



DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL INTERACTION BETWEEN BOARDING HOUSE RESIDENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN MAJENE REGENCY

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Abstract

This study analyzes the dynamics of social interactions between boarding house residents and the local community in Majene Regency, West Sulawesi. The growth of boarding houses as a consequence of the increasing number of incoming students has created a new social space that brings together diverse cultural backgrounds. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, this study explores the experiences of boarding house students, boarding house owners, and the local community in building social relationships, adapting to local norms, and managing potential conflicts. The results show that social interactions occur across a broad spectrum, ranging from associative forms such as accommodation and cooperation to dissociative forms such as controversy and value conflicts. Factors influencing the dynamics of interactions include cultural background, communication intensity, the role of boarding house managers, community leaders, and the duration of students' stay. Social capital in the form of networks, trust, and norms has proven to be an important instrument in facilitating student adaptation while strengthening social cohesion with the local community. This study confirms that boarding houses function not only as temporary housing but also as social institutions that play a role in the process of cultural and social integration in Majene. These findings contribute to the sociological study of social interaction and social capital and provide a basis for local policies to manage boarding houses more inclusively.

Keywords: *Social Interaction , Boarding House , Local Community .*

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of educational urbanization that has occurred in various regions in Indonesia over the past decade has resulted in significant social transformation in many cities and regencies that host higher education institutions. Majene Regency has solidified its position as the epicenter of education in West Sulawesi Province, particularly with the rapid development of West Sulawesi University and various other private universities. This transformation has triggered a massive wave of student migration, which has spatially resulted in the explosive growth of boarding houses as the primary housing provider (BPS Majene Regency, 2023). However, the transition from their home environment to a new area often poses psychosocial challenges for incoming students, ranging from *culture shock* to difficulties navigating different social and economic structures (Pratama & Fitriani, 2021). In this context, boarding houses are no longer simply physical entities for shelter, but rather become the first social arena where students must adapt without the direct support of their immediate families.

The growth of boarding houses in Majene is in line with the increasing number of students. Boarding houses are not just places to live, but also social spaces where students build networks, establish norms, and interact with the surrounding community. However, these interactions are not always smooth. Newcomers often face *culture shock*, differences in customs, and economic constraints that impact their adaptation process. Meanwhile, local communities have certain expectations of boarding students, both in terms of social contribution and adherence to local norms. Previous research has focused on boarding houses from an economic or architectural perspective (Damayanti et al., 2022). The interaction phenomenon in boarding houses is often overlooked, despite the dynamic exchange of social resources that is crucial for student survival (Hidayat & Sugianto, 2020). Furthermore, studies on the dynamics of social interactions between boarding house residents and the local community are also limited. Yet, these interactions are crucial for understanding how social capital forms and functions within the context of student

adaptation. Social capital, as proposed by Putnam (2000) and Coleman (1990), encompasses networks, trust, and norms that facilitate cooperation and solidarity. In the boarding house context, social capital can be a crucial instrument for students to survive and build integration with the local community. This research gap lies in the lack of studies that highlight boarding houses as a new social institution that plays a role in shaping the dynamics of interactions between students and the community. Ramli's (2022) research shows that the habitus of boarding students in Makassar is influenced by social capital formed through daily interactions. However, this research has not specifically addressed the relationship between boarding students and the local community. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the dynamics of social interactions in Majene. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, this research is expected to contribute to sociological studies, particularly regarding social interaction, social capital, and student adaptation in the local context. Furthermore, the results can inform educational and social policies in Majene to strengthen social cohesion between incoming students and the local community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Social Interaction

Social interaction is the primary foundation of social life. Soerjono Soekanto (in Ritzer, 2021) defines social interaction as dynamic social relationships involving relationships between individuals, between groups of people, and between individuals and groups of people. Social interaction can only occur if there is social contact and communication between the interacting parties. George Herbert Mead, in his theory of symbolic interactionism, emphasized that human interaction is mediated by symbols that have shared meaning. Individuals interact based on their interpretations of the symbols used by others, making the process of shared meaning-making key to understanding social relationships (Blumer, in Turner, 2022). In the context of boarding house residents and the local community, differences in the systems of symbols and meanings carried by each group can lead to miscommunication or even conflict. Park and Burgess (in Lofland et al., 2021) classify forms of social interaction into two main categories: associative interactions, which include cooperation, accommodation, and assimilation; and dissociative interactions, which include competition, controversy, and conflict. In this study, these two forms of interaction serve as an analytical framework for understanding the dynamics between boarding house residents and the local community in Majene.

B. Social Capital

The concept of social capital proposed by Putnam (2000) and Coleman (1990) emphasizes the importance of networks, trust, and norms in facilitating cooperation. Social capital can take the form of *bonding social capital* (close ties between individuals in a homogeneous group) or *bridging social capital* (networks connecting different groups). In the context of boarding houses, *bonding* occurs between boarding house residents, while *bridging* occurs between boarding students and the local community. Research by Damayanti et al. (2022) confirms that solidarity among boarding house residents can help students overcome economic and social difficulties. However, integration with the local community requires stronger *bridging social capital*.

C. Local Communities and Cultural Acculturation

The local community, as recipients of incoming visitors, plays a central role in determining the quality of interactions. Giddens (in Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2021), in his structuration theory, emphasizes that social structures not only constrain individual actions but also enable social transformation through everyday practices. In this regard, the norms and values of the Majene community, derived from Mandar traditions, serve as a structure that shapes patterns of interaction with boarding house residents. Rahmawati and Hidayat's (2023) research on cultural acculturation in urban Indonesia shows that the process of cultural adjustment between immigrants and local communities is influenced by four main strategies: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. The integration strategy is considered most conducive to social cohesion because it allows immigrants to maintain their original cultural identity while selectively adopting local cultural values. A comparative study conducted by Purnama et al. (2021) in several regions in Eastern Indonesia found that the level of harmony between migrants and local communities is largely determined by the extent to which local institutions, such as neighborhood associations (RT/RW), mosques, and traditional institutions, can function as communication bridges between the two groups. These findings provide a relevant context for research in Majene Regency, given the strong role of traditional social institutions in the lives of the Mandar people.

D. Boarding Houses as Social Institutions

In a sociological context, boarding houses are social spaces that bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds within a relatively confined residential environment. Hartomo and Aziz (in Wulandari & Pratama, 2022) describe boarding houses as semi-communal residential units with unique characteristics: residents share certain amenities while maintaining their individual privacy. This creates a unique form of sociality not found in other forms of housing. Susanto et al.'s (2023) research in university towns on Java found that boarding house residents tend to form relatively closed in-group communities, especially during the initial phase of placement. This phenomenon aligns with Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory, which states that individuals tend to categorize themselves into specific groups, which influences their perceptions of outgroups. However, the intensity of regular interactions can weaken these in-group and out-group boundaries over time. Boarding houses can be viewed as a new social institution that plays a role in shaping the dynamics of student interactions. Ramli's (2022) research in Makassar shows that the habitus of boarding students is formed through daily interactions, such as sharing food, borrowing items, and participating in communal activities. This demonstrates that boarding houses are not simply residences but also arenas for the formation of social capital and social adaptation. In the context of Majene, boarding houses have the potential to serve as a bridge between incoming students and the local community.

METHOD

This study uses a **qualitative approach with a phenomenological-descriptive design** to deeply understand the subjective experiences of incoming students in adapting to a new social environment in boarding houses in Majene Regency. The phenomenological approach was chosen because this study focuses on **the meaning of students' lived experiences** in building social relationships, obtaining social support, and adjusting to academic and social life in a new environment. The qualitative method allows researchers to comprehensively explore the dynamics of social interactions, friendship networks, and solidarity practices formed in the boarding house environment as a form of social capital in the student adaptation process (Creswell & Poth, 2021). The study was conducted in Majene Regency, West Sulawesi, known as an educational center with many universities. This location was chosen because of the high number of incoming students living in boarding houses, making interaction with the local community a significant social phenomenon.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Overview of Location and Characteristics of Informants

Majene Regency, a coastal region in West Sulawesi Province, has unique social characteristics: a mix of local communities with a strong Mandar cultural background and immigrant groups, predominantly students from various regions. The growth of the education sector in this region has driven an increase in the number of boarding houses as an alternative form of housing for students, ultimately creating new social spaces in community life. Based on the results of field research, boarding houses not only serve as temporary residences, but also serve as arenas for intense social interaction between boarding house residents and the local community. The informants in this study consisted of three main groups: incoming students, boarding house owners, and the surrounding community. The incoming students come from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including Bugis, Makassar, Toraja, and some from outside Sulawesi. Meanwhile, the local community is dominated by the Mandar ethnic group, who hold cultural values such as *sipamandaq* (social solidarity) and *sibaliparriq* (mutual cooperation). This heterogeneity is an important factor in shaping the dynamics of social interactions, which are not only influenced by differences in cultural background, but also by communication patterns, social norms, and the level of openness of each individual.

B. Social Interaction Patterns between Boarding House Residents and the Local Community

Observations and interviews show that interactions between boarding house residents and the local community in Majene Regency occur in various areas of daily life. The main interaction spaces identified include: the physical environment surrounding the boarding house (streets, food stalls), religious facilities (mosques and churches), traditional markets, and communal activities such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) and celebrations of major holidays. The intensity of interaction varies based on several factors. Boarding house residents from West Sulawesi or areas with cultural ties to the Mandar community tend to integrate more easily than those from outside Sulawesi. This finding aligns with research by Widodo et al. (2023), which found that cultural proximity is a significant predictor of acculturation and social integration. The identified interaction patterns can be classified into three categories based on their intensity and quality: surface interactions, which are formal and impersonal, such as greetings and salutations; functional interactions, which are based on practical needs, such as economic

transactions and emergency assistance; and deep interactions, which include friendship, shared participation in communal activities, and emotional support.

C. Forms of Associative and Dissociative Interaction

The most dominant associative interactions found in this study were accommodation and cooperation. Accommodation manifested itself through behavioral adjustments made by boarding house residents to local norms, such as adjusting entry and exit times to local customs, participating in neighborhood community activities, and respecting the surrounding community's prayer times. One boarding house resident from Makassar stated: "I have to adapt to the customs here. Where I used to stay out late at night, here I pay more attention to the prevailing norms so as not to disturb the residents." This statement reflects the active accommodation process undertaken by boarding house residents in response to normative pressures from the local community.

A prominent form of cooperation is found in the context of religious activities. Boarding house residents from various regions actively participate in activities at nearby mosques and churches, such as commemorations of Islamic holidays and services commemorating Christian holidays. This participation not only positively impacts local perceptions of boarding house residents but also serves as a cultural bridge that facilitates social integration. This finding is consistent with research by Fadhilah and Kurniawan (2022), which emphasizes the role of religious institutions as facilitators of social integration in urban Indonesian communities. In addition to associative forms, this study also identified several forms of dissociative interactions. Value conflicts were the most frequently occurring form, particularly related to lifestyle differences between boarding house residents, particularly students, and the local community, which upholds conservative Mandar traditional values.

The issues that most frequently caused tension included: (1) noise from nighttime activities of boarding house residents; (2) clothing behavior of female boarding house residents that was considered inappropriate to local norms; (3) excessive use of public spaces; and (4) lack of participation in communal activities. Local residents interviewed expressed discomfort with these behaviors, although most stated that they preferred resolution through informal communication channels rather than open confrontation. Controversy has also been identified in the form of gossip and reciprocal stereotyping between boarding house residents and local residents. Local residents sometimes generalize boarding house residents as "impolite" or "disrespectful of customs," while boarding house residents often complain about local residents being too "nosy." This stereotyping phenomenon is a mechanism for protecting group identity that, if left unmanaged, can worsen intergroup relations. group.

D. Factors Influencing the Dynamics of Interaction

This study identified five main factors that influence the dynamics of interactions between boarding house residents and the local community in Majene Regency. **First**, cultural background: boarding house residents from ethnic groups that share a similar culture or value system with the Mandar community show better adaptation skills. Meanwhile, boarding house residents from different backgrounds experience slightly more difficulty in adapting. **Second**, communication: the quality and intensity of communication between boarding house residents and local residents greatly determine the quality of the relationship. Boarding house residents who actively greet and communicate with local residents tend to receive better acceptance. **Third**, the role of boarding house managers: boarding house managers who act as mediators between residents and local residents have been shown to contribute significantly to preventing and resolving conflicts. Managers who proactively socialize local rules and norms to new residents have a positive impact on the quality of interactions. **Fourth**, the role of community leaders: community leaders, including RT/RW heads and religious leaders, play a crucial role as opinion leaders who can build or destroy positive perceptions of newcomer groups. **Fifth**, the duration of stay: boarding house residents who have stayed longer tend to have wider social networks with local residents and better adaptability.

Although social interactions are relatively harmonious, there are potential conflicts that can and have occurred. The most common conflict currently encountered concerns noise generated by boarding house residents. This is a common complaint from local residents living near the boarding houses. The noise is often caused by students who live in boarding houses gathering late into the night, playing dominoes, online games, and even karaoke together. These conflicts are generally resolved through a family-friendly approach, such as deliberation and direct communication. This demonstrates the strong social values within the local community. The findings of this study reinforce the theory of social capital, which states that trust, networks, and social norms are important factors in building social cohesion. Furthermore, this research also enriches the study of social and cultural integration by demonstrating that residential spaces such as boarding houses can be a crucial arena in this process. Overall, the dynamics of social interactions between boarding house residents and the local community in Majene Regency

demonstrate a complex yet harmonious pattern. The social adaptation of incoming students, supported by social capital and local wisdom, is a key factor in fostering cultural integration.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the dynamics of social interactions between boarding house residents and the local community in Majene Regency. Based on the data analysis, three main conclusions can be drawn. First, the social interactions between boarding house residents and the local community of Majene are multidimensional and encompass a broad spectrum, ranging from associative interactions in the form of accommodation and cooperation to dissociative interactions in the form of controversy and value conflict. The dominant form of interaction is accommodation, demonstrating the ability to adapt and negotiate between the two social groups, albeit at varying levels. Second, the dynamics of social interactions are significantly influenced by structural and cultural factors, including the cultural background of boarding house residents, the mediating role of boarding house managers and community leaders, the intensity of communication, and the length of stay. These factors operate interactively and cannot be understood in isolation.

Third, the presence of boarding houses and their residents has a dual impact on social cohesion: on the one hand, it encourages economic diversification and positive cultural exchange, but on the other hand, it has the potential to erode local social values if not managed properly. The achievement of social harmony depends heavily on the effectiveness of local institutions in facilitating dialogue and mediation between groups. This study recommends: (1) the formulation of regional regulations governing the existence of boarding houses by considering the socio-cultural aspects of the Mandar community; (2) the establishment of a communication forum between boarding house managers, residents, and community leaders as a means of conflict mediation; and (3) strengthening the role of RT/RW as institutions that facilitate social integration between newcomers and local residents. Further research using a quantitative approach to measure the level of social cohesion in a more measurable manner is highly recommended.

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