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Structuration of Multicultural Harmony in Semudun Village

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ABSTRACT
Harmony amid societal heterogeneity is often perceived as a natural condition, yet it is a social product continuously produced and reproduced through social practices. This study analyzes the structuration process of harmonious social practices in Semudun Village, Mempawah Regency, West Kalimantan, a village composed of Chinese and a mix of Malay, Madurese, Bugis, and Javanese ethnicities, and home to five distinct religions. The research question addresses how the duality of structure, comprising rules across three dimensions of signification, domination, and legitimation, as well as allocative and authoritative resources, shapes and reproduces the social practices of harmony. The literature gap addressed is the scarcity of sociological studies that fully employ Giddens' Structuration Theory to analyze harmony in multicultural rural Indonesia. Unlike previous descriptive studies, this study employs Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory as its primary analytical framework. This study adopted a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 15 key informants, participatory observation, and documentary study, and were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The findings reveal that the structure of signification operates through interpretive schemes and physical symbols that assign meaning to harmony, the structure of domination operates through allocative and authoritative resources distributed inclusively, and the structure of legitimation operates through three layers of norms: customary, religious, and formal. Local agents employ the dialectic of control to resolve personal conflicts and land disputes, while harmony is reproduced through recursive practices. The theoretical contribution of this study is to extend the application of Giddens' Structuration Theory to the context of multicultural rural Indonesia. The implication is that the structuration model of harmony in Semudun Village can be replicated for other multicultural villages in Indonesia.
Keywords: Structuration; Duality of Structure; Agency and Structure; Harmony Aware Village

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a nation composed of diverse ethnic groups, religions, and cultures that have lived side by side for hundreds of years. Although ethnic diversity has been documented through national population censuses, detailed ethnic composition data are not always available at the village level. Consequently, understanding multicultural relations in rural communities requires a qualitative examination of everyday social interactions, shared norms, and local practices. Because society is pluralistic, the colonial legal provisions on population classification and related legal rules (Articles 163 and 131 of the Indische Staatsregeling) are no longer relevant and even contradict the philosophical value of unity expressed in the third principle of Pancasila. Natasha (2018) argues that the colonial classification of the population may cause social problems because it fosters legal dualism, provokes division, and conflicts with the ideal of national unity.

Life in multicultural societies is often marked by horizontal conflict, a reminder that harmony is not an automatic condition but the result of social practices that are continuously produced and reproduced. The values of multiculturalism are not merely slogans; they are practiced in everyday life, both in communities and in institutions (Bafadal & Pratiwi, 2025). Amid the dominant narrative of conflict, there are success stories that have received little academic attention. One of them is Semudun Village, Sungai Kunyit District, Mempawah Regency, West Kalimantan. The village has a distinctive population composition, with ethnic Chinese residents and a mix of Malay, Madurese, Bugis, and Javanese residents who adhere to five different religions, and in 2020, it received the title of Harmony-Aware Village (Desa Sadar Kerukunan) from the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (Busrah, 2020).

Studies of interreligious harmony in Indonesia fall into two main approaches: social capital and descriptive-programmatic approaches. Fitriyanto et al. (2024), in a study of the Harmony-Aware Village of Ilir Kota, Kabupaten Sanggau, used Robert D. Putnam's social capital theory to explain the harmony between the congregations of the Al-Ikhlas Mosque and the Tri Dharma Temple, which stand side by side. They identified four pillars sustaining harmony: trust, social networks, social norms, and economic motives. Meanwhile, Tri Hasanah et al. examined the formation of a Desa Pancasila as a cultural identity in Desa Pasir Panjang, Kabupaten Mempawah, through a community service program aimed at strengthening Pancasila values and making the village a symbol of interreligious tolerance.

Both studies have limitations that open a research gap. First, Fitriyanto et al. (2024) used a social capital framework that describes what sustains harmony but does not explain how harmony is produced and reproduced through everyday social practice. Putnam's framework is static: it identifies the pillars of harmony but not the dialectical process between agents and structure. Second, S. U. Hasanah et al. (2021) is descriptive-programmatic; it describes programs and aspirations but does not analyze the social processes that sustain harmony. That study also took a community service approach, using lectures and discussions, rather than systematic sociological research. Third, no study has yet fully applied Anthony Giddens' structuration theory to analyze harmony in Desa Semudun.

Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory serves as the main analytical framework of this study. As explained by Röttger (2026), social structures both enable and constrain human actions while being continuously produced and reproduced through social practices. As discussed by Khasri (2021), this relationship operates through three interrelated dimensions: signification (interpretive schemes and shared meanings), domination (control over allocative and authoritative resources), and legitimation (normative rules and sanctions). This framework provides an analytical basis for understanding how multicultural harmony is continuously produced and reproduced through interactions between agents and social structures. Unlike previous studies by Fitriyanto et al. (2024), which focused on social capital, and S. U. Hasanah et al. (2021), which examined community-based programs, the present study applies Structuration Theory to explain the dynamic processes through which local agents maintain and negotiate multicultural harmony in Semudun Village.

Based on this background, the study poses three research questions. First, how does the duality of structure, comprising rules across the three dimensions of signification, domination, and legitimation together with

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allocative and authoritative resources, shape and reproduce the social practice of harmony in Desa Semudun? Second, how do local agents use available rules and resources through the dialectic of control to resolve problems, and how does this resolution, in turn, reinforce or modify the structure of legitimation? Third, how do local agents continuously reproduce the structuration of harmonious social practice in the face of the challenges of modernization?

To answer these questions, this study adopts a qualitative case study design and collects data through in-depth interviews with 15 key informants, participant observation, and documentary study. Specifically, the objectives are: first, to analyze the structuration process that shapes and reproduces harmonious social practice in Desa Semudun through the dialectical interaction between agency and structure across Giddens' three dimensions of structure; second, to analyze the role of local agents in using rules and resources reflexively (the dialectic of control) to resolve social problems; and third, to analyze the strategies for the sustained reproduction of harmonious practice in the face of modernization.

METHODS

Research Design and Sample

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to explore the structuration of harmonious social practice in Desa Semudun. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study aims to understand how and why harmony is produced and reproduced through the dialectical interaction of agency and structure, and to capture the complexity of social practices that cannot be reduced to numerical measurement. A case study design was chosen because the phenomenon is contemporary and bounded in a specific context: a multicultural village in Kalimantan Barat that has maintained harmony despite its heterogeneity.

The study was conducted in Desa Semudun, Sungai Kunyit District, Kabupaten Mempawah, Kalimantan Barat Province, Indonesia. The study population consisted of members of the Semudun community with in-depth knowledge and direct experience of harmony practices. Purposive sampling was used to recruit 15 key informants. Snowball sampling began with several key informants, who then recommended others who also met the criteria (Muksin et al., 2024). Residents were selected through random sampling to represent each hamlet: Indah, Permai, Sejahtera, and Lestari.

Informants were selected according to three criteria: (a) in-depth knowledge of harmony practices in Desa Semudun; (b) representation of various elements of the community, including the village government, customary leaders, religious leaders, residents, and security personnel; and (c) willingness to provide information voluntarily. The informants comprised the village head (1), hamlet heads (4), religious leaders (4), residents (5), and a police officer (1).

The main research instrument was a semi-structured interview guide designed to explore community members' experiences, focusing on harmony practices, conflict-resolution strategies, and decision-making in a multicultural village. The guide was built on Giddens' three dimensions of structure: (a) signification, with questions on the meaning of harmony, physical symbols, and interpretive schemes; (b) domination, with questions on allocative and authoritative resources; and (c) legitimation, with questions on customary, religious, and formal norms. In addition, the researchers used field notes for participant observation and a documentation guide to collect village documents, local news, and related publications.

Validity and reliability were maintained through source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation drew on interviews (15 informants from different elements of the community), participant observation, and documentary study, while technique triangulation compared data from these three methods. Member checking was carried out by confirming initial findings with key informants, and an audit trail was maintained through systematic recording of the entire research process to enable replication by other researchers.

Measures and Data Analysis

Data collection involved three techniques. First, in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face at participants' homes or the village office, lasting about 30–60 minutes per session, between June and July 2026.

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All interviews were recorded with the informants' permission and transcribed verbatim. Second, participant observation was carried out during everyday community activities, including cooperation (*gotong royong*), religious holiday celebrations, and village meetings. Third, the documentary study covered official village documents, local media reports, and academic publications related to Desa Semudun.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes in qualitative data, involving coding, grouping, and interpretation (Muksin et al., 2024). The analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. Data reduction was done manually by sorting relevant information from interview transcripts, field notes, and documents, then coding it according to themes derived from Giddens' framework: signification, domination, legitimation, the dialectic of control, and recursive practice. Data display organized the coded data into matrices mapping themes against informant categories and empirical evidence to identify patterns and relationships. For example, the matrix for the structure of signification maps how different informants (the village head, religious leaders, residents) interpret physical symbols such as the mosque and temple standing side by side. Conclusions were drawn by looking for patterns and relationships among themes and were then verified through source triangulation.

Ethical principles were observed, although the study involved no medical intervention or special treatment of human participants. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation. Confidentiality of research data was maintained through secure data storage. Informants who explicitly consented to being identified were acknowledged by name and institutional role, while the identities of other participants were protected through anonymization.

RESULTS

The study was conducted in Desa Semudun, Kabupaten Mempawah, Kalimantan Barat, which is regarded as an emblem of a Harmony-Aware Village. The location was chosen for several reasons. First, its distinctive ethnic composition, which is multi-ethnic and multi-religious, led to the Ministry of Religious Affairs' award of the title Harmony-Aware Village in 2020. Second, its high heterogeneity, with five religions and diverse ethnic communities, makes it an ideal social laboratory for examining Giddens' structuration theory in a multicultural rural context. This is evident in the data shown in Figure 1.

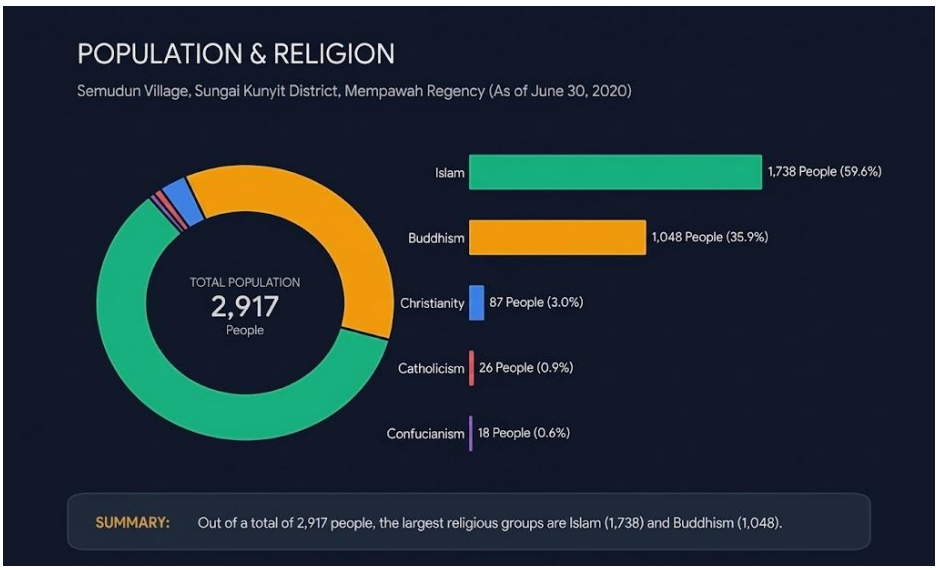


Figure 1. Population by number and religion

Source: (Dinas Komunikasi dan Informatika Provinsi Kalimantan Barat, 2020)

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Although Semudun Village is characterized by considerable religious and ethnic diversity, the interview evidence and documented incidents examined in this study did not identify interreligious conflict. The reported disputes were primarily associated with socioeconomic and administrative issues. According to a personal interview with the Sungai Kunyit Hulu police, "There has never been a case related to interreligious harmony in Semudun Village. The cases that do occur are usually unrelated to it" (Sungai Kunyit Sector Police, personal communication, 2026). The problems other than interreligious harmony are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of local events and issues in Semudun Village

Date	Main topic	Location	Parties involved	Brief description	News source
21 March 2020	Narcotics (methamphetamine)	Permai Dusun, Desa Semudun	AB (21), RO (20), RA (25), Sector Police	Raid on three young men consuming methamphetamine at a suspect's house.	(Dian, 2020)
19 September 2022	Profit-sharing default (fish pond)	Pond area, Desa Semudun	Pond owner and pond keeper	The pond keeper defaulted on profit-sharing because the income was used for urgent needs.	(MUKTI, 2022)
9 February 2024	Labor and economy (alleged monopoly)	Desa Semudun (PT Sigma project)	Residents, village head, SJB Cooperative, PT Sigma	Protest against the alleged monopoly of labor recruitment and subcontracting by the village head through the SJB Cooperative.	(Hamzah, 2024)
19 February 2025	Employment (management attitude)	Desa Sungai Dungun Office	Residents, personnel manager, security	Residents stormed the company over the personnel manager's arrogant attitude during mediation.	Tim Warta Pontianak 2 (2025)
28 April 2025	Infrastructure and drainage	Dusun Indah, Desa Semudun	Residents, PT Babe, village head, BPD, military personnel	Forced halt of a road project because blocking a natural watercourse risked flooding.	(redaktur, 2025)

Source: Online news outlets

As shown in Table 1, the documented incidents primarily concerned socioeconomic, employment, and infrastructure-related issues rather than interreligious disputes. These findings suggest that the main recorded sources of social tension in Semudun Village were not directly associated with religious differences.

The duality of structure in the formation and reproduction of the social practice of harmony in Semudun Village

The social practice of harmony in Semudun Village did not emerge naturally; it is reproduced through the actions (agency) of actors rooted in a structural order.

The structure of signification

The Nurul Jannah Mosque, the Tri Dharma Temple, and the church stand in one area and function as collective sacred symbols (Durkheim) that remind residents of the importance of living side by side. The head of Dusun Indah stated, "The main factor in the formation of Semudun as a Resilient Village (Desa Tangguh) is the high level of tolerance among religious and ethnic communities" (Imi, personal communication, 2026), adding that

Chinese residents and others live together peacefully without social barriers. Consequently, the mosque and the temple standing side by side do not disturb one another's worship.

The village head of Semudun reinforced this: "We respect one another, not only in worship but also in daily life. If religious events fall on the same day, they are held on different schedules, and we help each other with the community's religious activities" (Wahdah, personal communication, 2026). These statements show that the symbol is not only physical but also reproduced in everyday interactions and activities in the community.

The 1998 regional ethnic conflict in West Kalimantan is used by religious leaders as a cognitive frame to guide the actions of the present generation. "Many Madurese who were victims of the Sambas conflict eventually decided to move and settle in Semudun" (Wahdah, personal communication, 2026). This is a powerful reminder of the dangers of interethnic conflict, which cost not only material and non-material losses but also lives.

This illustrates Giddens' theory: agents' experience changes the perspective through which structure is enacted, so that rules, resources, and structures produced and reproduced adapt to Semudun's heterogeneous environment in ways that foster mutual respect. This reinforcement is directed not only at village and hamlet officials but also at local religious and ethnic leaders. An Islamic religious leader said, "Islamic religious leaders always remind the community to maintain good interreligious relations and to learn from past conflicts such as that of 1998 so that they are not repeated" (Hirin, personal communication, 2026). The reinforcement is produced not only by officials and authorities but is also continually reproduced in daily life through attitudes and behaviors of inter-ethnic and interreligious tolerance.

The structure of domination

Inclusive distribution of allocative resources

The Semudun village government allocates a budget for the major holidays of all religions without discrimination. Village funds are distributed to all religious communities in need of assistance for religious purposes. The village head explained, "The village government provides a budget for Islamic as well as Buddhist/Chinese religious holiday activities... There are also joint activities such as cooperation and community service to clean the mosque and the temple" (Wahdah, personal communication, 2026).

Besides village funds, self-organized humanitarian solidarity also operates, with non-Muslim and Muslim residents channeling goods, donations, and low-price markets to disadvantaged residents (Daniel, personal communication, 2026). This help is not limited to religious events, as another statement indicates: "Residents help one another not only at religious events but also in other matters. If there is a funeral or a cultural event, residents help each other both materially and non-materially. For example, when Chinese residents donate drinking water for the Prophet's Birthday celebration, Muslim residents give the same help for Cap Go Meh or vice versa" (Wahdah, personal communication, 2026).

Authoritative resources for collaborative security

The structure of domination does not operate unevenly in Semudun. Both majority and minority residents are facilitated according to their needs and involve one another. "During the Prophet's Birthday, Chinese/non-Muslim youths help keep security; conversely, during Cap Go Meh or Chinese New Year, Muslim residents together with *Babinsa/Bhabinkamtibmas* officers (village-level military and police community officers) are deployed to manage traffic" (Yuda, personal communication, 2026). This shows that domination is practiced not to oppress but to govern shared harmony.

The structure of legitimation

The structure of legitimation is the normative dimension of structuration theory, governing agents' actions through moral rules, values, and socially agreed habits. In community life, legitimation operates not only through formal legal regulation but is also deeply rooted in customary values and religious teachings that exert moral pressure on individuals. It determines the limits of sanctioned actions and of those regarded as violating social harmony. This subsection describes how local norms, customs, and shared pledges are transformed into a moral foundation that binds agents to maintain harmony and order in the village (Table 2).

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Table 2. The structure of legitimation in Semudun

No	Layer	Form	Example
1.	Customary norms	Deliberation to consensus (*musyawarah-mufakat*), "sitting together"	Family-style dispute settlement
2.	Religious teachings	Doctrine of mutual respect	Adjustment of worship schedules
3.	Formal rules	Ministry of Religious Affairs Decree 2020, Harmony Pledge 2023	Signing of the pledge by four religious leaders

Source: Authors (2026)

Normative tension is managed through gradual negotiation

When customary rules collide with positive law (for example, disputes over certified land), conflict is managed through tiered mediation: customary leaders, religious leaders, the village government, and then the police. The head of Dusun Lestari explained, "Disputes are resolved in stages... if the problem grows, the police are involved" (Musa, personal communication, 2026).

Dialectical interaction among the three dimensions of structure

The dialectical interaction among the three dimensions of structure in Giddens' structuration theory, namely signification (meaning), domination (control of resources), and legitimation (norms and sanctions), shows in detail that social order is not static and external to people but is continuously produced and reproduced through the interlinked social practices of local agents in everyday life. The first dialectical relation, *signification to legitimation*, explains how symbolic schemes of meaning shared by residents, such as the view that "the mosque and temple standing side by side are a symbol of the village's pride," act as a *moral frame* exerting strong external pressure, so that the community automatically perceives any action likely to damage peace and interreligious tolerance as a serious and intolerable violation of social norms.

The three dimensions of structure do not work separately but are interlinked (Table 3).

Table 3. Dialectical interaction among the three dimensions of structure

No.	Origin → destination	Form of dialectical interaction	Manifestation/field practice
1.	**Signification → Legitimation**	Symbolic meaning that exerts moral pressure on norms.	The meaning *"the mosque and temple side by side are the village's pride"* creates moral pressure, so that the damage to peace is seen as a violation of norms.
2.	**Domination → Legitimation**	Resource support (budget and authority) gives weight to rules.	The harmony pledge becomes meaningful and binding only if supported by budget allocation and clear coordination among officials.
3.	**Legitimation → Domination**	Recognition of norms and justice that authorizes the use of authority.	The village head's authority is recognized as legitimate by residents because it is exercised in accordance with the principles of deliberation and justice.

Source: Authors (2026)

The second dialectical relation, domination to legitimation, asserts that normative rules and shared harmony pledges would never have effective binding force in the field if they stood alone without the support of real resource mobilization. Control over allocative resources, in the form of village activity budgets, and the mobilization of authoritative resources through coordination with security officers are, therefore, crucial means that give material weight and real validity to harmony agreements, enabling them to be realized and obeyed in residents' daily practice.

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The third dialectical relation, legitimation to domination, shows that the use of power and authority by structural agents, such as the village head and community leaders, never occurs in a vacuum or relies solely on coercion. It requires moral recognition from the community, achieved when authority is exercised consistently in accordance with commonly agreed normative principles, such as deliberation for consensus (*musyawarah untuk mufakat*) and social justice. The validity of norms (legitimation) thus becomes the primary basis that both justifies and authorizes leadership (domination) to direct collective action. Overall, the dialectical integration of the three dimensions demonstrates Giddens' concept of the duality of structure, in which rules, meanings, and resources are both the medium and the outcome of local agents' actions. Through daily routines, religious rituals, and the handling of recurring crises, the harmonious order of village life is maintained, thereby broadening the sociological understanding that collective consciousness and social solidarity can grow and endure on the foundation of an aware heterogeneity.

The role of local agents in the dialectic of control

In Giddens' Structuration Theory, the dialectic of control refers to the capacity of subordinate actors to influence dominant actors by mobilizing available resources. In Semudun Village, this dynamic is reflected in the interactions among village authorities, customary leaders, religious leaders, and residents, who exercise different forms of agency in maintaining social harmony. Their roles demonstrate that power relations are not entirely one-directional but are continuously negotiated through social interaction, collective participation, and conflict-resolution practices. These interactions also contribute to the reproduction of social norms that underpin the legitimacy of local authority.

The village head as the principal agent

The village head acts as a key agent in resource mobilization and conflict mediation. The current village head of Semudun is Bu Wahdah, one of the key agents in managing the community. She stated:

> "My success in becoming village head, among three women leading villages in Kabupaten Mempawah, is a form of community support that enabled me to lead Desa Semudun. I was supported, among others, by residents of the hamlet where most are of Chinese descent, which proves that there is no difference in community life in Desa Semudun" (Wahdah, personal communication, 2026).

The village head's account suggests that community support for local leadership can extend across ethnic and religious boundaries. Such support contributes to the legitimacy of village authority and illustrates the importance of trust in maintaining inclusive local governance.

Customary leaders and deliberation

Customary leaders act as traditional agents with the legitimacy of cultural norms. Customary deliberation serves as a conflict-resolution forum that emphasizes restoring social relations rather than retributive sanctions. A Confucian religious leader explained, "Disputes are resolved through deliberation with community and religious leaders... so that the decisions taken are fair and acceptable to all parties" (Asyin, personal communication, 2026).

Religious leaders as guardians of moral values

Religious leaders are agents with an important role in community life. Their role is not limited to safeguarding moral and religious values; they serve three functions simultaneously. First, an educative function: instilling the doctrine of peace (Hirin, personal communication, 2026). Second, a coordinative function: communicating before activities to prevent schedule clashes (Asyin, personal communication, 2026). Third, a mediative function through the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB), the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), and the PPHTGD (Daniel, personal communication, 2026).

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Residents' participation in everyday practice

Residents routinely reproduce harmony through *recursive practices*: cooperation, cleaning of houses of worship across religions, voluntary community security, and the tradition of visiting. The head of Dusun Permai gave an example: "Non-Muslim residents come during Islamic holidays, and Muslim residents also attend Christmas celebrations or other religious activities" (Abidin, personal communication, 2026).

The dialectic of control in facing conflict

In Semudun Village, power relations are shaped by the distribution of authoritative and allocative resources among different social groups. The village government and Malay customary leaders exercise authoritative resources through institutional leadership and customary recognition, while members of the ethnic Chinese community participate in economic activities associated with allocative resources. Based on population data as of 30 June 2020, Muslims constitute the largest religious group, accounting for 1,738 people (59.58%). Meanwhile, the presence of Malay, Chinese, Madurese, Bugis, and Javanese ethnic communities reflects the multicultural composition of Semudun Village, as identified through qualitative fieldwork.

From the perspective of Giddens' Structuration Theory, power is not entirely concentrated in dominant actors, as subordinate groups retain the capacity to influence existing power relations through the dialectic of control. In Semudun Village, the Madurese, Bugis, and Javanese communities are discussed in relation to employment in the labor, agricultural, and fisheries sectors. Their potential influence is associated with informal resources, including internal solidarity, kinship networks established through interethnic marriages, moral pressure, and access to religious institutions such as the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB). These resources provide opportunities for subordinate groups to communicate grievances, negotiate competing interests, and participate in conflict-resolution processes without necessarily relying on formal institutional authority.

More importantly, these practices can be understood as mechanisms through which subordinate agency interacts with the structure of legitimation. In Giddens' framework, legitimation refers to the normative rules and sanctions through which social conduct is evaluated and regulated. When members of subordinate groups express their concerns through kinship networks, religious institutions, or customary deliberation, they may influence how dominant actors interpret and apply existing social norms. For example, the customary practice of *musyawarah mufakat* (deliberation to reach consensus), used in Semudun Village to resolve disputes, provides a normative framework for considering diverse community interests. The continued use of such mechanisms reinforces the expectation that conflict resolution should be based on fairness, mutual respect, and collective agreement rather than unilateral decisions by dominant authorities.

The relationship between subordinate agency and legitimation is therefore recursive. On the one hand, subordinate groups reproduce existing norms by participating in established mechanisms of deliberation and mediation. On the other hand, their participation creates opportunities for these norms to be reinterpreted in response to diverse social interests. When expectations of fairness, inclusion, and mutual recognition are repeatedly expressed and accommodated, they may gradually become more firmly embedded in the normative principles governing village leadership and conflict resolution. In this process, the legitimacy of local authority depends not only on formal institutional positions or economic resources but also on the recognition and acceptance of its decisions by different ethnic communities.

This dynamic illustrates how the dialectic of control can contribute to the potential transformation of the structure of legitimation over time. Rather than simply accepting established power relations, subordinate actors can participate in negotiating the normative expectations that guide social interactions. Consequently, multicultural harmony in Semudun Village can be interpreted as an ongoing process in which dominant and subordinate groups jointly reproduce existing social norms while creating possibilities for their gradual adjustment. Nevertheless, because this study does not provide longitudinal evidence of changes in normative arrangements, the analysis identifies mechanisms of potential structural transformation rather than establishing that such transformation has already occurred.

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Agents' reflexivity as the key to sustainability

All agents engage in *reflexive monitoring of action* (Röttger, 2026). The village head evaluates policy through monthly coordination meetings; religious leaders critically reflect on their sermons to keep them inclusive; and residents adjust the volume of music during prayer times. The sustainability of the harmonious social order in Semudun is determined by this continuous monitoring by all local agents. As Röttger (2026) formulated, agents do not act like passive mechanics but consciously evaluate and adjust their actions. This reflexive awareness bridges *practical consciousness*, the spontaneous knowledge lived in daily routines, such as stopping music when the call to prayer sounds, and *discursive consciousness*, the agent's ability to articulate the rational reasons behind the action (for example, when residents explain, *"because we respect neighbors who are worshipping"*). Through the integration of these two levels of consciousness, agents' reflexivity transforms the norm of harmony from an automatic habit into a consciously held and sustainably maintained value choice (Bafadal & Pratiwi, 2025; Busrah, 2020).

Through continuous reflexive monitoring, local agents not only reproduce established practices of tolerance but also create opportunities to reassess and adjust the normative expectations governing social interactions. In this sense, reflexivity connects everyday practices of harmony with the ongoing reproduction and potential transformation of the structure of legitimation, particularly when different ethnic communities participate in negotiating socially acceptable forms of conduct and conflict resolution.

The reproduction of harmony and its sustainability strategies

Recursive practices and the reproduction of structure

Giddens asserts that most social action is based on routine (*routinization*). In Semudun, there are three mechanisms of structural reproduction: annual rituals, daily routines, and crisis cycles.

Strategies for adapting to modernization

Modernization brings the challenge of eroding solidarity among the younger generation. Local agents respond with three strategies. First, internalizing the value of tolerance through religious, sports, and cultural arts activities (Daniel, personal communication, 2026). Second, engineering cross-generational spaces of interaction: interreligious youth are involved in holiday committees and security teams (Yuda, personal communication, 2026). Third, adapting communication technology, using social media and WhatsApp groups to spread narratives of harmony.

Challenges and sustainability

Structural challenges. First, technological disruption: provocative content or identity politics on social media. Second, population mobility: newcomers have not yet internalized local norms. Third, commercialization, individualism, and economic competition may trigger envy.

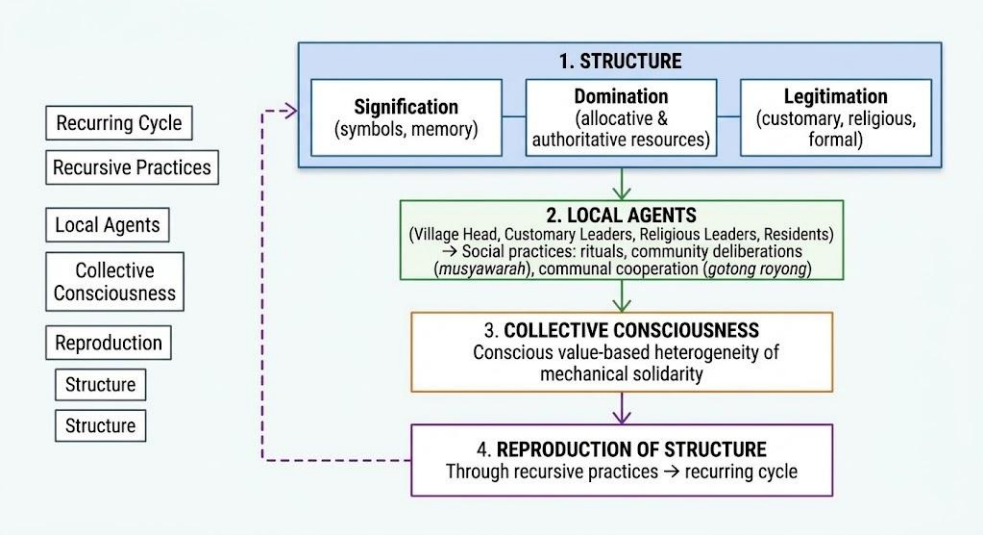
Specific obstacles. First, economic and educational conditions: economic hardship triggers petty crime that may be misread as ethnic conflict (Daniel, personal communication, 2026). Second, dependence on key actors: mediation relies on the charisma of senior figures, and regeneration has not proceeded systematically.

Recommendations for strengthening. First, formal institutionalization through a Village Regulation on Harmony (*Perdes Kerukunan*) so that harmony does not depend on the tenure of a particular village head. Second, inclusive economic empowerment by integrating harmony programs with inclusive village-owned enterprises (BUMDes), and third, formalizing the training of young mediators through a Youth FKUB or an inclusive Karang Taruna (village youth organization).

A theoretical model of harmony in Semudun Village

Based on the findings, the proposed theoretical model integrates Giddens' structuration theory and Durkheim's theory of mechanical solidarity (Figure 2).

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Source: Researcher (2026)

Figure 2. Theoretical model of harmony in Semudun Village

DISCUSSION

The findings show that harmony in Desa Semudun is not a natural condition that arises on its own but a social product continuously produced and reproduced through the social practices of agents. This interpretation rests on three interrelated main findings, all read through Anthony Giddens' structuration theory.

First, the duality of structure operates dialectically to shape harmonious social practice, in the sense that structure is both the medium and the outcome of social action, while agency simultaneously reproduces and can transform those structural conditions (Lippuner & Werlen, 2009; Whitbred et al., 2011). The structure of signification operates through physical symbols (the Nurul Jannah Mosque, the Tri Dharma Temple) and the collective memory of the 1998 conflict, which serves as a cognitive frame (Licata & Mercy, 2015; Bruyneel, 2014). The structure of domination operates through the inclusive, rather than repressive, distribution of allocative and authoritative resources. The structure of legitimation operates through three layers of norms: customary, religious, and formal. The three do not work separately but reinforce one another. The meaning of harmony, built symbolically, exerts moral pressure for legitimation; legitimation is meaningful only if supported by resource allocation, and authoritative power is recognized as legitimate because it is exercised in accordance with agreed-upon norms.

Second, local agents exercise the dialectic of control by strategically mobilizing available resources to negotiate power relations and maintain social harmony. In Semudun Village, the village head, customary leaders, religious leaders, and residents act as reflexive agents who utilize social norms, institutional authority, and informal networks to prevent interpersonal and socioeconomic disputes from escalating into ethnic or religious conflicts. The gradual conflict-resolution mechanism, involving customary leaders, religious leaders, village authorities, and, when necessary, the police, demonstrates how social actors reproduce the existing structure of legitimation through deliberation, negotiation, and collective agreement. This finding is consistent with Amal (2020), who highlights the importance of deliberative mechanisms in conflict resolution.

More critically, Giddens' dialectic of control demonstrates that subordinate groups are not merely passive recipients of rules established by dominant actors but possess the capacity to influence the conditions under which authority is exercised. In Semudun Village, the Madurese, Bugis, and Javanese communities mobilize informal resources, including internal solidarity, kinship networks established through interethnic marriages, moral pressure, and access to religious institutions such as the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB). These

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resources provide opportunities for subordinate groups to express grievances, negotiate competing interests, and seek recognition within existing decision-making processes. Through these interactions, the authority of dominant actors becomes dependent not only on their formal positions or control over economic resources but also on their ability to accommodate the interests and expectations of different ethnic communities.

The relationship between these practices and the structure of legitimation can be understood through the recursive relationship between agency and structure. When subordinate groups participate in deliberation, and their concerns are accommodated through socially accepted conflict-resolution mechanisms, they contribute to the reproduction of customary, religious, and formal norms that emphasize mutual respect, fairness, and collective responsibility. At the same time, such negotiations create opportunities for these norms to be reinterpreted and adjusted to accommodate the interests of different ethnic groups. In this sense, the dialectic of control may gradually reshape the structure of legitimation by strengthening the expectation that legitimate authority must be exercised inclusively and that conflict resolution should involve recognition of diverse community interests. Thus, multicultural harmony in Semudun Village is not maintained solely through compliance with established rules but through continuous negotiation in which both dominant and subordinate actors participate in reproducing and potentially transforming the normative foundations of social order. This interpretation extends the application of Giddens' Structuration Theory by demonstrating how informal resources and everyday negotiations can connect subordinate agency with the reproduction and potential transformation of legitimation structures. However, because the present study does not longitudinally trace changes in village norms, these findings should be understood as evidence of mechanisms through which legitimation may evolve rather than definitive proof of long-term structural transformation.

Third, harmony is reproduced through three mechanisms: annual rituals, daily routines, and crisis cycles. Through repetition over a long span of time (*time-space distanciation*), harmony becomes an external, coercive, and intergenerationally transmitted social fact; this interpretation is reinforced by studies showing that interreligious coexistence is reproduced through recurring rituals, communal participation, and everyday practices such as traditional ceremonies, gotong royong, and shared festivities (Pajarianto et al., 2022; Jamal et al., 2025; Huda et al., 2025; Erawadi & Setiadi, 2024). This finding yields a novel contribution: a collective consciousness based on the value of aware heterogeneity, namely a consciousness grounded not in shared religion or ethnicity but in a shared normative conviction that heterogeneity must be preserved. Existing studies come close through ideas of collective consciousness, togetherness, acceptance of difference, and sustainable pluralism (Setinawati et al., 2025; Jamal et al., 2025), but they do not explicitly formulate aware heterogeneity as a distinct concept; this is the theoretical gap that the present study addresses.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings can be compared with several earlier studies of harmony in Indonesia

Fitriyanto et al. (2024), in a study of the Harmony-Aware Village of Ilir Kota, Kabupaten Sanggau, applied Robert D. Putnam's social capital theory and identified four pillars that sustain harmony: trust, social networks, social norms, and economic motives. That study could describe what sustains harmony, but did not explain how harmony is produced and reproduced through everyday social practice. Putnam's framework is static because it identifies the pillars of harmony without explaining the dialectical process between agent and structure. By contrast, this study shows that harmony in Desa Semudun is not merely the result of existing pillars of social capital but the product of an ongoing structuration process. Physical symbols, collective memory, and recursive practices are the mechanisms that explain how such social capital is reproduced from one generation to the next.

S. U. Hasanah et al. (2021) examined the formation of a Desa Pancasila as a cultural identity in Desa Pasir Panjang, Mempawah Regency, through community service activities. That study is descriptive-programmatic because it describes programs and aspirations without analyzing the social processes that sustain harmony. It took a community service approach, using lectures and discussions, rather than systematic sociological research. The context of Pasir Panjang also differs from that of Semudun, which has an ethnic Chinese

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population and five religions. This study fills that gap by analyzing the structuration process that sustains harmony in Semudun rather than merely describing its programs.

Thus, this study extends the application of Giddens' structuration theory to the multicultural rural context of Indonesia. Unlike earlier studies that were descriptive or used a social capital framework, it uses the concepts of the duality of structure, the three dimensions of structure (signification, domination, legitimation), the dialectic of control, and recursive practice to explain how harmony is produced and reproduced. The findings are also consistent with Bafadal & Pratiwi (2025), who showed that multiculturalism is practiced through inclusive policy and symbolic interaction in daily life, and that collective identity is a social product continuously formed through interaction.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study shows that harmony in Desa Semudun is a social product sustained by a continuing process of structuration. Signification, domination, and legitimation reinforce one another dialectically; local agents use rules and resources reflexively through the dialectic of control; and recursive practices reproduce harmony across generations. The following implications follow from these findings. This study offers two main theoretical implications within the framework of Giddens' structuration theory.

First, it extends the application of Giddens' structuration theory. The findings show that the duality of structure can work effectively in a heterogeneous society, provided there is a shared moral commitment to the values of harmony. Structure need not be based on shared ethnicity or religion; it can be based on shared values in managing difference. This enriches the understanding of the conditions under which structure is simultaneously enabling and constraining.

Second, it enriches the concept of the *dialectic of control*. The findings show that the dialectic of control operates not only vertically between superior and subordinate parties but also horizontally through kinship networks, internal solidarity, and institutional access such as the FKUB. Subordinate agents are not passive but reflexively use available resources to ensure that village policy remains inclusive. This broadens understanding of how power is distributed and negotiated in everyday social practice.

Managerial Implications

This study has several managerial implications for stakeholders

First, for the Desa Semudun Government. The current success of harmony still depends on the charisma and authority of senior figures. If agents are not trained systematically, leadership succession may leave a vacuum in mediation authority. It is therefore necessary to formalize the training of young mediators through bodies such as a Youth FKUB or an inclusive Karang Taruna.

Second, for the Kabupaten Mempawah Government and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The Harmony-Aware Village program should be strengthened through formal institutionalization, for example, a Village Regulation on Harmony, so that it does not depend on the tenure of a particular village head. It also needs to be integrated with inclusive economic empowerment, such as inclusive BUMDes or entrepreneurship assistance for interreligious youth, to address the root problem of economic backwardness that may trigger social friction.

Third, for other multicultural villages in Indonesia. The Semudun model of harmony may offer adaptable lessons for other multicultural villages in Indonesia. Its underlying principles, including inclusive social structures, reflexive agency, and recurring practices of cooperation, may be adapted according to the social, cultural, and economic characteristics of each community. The key to its success is the combination of inclusive structures, reflexive agents, and recurring social practices. Other villages can adopt these principles according to their own social, cultural, and economic conditions.

Fourth, for the Semudun community. The practice of harmony, which has run for more than 30 years, needs to be continually maintained and passed on to the next generation. The challenges of modernization, such as technological disruption and population mobility, demand adaptation without sacrificing the basic values that

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define the village's identity. Agents' reflexivity, both individual and collective, is the key to the sustainability of harmony.

Limitations and Future Research

This study should be read in light of several limitations. First, because it relies on a qualitative, context-specific design focused on Desa Semudun, the findings are better understood in terms of *transferability* than in terms of broad statistical generalization (Maxwell, 2021). The analysis offers an in-depth account of how harmony is produced through structuration in this setting. However, the same configuration of signification, domination, legitimation, and recursive practice may not operate in the same way in other villages or multicultural communities. Second, the study captures harmony as a socially reproduced process at a particular moment in time; it therefore cannot fully trace how these practices are sustained, contested, or transformed across generations through longer-term social change (Petrescu-Mag et al., 2024).

Future research can extend this work in several directions. Comparative studies across villages, regions, or other multicultural settings would help identify the boundary conditions of the structuration processes observed here and clarify which elements are context-specific and which are more transferable (Maxwell, 2021). Longitudinal designs would also be valuable for examining how harmony is reproduced, negotiated, or disrupted over time (Petrescu-Mag et al., 2024). In addition, mixed-methods approaches could complement the present qualitative analysis by combining in-depth interpretation with broader pattern identification, thereby strengthening explanation and inference while remaining attentive to the philosophical and design challenges involved in integrating methods (Reis et al., 2022).

DECLARATIONS

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the authors, who have verified the accuracy of all information generated with AI assistance and ensured that there is no element of plagiarism.

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