

## Psychological Communication in the Self Concept and Cultural Identity of the People of Indramayu Regency through Ngarot Tradition

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Yeni Nuraeni<sup>1\*</sup>, Ashur Harmadi<sup>1</sup>, Sugiharti Binastuti<sup>1</sup>, Diana Sari<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Communication Science, Universitas Gunadarma

Jln. Margonda Raya No. 100, Depok 16424 - Indonesia

\*Corresponding author: ynuraeni@staff.gunadarma.ac.id

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**Abstract** – This research aims to find out psychological communication through the self-concept and cultural identity of the people of Indramayu Regency using a symbolic interaction theory (mind, self and society). Ngarot tradition evolved within Lelea community in Indramayu Regency, West Java, where they celebrated the tradition every year. The word Ngarot comes from Sanskrit which means to cleanse oneself from stains and sins from the wrong behavior of a person or a group of people in the past. Ngarot tradition is closely related to the cultural identity that is shaped in the society and serves as the symbols of the next generation. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. The results of the research show that the self-concept of the people of Indramayu Regency is designed to appreciate and respect the culture, by preserving it through agricultural activities, as well as to express gratitude to God. The cultural identity of the Lelea community can be seen from various things that developed in the area, including those in the socio-cultural, economic, and religious fields.

**Keywords:** Self Concept, Cultural Identity, Psychology Communication, Ngarot Tradition

### Introduction

Culture is a defining feature of a person's identity and self concept, how they see themselves and identity of the groups. Soemardi (1964) defined culture as all the works, tastes, and creations of society. While according to (Koentjaraningrat 2009), culture is the entire system of ideas and feelings, actions, and works produced by man in social life as his own by learning. Sociology studies several areas of human life, including : society, culture, group and and social control (Alvin,1980).

Indonesia is rich in culture, including Ngarot tradition. Ngarot tradition began to emerge in the 17th century, around 1686, and is still preserved until now. Tradition is defined as customs and beliefs that can be maintained for generations (Soekanto, 1994). Based on these theories, it can be concluded that Ngarot tradition does not arise and grow by itself, but it goes through a process of socialization, learning, and understanding norms, which gives a birth to human cultural works in the midst of its environment, Lelea community, in Indramayu Regency.

For hundreds of years, this tradition has successfully brought Indramayu to have agricultural culture that brings prosperity. Young people have farming ability and regenerate it, so that agriculture has been Indramayu's economic strength for the last three centuries before the 2019 Covid pandemic hit the world. Entering 2021, things slowly returned to normal despite the pandemic, making the people of

Lelea in Indramayu Regency happy. Ngarot tradition is celebrated every year by the people of Lelea, Indramayu Regency. It has become a very important activity and a compulsory event carried out through rituals. As regional culture, Ngarot tradition is a means of getting to know each other, helping each other, and being considerate of each other.

In the opinion of both local and foreign tourists, Ngarot traditions or customs in Indramayu Regency are full of positive activities, apart from entertaining, and containing moral values and religious messages.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Self-concept and cultural identity are known through communication psychology. The Communication Psychology is a science that seeks to describe, predict and control mental events and behavior in communication. Meanwhile, according to (Rakhmat 2001), communication psychology is a science that studies communication from a psychological aspect that examines human consciousness and experience.

Self-concept is everything a person can say about himself, not only about his body and psychical state, but also about his family, home, work, ancestors, friends, possessions, and money. If everything is good, he feels satisfied and proud. However, if anything is bad, broken, or gone, he feels hopeless, disappointed, and others (James, 1980). Cultural identity is a communication identification of a system of verbal and nonverbal symbolic behaviors that have meaning and are shared among group members who have a sense of belonging and share the same traditions, heritage, language, and norms. Cultural identity is a social construction.

Cultural identity is "a person's sense of belonging of a particular culture or ethnic group (Samovar, 2010: 184). Intercultural communication itself can be understood as the most effective interpersonal self-statement between two people with different cultural backgrounds (Liliweri 2003). Cultural identity is "the emotional signification we add to our sense of belonging or affiliation with a larger culture. Identity is a product of one's membership in a group. Cultural identity refers to an individual's sense of belonging to a formal or informal group that passes on and instills knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, traditions, and ways of life. Everyone is always passively changing all the time (Ting-Toomey, S., & Chung, L. C. 2012).

Previous Research, Self-esteem and Cultural Identity in Aboriginal Language Immersion Kindergarteners. The results of the research give important insights into not only the self-esteem of children in this immersion school as part of a measure of its overall success, but also the school experiences of Aboriginal children in different cultural, geographic, and educational contexts (Markom, 2017). Exploring the Self-Concept in an African Culture. Self-concept orientations (individualistic, collectivistic, and moralistic) Zimbabwe college students of a Shona cultural background. Although the students tended to endorse an individualistic self-concept orientation to a significant extent, the women and the older students were more inclined to perceive of the self-concept as collectivistic and moralistic in orientation (Mpfungu, 2010).

Community life and traditions are very interesting to know and learn about. This research intends to find out what the self-concept of the young generation of the people of Lelea Village, Indramayu Regency is and what the cultural identity of the people of Lelea Village, Indramayu Regency is. Communication as a form of interaction between one individual and another in a group or between groups uses symbols. As a result, communication that occurs in the group is often referred to as symbolic communication. This is understandable because the communication that occurs uses symbols that are organized and generally agreed upon as a vehicle for exchanging ideas. George Herbert Mead is a major figure among symbolic interactionists who is famous for his work, '*mind self and society*' (Miller, 1973).

According to Blumer, there are three main principles contained in the theory of symbolic interactionism, namely *meaning*, *language*, and *thought* (Griffin 2003); The connection between the self-concept and cultural identity of Ngarot tradition, which has strong characteristics, becomes the main reason for the researcher to conduct this research. The phenomenon of religious and cultural relations can be seen directly in the Sekaten Tradition held in Yogyakarta and its relation to the Kauman Yogyakarta Community. In fact, Sekaten with mystical traditional colors still exist in Kauman Village, where the majority of its people are identical with Islam and Muhammadiyah

## Material and Methodology

This research used a descriptive qualitative method. In general, qualitative research is a research that intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the research subject (Steven, 1992), for example, behavior, perception, motivation, and so on. Holistically, it was conducted in a descriptive way in the form of words and language, in a special natural context and by utilizing various natural methods (Creswell, 2013).

In addition, qualitative research is descriptive, concerning the process than the results, limiting the focus of the study, having a set of criteria to check the validity of the data, the research design is temporary and the results of the research are agreed by both parties between the researcher and the research subject (Moleong, 2012).

According to Sugiyono (2012), data analysis is the process of systematically searching and compiling data obtained from interviews, field notes, and other materials, so they can be easily understood, and the results can be informed to others. Based on these statements, the research subjects in this case are Head of Lelea village, Head of Cultural Section of Youth Sports Culture and Tourism Office of Indramayu Regency, and a pair of young people participating in the Ngarot traditional ceremony

This research was conducted in Lelea village which is located in Lelea Sub-district, Indramayu Regency.

## Results and Discussion

The noble values that exist in the culture of Indramayu people are channeled in the form of traditional ceremony. Traditional ceremony is a form of human activity in social life to express gratitude to God. The ceremony is carried out through the ceremonial process by people as a manifestation of gratitude to God.

The Ngarot tradition carried out by Lelea community is closely related to their ancestor named Ki Buyut Kapol (Samian) Lelea people consider him as an elder, and a leader of the young and older generations. He showed his concern for the youth by providing paddy fields for farming, so they had skills to be a respected community leader. For hundreds of years, the tradition has led Indramayu to a prosperous agrarian culture. The youth have the ability to farm and regenerate, so that agriculture has become the economic strength of Indramayu for the last three centuries before the Covid 19 pandemic struck. Entering 2021, the situation slowly returned to normal. The people of Lelea, rejoiced.

Ngarot tradition is held annually by the Lelea community of Indramayu Regency. It has become a very important activity and a compulsory event carried out through regional cultural rituals to serve as a means for the people to get to know each other, help each other, and tolerate each other. Quoting the opinion of both local and foreign tourists, Ngarot tradition is full of positive activities, besides it entertains and carries moral values and religious messages as a manifestation of gratitude to God for all the blessings to all people.

Before 1681, Lelea was part of the territory of the Sumedang kingdom, therefore the native language of the Lelea villagers was Sundanese. Ngarot is one of the customs that still exist until now, in 2023. According to Mr. Asep Ruchyadi who is a community leader as well as Head of the Cultural Section of Indramayu Regency in 2014, Ngarot tradition began to emerge during the life of Ki Buyut Kapol, a farmer who owned a rice field of 26,100 m<sup>2</sup> and had no children. His rice harvest was never lacking to cover his living expenses at all, even it became more abundant. Every day, a lot of young people gathered to meet him. He made use of the occasion to develop an idea to unite the young people. The idea was realized in the form of a "gotong royong" (mutual help) lifestyle that serves as a means of supporting the use of his rice fields.

All Lelea villagers, are obliged to attend the Ngarot ceremony before they get married, and if they do not, their family will be penalized by the community. Following Ngarot tradition means that they will one day be directly involved in agriculture, and their families will get a good view from the surrounding community. Ngarot tradition has the initial goal of fostering healthy relationships, so that young people will get to know each other, adjust each other's attitudes, and have noble behavior in accordance with eastern cultural values. Ngarot is a method or way to mobilize and foster a sense of unity among young men and women before the cultivation and planting of rice begins.



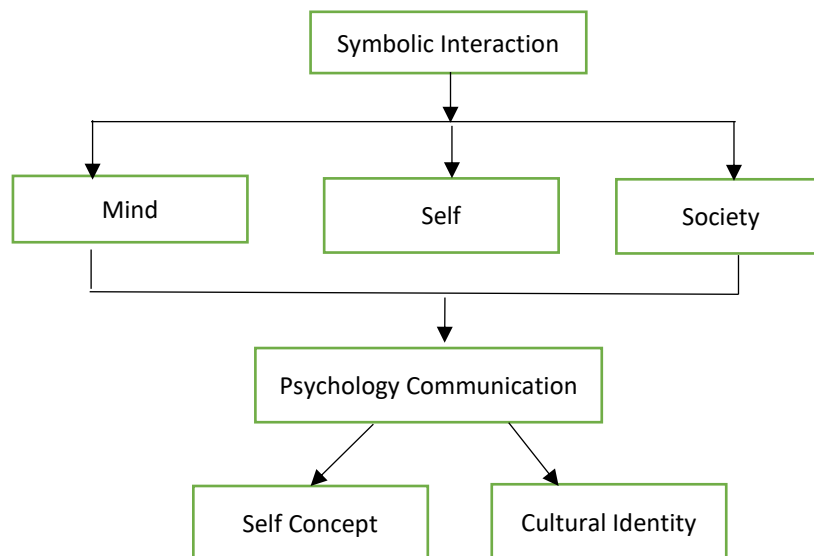
**Picture 1.** The symbolic handover of fertilizer & hoe, rice plants, a jug of water seeds by Pak Kuwu (Village Head) which means Tamba water (medicinal water) and fertilizer for rice plants



Picture 2. The symbolic handover of fertilizer and hoe. Ceremonial Ngarot Tradition

For the people of Lelea village, celebrating Ngarot tradition is actually a form of gratitude ritual for farmers before the rice planting period. The ceremony is usually held on Wednesdays in November. Ngarot tradition has the benefit of increasing gratitude to God for the blessing on the rice fields to be cultivated in addition to honoring the services of Ki Buyut Kapol. Based on this information, it is related to symbolic interaction. Mind, it is likely influenced by social and cultural contexts. Mind, Self, Society, means everything that people do and all of their interactions ends up creating society.

The other benefits of Ngarot tradition include: (1) In the social-cultural field, Ngarot tradition has well-established social ties between Lelea villagers and their surroundings and minimizes obstacles or misunderstandings; (2) In the economic field, Lelea villagers, who farm rice, strongly believe that celebrating Ngarot tradition will affect the process of achieving the success of their rice yields. Most of Lelea villagers work in the agricultural sector, making rice fields their main livelihood. In addition to growing rice, farmers who have sufficient capital run a part-time business by buying unhusked rice, milling unhusked rice themselves at rice milling units and then selling milled rice to both large markets and small markets; (3) In the field of religion, Ngarot tradition has an influence on the harmonious life of the people, especially Muslim villagers. According to Mulder, the word "harmony" is a state of harmony, calmness, and peace without disputes and disagreements, and a state of being united to help each other. The tolerant attitude of different religious communities is realized in the daily lives of the people of Indramayu Regency. After observing the people of Lelea village celebrating Ngarot tradition with symbolic interaction, the research can find out self concept and cultural identity of the people of Indramayu Regency through a communication psychology approach.



### *Self-concept of the people in Indramayu Regency :*

First, they appreciated and respected the culture by preserving Ngarot tradition as a manifestation of farmers' gratitude before the rice planting period as well as a form of respect for their ancestors, namely Ki Buyut Kapol.

Second, the self-concept in this tradition is manifested in agricultural activities as the main field of work for the people of Indramayu Regency.

Third, the self-concept of the community in Ngarot tradition is realized as a manifestation of gratitude to God for all the abundant blessings every year.

Cultural Identity of the people of Lelea Village, Indramayu Regency can be seen from various things that develop in the area, namely: (1) Social field, Ngarot tradition has an influence on the social bonds established between Lelea villagers and their surroundings; (2) Economic field, besides having an identity as a farmer, the people of Indramayu Regency also have another income as traders during the Ngarot tradition ceremony; (3) Religious field, Ngarot tradition gives positive direction to the life of religious harmony, especially the Lelea community who are Muslims who teach mutual help and foster a sense of brotherhood between fellow Muslims and non-Muslims; (4) Cultural field, the Head of the Regional Tourism Office and the people of Indramayu Regency make Ngarot tradition a characteristic and the tradition must be preserved so that it will not be lost in the times

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results and discussion, conclusions can be drawn: regarding the self-concept of the people of Indramayu Regency: (1) Appreciate and respect the culture by preserving Ngarot tradition as a manifestation of farmers' gratitude before the rice planting period; (2) Make agriculture the main field of jobs for the people of Indramayu Regency; (3) Express gratitude to God for abundant blessings every year.

Cultural Identity of the people of Lelea Village, Indramayu Regency can be seen from various fields that develop in the area, namely: (1) Social-Cultural field; (2) Economic field; and (3) Religious field. The Head of the Regional Tourism Office and the people of Indramayu Regency make Ngarot tradition a characteristic and the tradition must be preserved so that it will not be lost in the times.

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