



## **SOCIAL SEGREGATION AND COLLECTIVE TRAUMA AFTER ETHNIC CONFLICT: A CASE STUDY OF THE SAMBAS MALAY COMMUNITY, WEST KALIMANTAN**

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**Abstract.** Previous studies on post-conflict ethnic relations in Sambas have largely focused on patterns of violence and reconciliation, yet limited attention has been given to how collective trauma shapes long-term social segregation and everyday citizenship practices across generations. Addressing this gap, this study examines the dynamics of social segregation and diversity within the Malay community in Sambas Regency, West Kalimantan, with particular emphasis on intergenerational differences in post-conflict social interaction. This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing literature review, field observations, and in-depth interviews with members of both older and younger generations of the Malay community. The findings indicate that collective trauma among the older generation significantly reinforces social boundaries and residential segregation as a protective mechanism in post-conflict settings. In contrast, the younger generation tends to demonstrate greater openness toward interethnic interaction, although certain social boundaries are still maintained as part of prevailing communal norms. These findings suggest that post-conflict diversity in Sambas is negotiated through a dynamic balance between caution and coexistence, rather than leading to full social integration. This study contributes to the literature by offering an intergenerational perspective on post-conflict social dynamics and by reframing social segregation not merely as a form of ethnic prejudice, but as an adaptive response shaped by collective trauma. Furthermore, it highlights the role of Civic and Pancasila Education in fostering critical civic awareness to support sustainable social reconciliation and the strengthening of diversity in post-conflict societies.

Keywords: Civic education; collective trauma; diversity; post-conflict society; social segregation

### **Introduction**

Ethnic conflict in West Kalimantan has been part of the social historical dynamics of this region since the colonial period, with records of events that have occurred at least since 1933 (Arkanudin, 2019). A series of conflicts between 1962 and 1999 shows the intensity and complexity of ethnic problems in the region, including fourteen major conflicts involving Dayak, Madura, Chinese, and Malay ethnic groups (König, 2016; Suprpto, 2018). Among these, the Malay-Madura conflict in Sambas in 1999 became one of the most impactful events, leaving long-term social and psychological consequences in the form of collective trauma (Eka Jaya, 2019).

The conflict emerged from accumulated social tensions. Initially, relations between the Malay and Madura communities were relatively harmonious, particularly during the early arrival of the Madura community in the 1970s. However, socio-economic competition, especially in economic sectors and land control, gradually triggered social

jealousy and tension (Kurniawan & Miftah, 2021; Ekawarna, 2018). From the perspective of conflict theory, this condition reflects inequality in resource distribution that contributes to intergroup tension and social distance.

The 1999 violence left deep trauma within the Malay community, not only for those who directly experienced the conflict but also for subsequent generations through collective memory and social narratives (Wahab, 2017). Although physical conflict has ended, social boundaries between ethnic groups persist in everyday life, indicating that post-conflict conditions are still shaped by psychological and emotional residues. In the context of Indonesia's diversity, this condition presents challenges to the realization of inclusive social relations based on the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Nurhidayati & Suharno, 2025). Previous studies have largely examined the causes of conflict and reconciliation processes; however, these studies tend to focus on structural factors and short-term recovery, and have not sufficiently explained how collective trauma operates across generations in shaping social segregation and everyday interethnic interaction in post-conflict contexts (Galtung, 2008).

This limitation indicates that there is still a lack of understanding regarding the role of intergenerational dynamics in maintaining social boundaries after conflict. Therefore, this research becomes important to explain how post-conflict social relations are not only influenced by past events, but also by the transmission of trauma, values, and collective memory within the community. Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze how collective trauma influences social segregation and diversity within the Malay community in Sambas. The research specifically addresses the following questions: (1) how does collective trauma shape social boundaries in post-conflict society, and (2) how do intergenerational differences influence patterns of interethnic interaction. This research employs a qualitative approach through literature study, field observation, and in-depth interviews with informants from different generations. This study contributes by providing an intergenerational perspective on post-conflict social dynamics and by positioning social segregation as an adaptive response shaped by collective trauma, rather than solely as a form of ethnic prejudice (Ashutosh Varshney, 2002; Johan Galtung, 1990). In this way, this research adds to previous studies by explaining the relationship between trauma, social norms, and intergenerational processes in maintaining post-conflict social segregation.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore social segregation and the dynamics of diversity in a post-conflict context. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate as the research aims to understand social experiences, collective trauma, and meanings constructed by the community based on lived experiences following the 1999 ethnic conflict in Sambas Regency, West Kalimantan. The research was conducted over a period of four months (John W. Creswell, 2014; Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln, 2011)

### **Research Context and Unit of Analysis**

The research was conducted in Sambas Regency, West Kalimantan, Indonesia, an area that experienced an ethnic conflict between the Malay and Madurese communities in 1999. The unit of analysis in this study was the Malay community in Sambas, particularly focusing on social relations, attitudes toward interethnic interaction, and the interpretation of diversity in post-conflict daily life.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Data were collected using three main techniques: literature review, field observation, and in-depth interviews (Steinar Kvale, 2009). The literature review was conducted to examine previous studies related to ethnic conflict, collective trauma, social segregation, and diversity in post-conflict societies. Field observations were carried out to identify patterns of social interaction and community practices related to interethnic relations. In-depth interviews were conducted with members of the Malay community, including both older and younger generations, to capture generational differences in perceptions and experiences related to the post-conflict situation. A total of 24 informants participated in this study. Each interview lasted approximately 45-90 minutes, allowing for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives.

### **Selection of Informants**

Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research objectives (Michael Quinn Patton, 2002). The criteria included (1) individuals who experienced or were directly affected by the 1999 conflict and (2) younger community members who did not directly experience the conflict but were influenced by collective memory transmitted within the community. This selection enabled a comparative analysis of generational perspectives on trauma, segregation, and diversity.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts and observational notes were systematically coded to identify recurring themes related to collective trauma, social boundaries, interethnic relations, and diversity practices. The analysis involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to ensure a coherent interpretation of the findings (Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke, 2006).

### **Data Validity**

To ensure data validity and reliability, this study employed triangulation of data sources and methods (Norman K. Denzin, 1978). Findings from interviews were cross-checked with observational data and existing literature to strengthen the credibility of the analysis and minimize researcher bias.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were carefully maintained throughout the research process (World Health Organization, 2011). All informants participated voluntarily and were informed about the purpose of the study prior to data collection. Informed consent was obtained before conducting interviews, and participants' identities were kept confidential to ensure anonymity and protect their privacy. Participants were also given the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

## **Research Result**

*Early Malay-Madura Ethnic Ming in Sambas*

The research results show that the presence of the Madura ethnic group in Sambas Regency began with migration processes around the 1930s, primarily driven by economic motives. Their roles as traders, laborers, and agricultural workers alongside the Malay community indicate that early interethnic relations were relatively accommodative and based on shared economic interests (Jamie S. Davidson, 2008; Arkanudin, 2015).. Since the 1970s, the increase in Madurese migration strengthened patterns of social interaction that were supported by religious closeness, economic cooperation, and everyday contact. However, the findings also indicate the emergence of subjective perceptions among some Malay community members regarding the character of the Madurese. Although these perceptions did not lead to open conflict, they reflect latent tensions that were embedded within social relations and later became an important background in understanding the escalation of conflict (Davidson, 2008; Arkanudin, 2015).



Picture 1. Historical evidence of the 1999 war, bloody ketupat monument

### *Malay-Madura Ethnic Conflict in 1999*

The findings reveal that the conflict in January 1999 represents the accumulation of unresolved tensions rather than a purely spontaneous event (Atem, 2022). The triggering incident functioned as a catalyst that accelerated the breakdown of interethnic relations. The rapid spread of violence indicates that social control mechanisms had weakened and that trust between groups had significantly declined.

The emergence of assumptions regarding the violation of prior agreements further intensified group-based tensions, showing how perceptions and collective interpretations contributed to escalation (Fahham, 2005). Institutional responses from the government and the Sambas Sultanate demonstrate efforts toward conflict resolution, but their limited acceptance suggests that formal mechanisms were not sufficient to address deeper social and psychological conditions. The relocation policy for the Madurese community reduced open violence, but at the same time reflects that conflict resolution was achieved through separation rather than integration.

### ***Collective Trauma as Social Control***

The findings show that post-conflict social restrictions toward the Madurese ethnic group are closely related to collective trauma experienced by the Malay community. Trauma does not only remain as memory, but functions as a basis for maintaining social boundaries, particularly in restricting permanent settlement (Eka Jaya, 2019). The absence of Madurese settlements in Sambas indicates that these boundaries are strongly maintained through informal mechanisms. These restrictions do not eliminate interaction entirely, but limit it to specific contexts such as economic and social activities. This shows that social relations are controlled rather than fully open, where stability and conflict avoidance become primary considerations. The persistence of these restrictions also indicates that reconciliation efforts have not fully addressed community-level concerns, especially regarding security and trust.

### ***Intergenerational Transmission of Fear***

The research results indicate that trauma remains a significant factor, particularly among the older generation who directly experienced the conflict. Feelings of fear and caution continue to shape their attitudes in interethnic interaction, reflecting the long-term psychological impact of violence. At the same time, the younger generation shows a more open attitude toward interethnic relations. However, this openness is not fully independent, as it is still influenced by values, norms, and boundaries inherited from the older generation. This condition indicates that trauma is transmitted across generations, not in the form of direct experience, but through socialization processes within the family and community. As a result, post-conflict social relations are characterized by both continuity and change, where openness begins to develop but remains within existing social boundaries.

### ***Conditional Reconciliation***

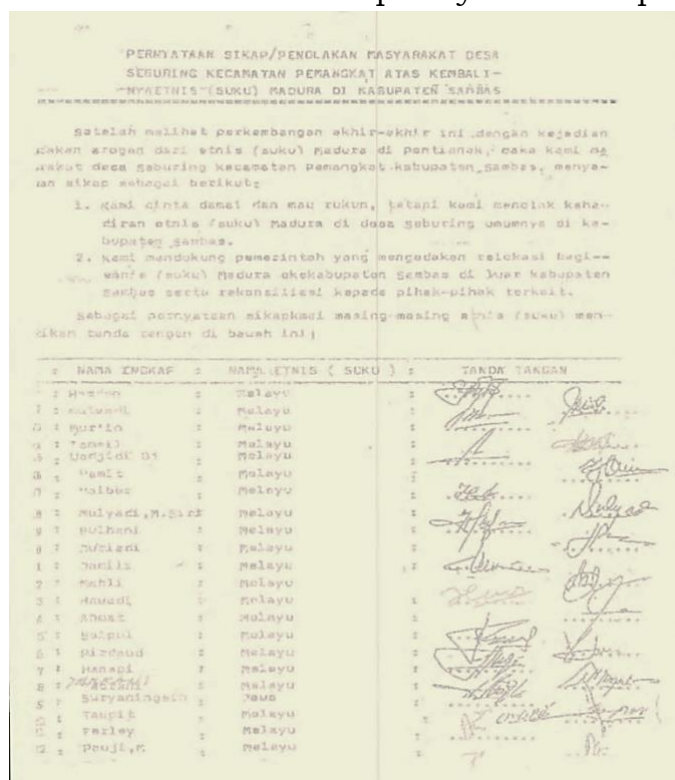
The findings show that interethnic relations between Malays and Madura in Sambas reflect a pattern of conditional reconciliation (Bayu Bestari, Amrazi Zakzo, 2022). Social interaction has resumed in certain forms, indicating that open conflict has subsided. However, this reconciliation is limited and does not lead to full acceptance, particularly regarding the return and resettlement of the Madurese ethnic group. This condition shows that post-conflict social relations are not fully integrative, but are maintained through coexistence with clear boundaries. Differences between institutional reconciliation efforts and community-level attitudes further indicate that reconciliation processes are uneven and influenced by collective memory and social trust.

## **Discussion**

The Malay-Madura ethnic conflict in Sambas Regency in 1999 started from a local incident in Parit Setia Village, Jawai District, in early January 1999. However, this incident cannot be positioned as the main cause, but rather as a trigger that accelerated tensions that had previously accumulated in interethnic relations (Nova, 2023). From the perspective of social conflict theory, this condition reflects latent conflict driven by inequality, competition, and weakening intergroup trust. The rapid escalation of violence indicates that social control mechanisms had weakened and that relations between groups were already in a fragile condition (van Klinken, 2007).

The relocation policy implemented by the government functioned as an effort to stop violence in the short term (Suprpto, 2018; Ulum, 2013). Analytically, this policy also reflects a pattern of conflict resolution through separation rather than integration, which later contributed to the persistence of social segregation in the post-conflict period. The conflict not only caused physical damage, but also produced long-term social consequences in the form of collective trauma, the disconnection of interethnic relations, and the formation of social restrictions.

The sustainability of social segregation towards the Madura ethnic group in Sambas Regency is closely related to collective beliefs formed after the conflict. These beliefs are manifested in an unwritten social agreement that limits the return and settlement of the Madura community. From the perspective of social segregation theory, this condition reflects boundary maintenance, where social groups actively construct and preserve social distance as a mechanism to maintain security and group cohesion (Hechter, 2021). In this study, segregation is not manifested in total exclusion, but in the form of controlled interaction. Interethnic relations continue in certain contexts such as economic cooperation, visits, and religious activities, indicating that segregation operates as an adaptive mechanism rather than purely as ethnic prejudice.



Picture 2. Document archive. Malay ethnic agreement

These unwritten agreements have strong normative power because they are supported by community norms and the authority of traditional and community leaders. This shows that in post-conflict societies, social order is often maintained not only through formal regulations, but also through informal agreements that are collectively believed and continuously reproduced. Compared to previous studies, this finding emphasizes that segregation in Sambas is sustained through collective memory and

social consensus, not solely through structural factors (Mochtar, 2019; Davidson, 2008).

The trauma experienced by the Malay community, especially the older generation, plays a central role in shaping post-conflict social relations. Referring to Volkan's concept of collective trauma, past experiences of violence are transformed into shared group memory that influences long-term intergroup attitudes (Aydin, 2017). In this study, trauma is not always expressed emotionally, but is manifested in cautious attitudes, social vigilance, and resistance toward full reintegration. This explains why the older generation is not ready to accept the Madura ethnic group to resettle, even though limited forms of social interaction have resumed (Khapova, 2019).

This trauma is also transmitted across generations. The younger generation, although not directly experiencing the conflict, still internalizes social boundaries through family and community narratives (Mengyao, 2023). From the perspective of political socialization, this indicates that attitudes toward other groups are shaped not only by direct experience, but also by inherited values and collective memory. However, this study also shows a shift, where the younger generation tends to be more open and inclusive in interethnic interaction. This openness reflects broader social exposure and the absence of direct traumatic experience, although it has not been able to fully eliminate existing social restrictions.

The current relationship between the Malay and Madura communities in Sambas shows a pattern of improvement, particularly at the interpersonal level. Social interaction such as visits, cooperation, and social activities has re-emerged, indicating a decrease in overt conflict. This improvement does not lead to full social integration, especially regarding permanent settlement. This condition can be understood as a form of conditional reconciliation, where coexistence occurs within socially accepted limits (Hein, 2015). Thus, post-conflict relations in Sambas can be described as relatively harmonious, but still structurally segregated.

Yet, the improvement in interpersonal relations does not automatically eliminate the underlying social boundaries that have been formed since the conflict. While interactions such as cooperation and social contact have resumed, they remain limited within socially accepted spaces and do not extend to more fundamental aspects such as permanent settlement or full integration. In this context, younger generations who are increasingly exposed to social-science education and multicultural values tend to show more open and inclusive attitudes. Educational interventions, particularly those emphasizing peace education and inter-ethnic understanding, have been shown to contribute to the development of tolerance, democratic values, and social cohesion among students (Nur, S., Bahri, S., & Lestari, 2025). However, this emerging openness coexists with persistent structural constraints, as social norms shaped by older generations and reinforced through collective memory continue to regulate interethnic relations in everyday life.

This finding reinforces previous studies on social segregation, while also highlighting that the persistence of social boundaries is closely related to collective trauma and perceived security needs. Segregation is not only the result of past conflict, but also a social practice that is continuously maintained through collective beliefs and intergenerational transmission. The implications of this study emphasize the importance

of citizenship education and social science education in post-conflict contexts (Widiatmaka & Hidayat, 2022; Canetti, 2018). In line with citizenship education literature, education functions not only as knowledge transfer, but also as a means of forming multicultural awareness, managing collective memory, and strengthening tolerance. However, this study shows that education alone is not sufficient to eliminate social segregation, because collective trauma and social norms remain dominant in shaping social relations. Therefore, reconciliation requires not only educational intervention, but also broader efforts to address collective memory and community-based norms. This study has limitations, particularly in the scope of informants, which are still dominated by the Malay community perspective. Further research is needed to include more diverse perspectives, especially from the Madura ethnic group, in order to produce a more comprehensive understanding of post-conflict social dynamics.

## **Conclusion**

This research revealed that the Malay-Madura ethnic conflict in Sambas Regency in 1999 left a long-term social impact in the form of collective trauma and the persistence of social segregation. The collective trauma experienced by the older generation becomes the main factor in maintaining social boundaries and settlement restrictions on the Madura ethnic group, even though limited social interactions such as visits, worship, and economic cooperation continue. In addition, there are differences in attitudes between generations, where the younger generation tends to be more open, but still follows the social boundaries inherited from the older generation. This shows that post-conflict social recovery takes place gradually and is influenced by collective memory and intergenerational processes.

Theoretically, this research confirms that social segregation in post-conflict societies is not only caused by past conflict, but is maintained through collective trauma, social trust, and unwritten social norms that are passed down across generations. This finding strengthens the perspective of social conflict theory, collective trauma, and social segregation, and shows that interethnic boundaries can persist even after open conflict has ended, while still allowing limited forms of social interaction.

Practically, this research emphasizes the importance of citizenship education and peace-based multicultural social science education in supporting post-conflict reconciliation. Education plays a role in forming multicultural awareness, fostering tolerance, and helping communities manage collective trauma. However, reconciliation efforts also need to consider local social norms and collective beliefs, so that social segregation can be reduced gradually and social relations can develop more harmoniously.

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