

Sociology of Communication: Analysing Social Inequality and Community Integration in Limau Village, Banyuasin Regency

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Abstract: Social disparities between hamlets caused by economic differences, technology accessibility, and education levels have an impact on communication patterns and community interactions, where inequality in Access to information can strengthen social hierarchies, stereotypes, and social exclusion among community groups. This study aims to analyse the social gap between hamlets in community interaction through the sociology of communication perspective. The research method used is a qualitative approach with the type of phenomenology. Data collection techniques were participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. This research was conducted in Limau village, Sembawa District, Banyuasin Regency. The informants in this study were local village officials. The results show that social disparities, such as educational level differences, access to resources, and cultural traditions, create significant communication barriers. This leads to limited social interaction and the emergence of stereotypes and prejudices between Hamlet residents. However, there were also efforts by the community and local leaders to reduce these disparities through joint activities and intergroup dialogue. The study concludes that an in-depth understanding of the communication dynamics and social factors underlying the gaps can be the foundation for building more harmonious and inclusive interactions between hamlets. The results of this study make an important contribution to understanding the socio-cultural dynamics that occur in Limau Village with three culturally distinct hamlets. It recommends several approaches to reduce social inequality in Limau Village, including strengthening education programs and increasing community literacy to address the root of the problem, which is identified as a lack of understanding and knowledge.

Keywords: Sociology of Communication, Social Gap, Community Interaction, Social Integration, Intercultural Communication.

INTRODUCTION

Sociology of communication is a branch of social science that focuses on social interaction in society (Pratama, 2024). In general, the sociology of communication can be interpreted as a science that studies the science of communication from a sociological or societal perspective (Putra et al., 2025). Sociology of communication plays an important role in understanding social interactions in society, especially in examining social inequalities between certain groups or regions. Social gaps in community interaction often arise due to economic differences, technology access, and diverse education levels. In rural areas, for example, social disparities between hamlets can be seen in access to information, economic opportunities, and social participation (Cook, 2014). These differences create diverse communication patterns, with more economically developed hamlets tending to have better access to media and information than less developed hamlets. These inequalities can reinforce social hierarchies and affect relationships between individuals and groups within village communities. In addition, communication between hamlets can be influenced by cultural norms that shape interaction patterns and social perceptions between groups (Firmansyah, 2024).

In the sociology of communication, it is important to explore how social interactions within a community are affected by existing social inequalities (Ferianto et al., 2024). Recent studies have shown that differences in access to information can reinforce stereotypes and social exclusion, creating polarisation in society. Therefore, research on social gaps between hamlets in community interactions needs to be conducted to understand the impact of communication in strengthening or reducing existing social inequalities (Basri et al., 2024; Mahmud, 2024; Nur et al., 2023; Prastio, 2024). According to Karl Marx, social inequality arises due to society's development, which is influenced by production factors and methods used. Communities that begin to use traditional production methods develop into modern ones with the development of technology and social capital (Jamaludin, 2015; Makmur et al., 2024; Suryono, 2010; Azhari Evendi, 2021). To achieve equitable growth and minimise social and economic disparities requires effort which is certainly not easy, because the reduction of disparities cannot be separated from how to build villages to escape the circle of poverty, limited accessibility, improving population health, quality of education and synergy between the community and government officials (Ibrahim, 2017; Ali, et al., 2025).

Social inequality, as a condition of inequality in the distribution of resources, access, and opportunities, is often reflected in patterns of communication and interaction between groups in society (Hermanto Suaib, 2017; Puspitasari, 2019; Syahrin et al., 2022). In Indonesia, where the structure of society is still heavily influenced by geographical, cultural, and historical factors, social inequality between hamlets can be a relevant case study to understand how communication plays a role in reinforcing or reducing such inequality. Geographically separated hamlets often have different socio-economic characteristics, which in turn affect the way they interact with each other (Firmansyah et al., 2025).

This research brings novelty in combining the perspectives of sociology of communication and social gap analysis specific to the village context, with multi-hillage characteristics and cultural differences, an aspect that has not been explored in depth in

previous studies. Maruapey and Rusliandy (2022) which focuses on the impact of population growth on social inequality in urban-industrial areas Najoan et al. (2017) which emphasises the role of community leaders in minimising social inequality in urban contexts with public service issues, this research presents a more comprehensive analysis by identifying and exploring how cultural differences between hamlets, biased perceptions of village leadership, and the role of religious activities as a social bridge become determinant factors in the dynamics of inequality in rural areas.

The novelty of this research is particularly evident in its application of the sociology of communication approach to examine the intricate relationship between social media, communication patterns among village institutions, and their collective impact on social inequality. This study goes beyond conventional analyses by exploring how digital interactions and institutional discourse can reinforce or mitigate social disparities within rural communities. Furthermore, it delves into the underlying causes of these inequalities, emphasising the role of limited understanding, insufficient knowledge, and inadequate education as fundamental factors that have yet to be thoroughly explored in previous research. By shedding light on these dimensions, this study provides a more comprehensive perspective on the mechanisms that sustain social gaps and offers a novel framework for addressing them through improved communication strategies and educational initiatives.

This study analyses how social inequality between hamlets manifests in community interactions and how communication plays a role in mediating or exacerbating such inequality. Using a sociology of communication approach, this study will explore the dynamics of relationships between hamlets, including factors such as access to communication technology, cultural differences, and economic inequality, which can affect communication patterns and social interactions. Through this analysis, it is hoped that valuable insights can be found to reduce social inequality and increase harmony in community interactions between hamlets.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted from October 21, 2024, to February 22, 2025, in Limau Village, which is located in Sembawa District, Banyuasin Regency. The subjects of this research were local village officials. This research used a qualitative method with a type of phenomenology. Phenomenological research is a methodological approach in qualitative research that focuses on the subjective life experiences of individuals and how they make meaning of these experiences (Williams, 2021; Tuffour, 2017). Rooted in the philosophy of phenomenology developed by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, this approach seeks to understand the essence of phenomena through the perspective of people who experience them directly (Arianto & Handayani, 2024; Ali, 2021; Fuster Guillen, 2019; Farid & Sos, 2018). The data collection techniques used in this study were interviews, observation, and documentation. The data analysis technique in this phenomenological research was carried out through several interconnected systematic stages, starting with verbatim transcription of all interviews with village officials and community leaders of Limau Village, followed by phenomenological reduction to reduce researcher bias, then horizontalisation by giving the same value to each informant's statement. Then identifying and grouping significant

statements into meaning units, continued with the preparation of textural (what is experienced) and structural (how the phenomenon of social inequality is experienced) descriptions to gain a thorough understanding of the essence of the experience of social inequality between hamlets, and ended by triangulating data by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the validity of the findings, as well as using member checking by confirming the interpretation of data to informants to ensure that the researcher's interpretation is by the informants' intentions and experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of local village officials in Limau Village regarding social inequality and cultural dynamics among its three distinct hamlets. Through qualitative methods, including interviews, observations, and documentation, the research sought to uncover the essence of social gaps and community integration efforts based on participants' perspectives. Based on the results of the interviews that have been conducted, it is known that in Limau Village, there are social gaps between communities because there are 3 hamlets/villages with different cultures. The findings are organised systematically to highlight the main factors contributing to social gaps, the village government's efforts to address these issues, and the implications for social cohesion.

Social Gaps and Cultural Differences

The study identified social gaps among the hamlets due to cultural differences and perceptions related to the village head's origin.

Factor	Description
Cultural Fragmentation	Each hamlet has distinct traditions, leading to reduced synergy among communities.
Perception of Development Bias	Dusun Two and Dusun Three residents feel that development decisions favour Dusun One, creating feelings of marginalisation.
Assumptions of Collective Failure	Misconceptions exist that failures in one hamlet adversely affect the others, further entrenching social divisions.

Village Government Initiatives

The village government has implemented several strategies to foster unity and minimise regionalism.

Initiative	Description
Promoting Village Unity	Efforts to educate the community on the importance of viewing themselves as one unit, regardless of their hamlet affiliation.
Organizing Inclusive Activities	Initiatives such as communal religious events and national celebrations aim to increase interaction and reduce cultural divides.
Utilising Social Media	Sharing government provisions and community information via social media enhances understanding and participation among residents.

Religious Activities as a Unifying Force

Religious events play a crucial role in bridging the gaps between the hamlets.

Activity	Impact
Religious Celebrations	Events like the commemoration of Maulid and other significant religious days foster kinship and collaboration among residents from different hamlets.
Community Cohesion	These activities help diminish the perception of differences, promoting a sense of belonging and shared identity across hamlets.

Challenges Identified

The research highlighted persistent challenges that hinder social cohesion in Limau Village.

Challenge	Description
Lack of Understanding and Education	A significant barrier to integration is the community's limited understanding of each other's cultures and the lack of educational resources.
Institutional Involvement	While institutions like the BPD are involved in decision-making, further engagement with community stakeholders is necessary to address social issues effectively.

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the socio-cultural dynamics in Limau Village. They reveal significant social gaps influenced by cultural differences, biased perceptions of development, and a lack of synergy among community groups. However, the village government's proactive efforts, particularly through religious activities and social media engagement, demonstrate potential pathways for fostering unity and addressing social inequalities. The ongoing challenges highlight the need for continued education and institutional involvement to enhance social cohesion across the hamlets.



Figure 1. Community Discussion at the Residence of the RT Head

The results of this study make an important contribution to understanding the socio-cultural dynamics that occur in Limau Village with three culturally different hamlets. The study found cultural variations across hamlets, skewed development objectives depending on the village head's hamlet of origin, and community group synergy issues that generated gaps and social jealousy. The results help explain how village government forms impact social cohesiveness and reveal that religious activities have bridged hamlets. The research also finds that lacking community understanding, knowledge, and education causes the gap. It describes the village government's efforts to close it by promoting village unity and using social media to share information.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from this study on social dynamics in Limau Village highlight significant patterns of social inequality and cultural fragmentation among its three hamlets. This discussion contextualises these findings within existing literature to better understand the socio-cultural landscape. The research revealed that cultural differences among the hamlets significantly contribute to social gaps. Residents of Dusun One, Dusun Two, and Dusun Three exhibit distinct cultural practices, which create barriers to synergy and cooperation. This aligns with Omotosho et al.'s (2020) concept of social fragmentation, where cultural diversity within a single administrative area can lead to group divisions based on primordial identities. The perception that development initiatives favour Dusun One, due to the village head's origin, exacerbates feelings of marginalisation among residents of the other hamlets. Previous studies have similarly identified how leadership representation can influence community perceptions. Lansing et al. (2023) noted that leadership backgrounds significantly shape residents' trust in governance and their sense of belonging. This suggests that the source of leadership can directly impact community cohesion, a phenomenon evident in Limau Village as well. The findings indicate a pronounced perception of biased development priorities based on the village head's affiliation. This perception has created tensions between groups, reflecting Kühne et al.'s (2020) conflict theory, which posits that unequal distribution of power and resources can trigger societal tensions. The assumption that failures in one hamlet affect the others further complicates inter-community relations, leading to a cycle of distrust. This mirrors findings by Olonisakin (2023), who discussed how perceived inequalities in resource allocation can lead to inter-group conflicts in multicultural contexts. The residents' belief that their hamlet's interests are consistently overlooked resonates with Johnson's assertion that such perceptions can hinder collaborative efforts and exacerbate social jealousy. In response to these challenges, the village government has undertaken several initiatives to promote unity and minimise regionalism. Efforts to educate residents about the importance of community cohesion reflect a proactive governance approach. This mirrors the findings of Doornbosch-Akse and van Vuuren (2019), who emphasised bridging social capital in overcoming inequalities through forming intergroup trust networks. The organisation of inclusive activities, particularly religious celebrations, has proven effective in fostering kinship and collaboration among hamlet residents. This finding reinforces the idea that shared cultural and religious experiences can unify fragmented communities. As Rämgård et al. (2023) noted, communal activities create opportunities for

interaction that can help dissolve barriers and build trust among diverse groups. Despite the positive initiatives, the study identified ongoing challenges related to misunderstandings and a lack of education among community members. These barriers are consistent with findings from Azanu et al. (2025), who highlighted that educational deficits can perpetuate social inequalities and hinder community integration. The involvement of local institutions, such as the BPD, is crucial for addressing these issues, as they can facilitate dialogue and enhance community engagement in decision-making processes. The need for greater involvement of community stakeholders is underscored by the experiences shared by participants, who noted that increased collaboration among local institutions could lead to more effective solutions to social challenges. This aligns with Vikalista et al. (2023), who emphasised the importance of inclusive governance structures in promoting social cohesion in diverse communities. Limau Village can move towards a more cohesive and equitable community by addressing these challenges, further enhancing social harmony and collaboration.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the social dynamics in Limau Village, highlighting the complexities of cultural fragmentation and social inequality among its three distinct hamlets. The findings reveal that significant social gaps exist due to cultural differences, perceived biases in development priorities, and the influence of leadership representation. These factors align with established sociological theories, notably Geertz's concept of social fragmentation and Dahrendorf's conflict theory. The village government's proactive initiatives to promote unity through education and inclusive activities, particularly religious celebrations, demonstrate effective strategies for fostering inter-community collaboration and bridging social divides. However, the study also identifies ongoing challenges related to misunderstandings, lack of education, and the need for greater involvement of local institutions in decision-making processes. Researchers can benefit from this study by recognising the importance of cultural dynamics in shaping community interactions and perceptions. Understanding how cultural identities influence social cohesion is crucial for addressing social gaps in multicultural settings. The findings emphasise how leadership representation affects community trust and perceptions of equity. Future research could explore the implications of leadership backgrounds on community dynamics in other similar contexts. The study highlights the effectiveness of communal activities, particularly religious events, in fostering social integration. Researchers can investigate how such activities can be leveraged to enhance community ties in diverse populations. Identifying education as a critical factor in mitigating social inequality suggests a need for focused research on educational programs that promote understanding and collaboration among different cultural groups. The role of local institutions in facilitating dialogue and enhancing community engagement points to an important area for further study. Exploring how different governance structures impact social cohesion can provide valuable insights for policymakers. In conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of socio-cultural dynamics in Limau Village, offering a framework for future research that can inform strategies for promoting unity and equity in

diverse communities. Limau Village can work towards a more inclusive and harmonious society by addressing the identified challenges and building on successful initiatives.

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