thus, cultural identity plays a central role in building social cohesion by strengthening social attachment, promoting inclusive attitudes, and supporting diversity-based policies and education. The success of maintaining social cohesion depends on how the community is able to manage cultural diversity with the principles of inclusiveness and mutual respect. With policies that support cultural integration and education that encourages cross-cultural understanding, multicultural societies can develop harmoniously and create sustainable social stability.

The Main Problems that Hamper Cultural Identity in Building Social Cohesion

One of the main challenges that hinders cultural identity in building social cohesion is the increasing social polarization caused by cultural exclusivity. When certain cultural communities consider their identity as superior or cannot interact with other cultures, this creates segregation in society. Social fragmentation can occur when cultural communities reinforce their own identity boundaries without providing space for cross-cultural interaction, which ultimately weakens the sense of unity in society (Burns et al., 2018).

Another problem is the inequality in the recognition and representation of culture in social policy. Governments in various countries often do not provide sufficient protection for minority cultures, causing mistrust of the social system. Rapid demographic change in some areas can cause friction between immigrant communities and indigenous communities if inclusion policies are not properly implemented (Hunting, 2015). This imbalance creates feelings of marginalization and hinders social cohesion.

In addition, economic competition between different cultural communities can also hinder social cohesion. In many cases, certain groups have better access to economic and educational resources, while other communities are left behind. Research by Khylko and Khylko (2021) identifies that economic disparities between cultural communities often exacerbate social divisions by creating dissatisfaction and inequality in economic opportunities. These inequalities weaken social trust and increase the propensity for intercommunal conflict.

Cultural identity can also be a political tool used to reinforce social divisions. In some countries, the political elite often exploits cultural identity to rally support in divisive ways. In the UK, cultural differences are often used as political campaign material that increases sentiments of exclusive nationalism and hinders efforts to build social cohesion (Zriba, 2019). This kind of exploitative identity politics reinforces cultural differences instead of looking for similarities that can strengthen social solidarity.

The next challenge is the increasing intolerance and discrimination against certain cultural groups. This factor is often influenced by a lack of understanding of cultural diversity and the existence of stereotypes that discredit certain groups. Ignorance and prejudice between cultural groups hinder the formation of a shared identity which should be the main foundation for building social cohesion (Lefko-Everett et al., 2018). The lack of effective cultural dialogue is a factor that exacerbates this problem.

Rapid social change due to globalization is also a challenge to building social cohesion based on cultural identity (Arifin & Rojak, 2022). Communities that experience an influx of new cultures in a short period of time often face difficulties in adapting, which can lead to resistance to cultural diversity. Stead (2017) explains that in many cases, multiculturalism policies implemented without sufficient understanding can cause tension between different cultural communities, instead of strengthening social integration. This shows the importance of a careful approach to managing cultural diversity.

Finally, the challenge of building social cohesion based on cultural identity is also related to the lack of effective multicultural education. Education has a major role in shaping people's understanding of other cultures, but the education systems in many countries have not been able to accommodate cultural diversity properly. Inclusive education policies can reinforce cultural segregation from an early age, thus hindering social integration in the future (Bidandi, 2021). Therefore, a more inclusive education system is needed to support social cohesion based on cultural identity.

The Importance of Research on the Relationship between Cultural Identity and Social Cohesion

Examining the relationship between cultural identity and social cohesion is very important because cultural identity plays a major role in shaping social stability in multicultural societies. Cultural identity serves as a tool to strengthen social attachment and a sense of togetherness, thus reducing tensions between different communities. García-Alonso and Wahhaj (2021) state that cultural diversity can strengthen social solidarity when there is an identity that bridges different communities. By understanding this relationship, communities can develop more effective strategies for building a harmonious social environment.

In addition, research on cultural identity and social cohesion can help to design more inclusive public policies. In many countries, social policies often fail to accommodate cultural diversity fairly, which ultimately weakens social cohesion. Imbalances in the recognition of cultural identities can lead to political and economic instability, especially in countries with high ethnic diversity (Balogun & Obosi, 2018). Therefore, research that can provide insights to create fairer and more effective policies to support social integration is needed.

The importance of examining the relationship between cultural identity and social cohesion is also evident in relation to globalization, which is accelerating social change. As migration and intercultural interaction increase, societies must find ways to manage differences in ways that strengthen, not weaken, social cohesion. A social environment that supports cultural diversity can improve social integration and help individuals feel more accepted in their community (Pasco et al., 2021). This study shows that when cultural identity is understood and accepted in society, a sense of belonging and social attachment will be stronger.

In addition to the aspects of policy and globalization, examining the relationship between cultural identity and social cohesion is also important to prevent social conflict. In many countries, tensions between cultural communities are often triggered by a lack of understanding of different cultural identities. Khylko and Khylko (2021) reveal that social inequalities stemming from differences in cultural identity can exacerbate social fragmentation and even trigger intercommunal conflict. With this understanding, communities can develop strategies to reduce tensions and improve cooperation between communities.

Research in this field is also relevant for building social resilience in the face of economic and political change. In many countries, changes in the economic and political landscape can affect the way cultural communities interact with each other. Sharing the same identity or respecting each other's different cultural identities can increase social trust, which is an important factor in maintaining political and economic stability (Holtug, 2021). Thus, research on the relationship between cultural identity and social cohesion can help formulate policies that are more responsive to social change.

This study also aims to ensure that the education system is able to teach the values of multiculturalism that support social cohesion. Research by Gerchanivska (2021) shows that education that emphasizes the importance of cultural identity can help individuals understand differences and work together in an increasingly diverse society. By providing education that supports cultural diversity, future generations can be better prepared to live in a more inclusive and harmonious society (Hariyadi et al., 2023).

In conclusion, examining the relationship between cultural identity and social cohesion is essential to understanding how a society can thrive in diversity. This research provides insights that can be used in public policy, preventing social conflict, supporting social resilience, and improving education systems to be more inclusive. With a better understanding of the role of cultural identity in social cohesion, societies can develop more effective strategies to create social stability and strengthen unity in diversity.

D. CONCLUSIONS

Cultural identity has a very significant role in building and strengthening social cohesion in multicultural societies. Cultural identity is a reflection of a community's values and norms, and serves as a tool to strengthen social solidarity. Well-managed cultural diversity can create a harmonious social environment, where different communities can coexist with mutual respect and understanding. However, there are various challenges that hinder the role of cultural identity in building social cohesion, such as social polarization, economic inequality, and the lack of inclusive policies. Without an understanding of the relationship between cultural identity and social cohesion, society risks fragmentation that can hinder sustainable social development.

Research on the relationship between cultural identity and social cohesion is becoming increasingly important in dealing with the dynamics of globalization. Increased human mobility, changing social structures, and increased intercultural interaction demand more effective strategies for managing diversity. Understanding how cultural identity can strengthen or weaken social cohesion is very important in formulating public policies that support fair and sustainable social integration. In addition, this research also contributes to preventing culture-based conflicts and helps build a more inclusive society, where all communities have equal opportunities to develop and contribute to social development.

Based on the findings of this study, a more comprehensive policy is needed to support cultural diversity as an asset to strengthen social cohesion. The government and social institutions need to develop programs that recognize diversity and create spaces for dialogue that enable closer social interaction between different cultural communities. The education system must also play a more active role in shaping multicultural awareness that can reduce the prejudices and stereotypes that hinder social integration. In addition, there needs to be an economic strategy that ensures that all communities have equal access to resources and opportunities so that there is no inequality that weakens social solidarity.

In an increasingly complex social perspective, it is important for society to develop a more inclusive mindset to view cultural identity. Societies that value diversity have a greater opportunity to create a stable and harmonious social environment. Therefore, each individual has a responsibility to strengthen social cohesion by fostering an attitude of tolerance, respect for differences, and openness to intercultural dialogue. With a collective awareness of the importance of cultural identity to strengthen social cohesion, society can move towards a more inclusive and equitable direction, where diversity does not divide, but rather serves as a strength to build a more advanced civilization.

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