

**STEREOTYPES AND INTERACTION OF MULTICULTURALISM BETWEEN TRADERS
IN PASAR PROYEK BEKASI**

Stereotipe dan Interaksi Multikulturalisme Antar Pedagang di Pasar Proyek Bekasi

Nida Alfiana¹, Haziqoh Tiara Wildani^{2*}

Universitas Al-Azhar Indonesia
Jakarta Selatan, Indonesia

*e-mail: haziqohtw@gmail.com

Abstract: *This research observes the forms of stereotypes and interactions of multiculturalism between traders in Pasar Proyek, Bekasi. This research focuses on the stereotypes that occur between traders from different ethnic which purpose is to find out what stereotypes traders have towards each other. This study uses a qualitative approach that is descriptive using the theory of multiculturalism and stereotypes. To get accurate data and informants, techniques of data collection used in this study were observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study show that the stereotypes held by traders in the Pasar Proyek, Bekasi are dominated by positive stereotypes. Besides that, the study also discovered that these traders had a tendency to see auto-stereotypes of their own ethnicity favorably. Additionally, they have strategies for overcoming their racial and cultural divides.*

Keywords: *Stereotypes, Multiculturalism, Traders*

Abstrak: *Penelitian ini mengamati bentuk stereotip dan interaksi multikulturalisme antar pedagang di Pasar Proyek, Bekasi. Penelitian ini berfokus pada stereotip yang terjadi antara pedagang dari etnis yang berbeda yang bertujuan untuk mengetahui stereotipe apa yang dimiliki pedagang satu sama lain. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif yang bersifat deskriptif dengan menggunakan teori multikulturalisme dan stereotype. Untuk mendapatkan data dan informan yang akurat, teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa stereotipe yang dipegang oleh pedagang di Pasar Proyek, Bekasi didominasi oleh stereotip positif. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa para pedagang ini memiliki kecenderungan untuk melihat auto-stereotype dari etnis mereka sendiri secara positif. Selain itu, mereka memiliki strategi untuk mengatasi perbedaan ras dan budaya mereka.*

Keywords: *Stereotipe, Multikulturalisme, Pedagang*

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, market is a familiar place for people because Indonesia has known the market for a long time. The market is considered as a place where citizens can find the goods they want to meet their daily needs, so the market has an important role for Indonesian people, especially in their daily life. In addition, the market is a gathering place for traders from various tribes to sell various needs. Today, Indonesia has a variety of markets, ranging from traditional to modern ones. A traditional market in Bekasi City, for example, is still active and is a popular meeting place for traders from various ethnic backgrounds. This market is a good example of how traditional markets continue to play an important role in the lives of Indonesians.



Bekasi, a city in West Java near Jakarta, has become a key destination for people from different regions seeking work. This steady flow of migrants has led to a diverse population in Bekasi, creating a lively multicultural atmosphere. The mix of various ethnic groups has shaped the city into a reflection of Indonesia's broader cultural diversity, where different traditions, languages, and customs come together.

Tilaar, as mentioned in Suswandari (2017), defines multiculturalism as the process of embedding cultural diversity within a country by adopting common systems like language, laws, economy, education, and housing. This view suggests that multiculturalism is more than just different cultures existing side by side; it involves integrating these diverse elements into the society's core structures. In Bekasi, this means that the city's cultural diversity is supported by shared systems that help different cultural groups interact and thrive together.

One of the places where multiculturalism exists in the city of Bekasi is *Pasar Proyek*. Historian Ali Anwar argues that *Pasar Proyek* is the oldest market that has existed in Bekasi from the 16th or 17th centuries because of the strategic location of this market which is flanked by the Bekasi River and the highway that connects Bogor to Muara (Info Bekasi, 2020). There are various ethnic groups in this market. They carry out trading activities side by side with other tribes, in the market area of this *Pasar Proyek*, there is a special section filled with traders from various tribes who sell various kinds of food. A variety of foods are sold in this market, such as Bangka martabak which is sold by Tegal people, meatballs which are sold by Javanese people, dimsum which is sold by Sundanese people, and many more.

Ethnic differences among traders naturally bring to light a range of cultural distinctions, which can often lead to the formation of various stereotypes associated with each ethnic group (Torelli & Rodas, 2024). Consequently, traders who interact within this multicultural environment must adapt to and accept these differences to coexist harmoniously. According to interviews conducted by researchers, traders typically strive to understand the character and behavior of fellow traders from different ethnic backgrounds. This study seeks to explore the presence of multiculturalism among food traders in Pasar Proyek and examine how these traders navigate and respond to multiculturalism in their daily interactions.

This research employs the theory of multiculturalism to focus on the cultural differences present among food traders in the Pasar Proyek area. Multiculturalism refers to the state of a society where multiple cultures coexist, each with its unique characteristics. In this context, the term "multicultural" is used to describe a community of people from diverse cultural backgrounds who live and work together. As cited by Firdaus, Anggreta, and Yasin (2020), multiculturalism encapsulates the presence of cultural diversity within a community. It highlights the various aspects of differences that people encounter while living in a multicultural environment. Suswandari (2017) further defines multiculturalism as the institutionalization of cultural diversity within a nation-state through the adoption of shared systems such as language, law, economy, education, and housing. This framework is essential in understanding how

cultural diversity is integrated into the broader societal structures, facilitating harmonious coexistence among different ethnic groups.

In addition to multiculturalism theory, this research also incorporates stereotype theory, as the theme of stereotypes is central to the study. Stereotypes are preconceived images or beliefs about a particular group, often shaped by personal experiences and the influence of one's social environment (Forsyth, 2009; Helmreich, 2017; Lovitt, 2020). In the context of Pasar Proyek, traders develop perceptions about the character of other traders based on their ethnic background, which gradually solidifies into stereotypes through prolonged interactions. Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter (1976) describe stereotypes as perceptions that we form about groups or individuals, based on previously established opinions and attitudes. These stereotypes can influence how traders view and interact with one another within the market.

Stereotypes can be categorized into two types: negative and positive. Negative stereotypes are seen as hostile beliefs and are often linked to negative outcomes such as bias and discrimination, leading to create barriers to effective communication and cooperation among traders from different ethnic backgrounds (Lovitt, 2020). On the other hand, positive stereotypes are generally viewed as complimentary and less aggressive, and they can sometimes foster a more cooperative atmosphere among traders (Czopp et al, 2015; Lovitt, 2020). However, even positive stereotypes can be limiting, as they tend to oversimplify the complexity of individual identities and reduce people to generalized traits based on their ethnicity.

In addition to the stereotypes directed toward others, there are also self-directed stereotypes, known as auto-stereotypes or self-stereotypes. This concept refers to the process by which individuals internalize the general characteristics or stereotypes associated with their own ethnic group (Sinclair et al, 2006; Forsyth, 2009). This occurs when a person judges themselves based on the stereotypical traits of their group. In this situation, individuals often tend to view themselves positively, emphasizing good characteristics associated with their group (Forsyth, 2009). However, they may also acknowledge negative traits, particularly when they have made mistakes that align with these negative stereotypes.

Overall, the existence of ethnic diversity among food traders in Pasar Proyek creates a complex environment where multiculturalism and stereotypes play significant roles. Understanding how traders adapt to cultural differences and navigate the stereotypes that arise in this setting is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and cooperative atmosphere in the market. By applying both multiculturalism and stereotype theories, this research aims to shed light on the dynamics of interethnic interactions in Pasar Proyek and provide insights into how traders manage the challenges and opportunities presented by living and working in a multicultural environment. The findings of this study could contribute to broader discussions on the importance of cultural sensitivity and the need for strategies that promote understanding and collaboration across different ethnic groups.

METHOD

In this study, researchers employed qualitative research methods, gathering data through direct interviews conducted with food traders in Pasar Proyek, who served as the primary sources for the research. The researchers interviewed six informants from various regions, including a meatball seller from Wonogiri, Central Java; two martabak traders from Tegal, Central Java, one of whom is named Asrori (55); a Padang rice seller from Pariaman, West Sumatra, named Rico (30); a dim sum trader from Majalengka, West Java, named Rustani (54); and a mung bean porridge seller from Madura, East Java. The researchers posed several questions related to cultural differences among the traders, particularly focusing on their stereotypes about individuals from different ethnicities, as well as how they perceive themselves as members of their own ethnic group, or in other words, how they stereotype their own group. The responses provided by the informants will be used as descriptive analysis data, aiding the researchers in addressing the research questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia is known for its ethnic and cultural diversity. The market is one of the places where we can meet the diversity of each person's background based on ethnicity and culture. In *Pasar Proyek*, many traders come from different areas from each local trader, causing intercultural communication. The existence of differences between one trader and another raises the respective assessments of both parties which in fact, the assessment develops in the market environment. The form of one's evaluation of a group is commonly referred to as a stereotype. Stereotypes are conceptions about the nature of a group based on subjective or imprecise prejudices. Usually, the stereotypes that develop in society have a negative connotation towards a group. However, there is an opinion from one of the figures that there are two types of stereotypes.

There were six informants in this study, one trader from Wonogiri, two traders from Tegal, one trader from Padang, one trader from Majalengka, and one trader from Madura. Then, the researcher asked several questions to the traders regarding their background and the stereotypes of traders towards fellow traders of different ethnicities. Based on the results of the interviews conducted, the stereotypes formed by the traders towards other buying and selling actors come from the results of their personal observations. Their observations were made while interacting with each other for a sufficiently long period of time so that this stereotype could form.

According to Czopp (cited from Lovitt, 2020) Stereotypes can actually be positive and negative stereotypes. Negative stereotypes are often associated with negative attitudes or behaviours, such as prejudice and discrimination. While positive stereotypes are often regarded as stereotypes that are harmless and not hostile to another person or group. Besides stereotypes aimed at other groups, this discussion will also analyze how they judge themselves. This term is referred to as auto-stereotype. Of course, this also happens among the buying and selling actors in the food trader area.

Positive Stereotypes from Buyers and Sellers in Pasar Proyek, Bekasi

Between buyers and sellers interaction, various stereotypes naturally emerge, with some taking on a positive form. These positive stereotypes are considered beneficial because the participants in these commercial exchanges consciously strive to maintain good social relations with one another. This effort to preserve positive interactions often serves specific purposes. According to the researchers, beyond the aim of maintaining social harmony, fostering positive stereotypes is crucial for ensuring the smooth operation of buying and selling activities, which significantly impacts the sustainability of their economic endeavors. This perspective was reinforced by the responses from food traders at Pasar Proyek during interviews conducted by the researchers.

One example comes from a martabak trader named Asrori, a 55-year-old from Tegal, Central Java. Asrori expressed his views on the stereotypes he holds towards other ethnic groups in Pasar Proyek, illustrating a positive outlook. He stated, "Ya suku Sunda ya begitu, ya suku Jawa kesana juga ya sama aja. Kita saling menghargai karena kita ini merantau diusahakan untuk bersatu," which translates to, "The Sundanese are like that, The Javanese are there too, it's the same. We respect each other because we are wandering around trying to unite." This statement reflects Asrori's belief that mutual respect among different ethnic groups is essential, particularly for those living away from their homeland. His perspective highlights a positive stereotype, suggesting that different ethnic groups within the market share a mutual understanding and respect, which contributes to a sense of unity and cooperation among the traders.

The interview sessions also revealed similar sentiments from other traders regarding positive stereotypes. For instance, during an interview with a dim sum trader named Rustani, a 54-year-old from Majalengka, West Java, who identifies as Sundanese, another example of positive stereotyping emerged. Rustani shared his favorable view of a mung bean porridge trader from the Madurese ethnic group. He remarked that people from the Madurese tribe are known for their bravery in defending the truth and can be trusted, especially when it comes to handling problems that arise within the trading area of Pasar Proyek. Rustani said, "Disini juga namanya pedagang kaki lima, kadang ada aja yang berani. Saya salut sama suku Madura, (menunjuk salah satu pedagang bubur kacang hijau) ia merupakan ketua dari perkumpulan pedagang disini. Kalau ada apa-apa, dia yang maju (menghadapi). Kadang ada aja yang rese gitu, ada yang mintalah (uang)," which translates to, "Here, even as street vendors, there are sometimes those who are brave. I salute the Madurese tribe, (pointing to one of the mung bean porridge traders) he is the head of the merchant association here. If anything happens, he is the one who steps forward (to handle it). Sometimes there are people who cause trouble, like those who ask for (money)."

In this interview, Rustani's admiration for the Madurese trader illustrates a more specific form of positive stereotyping. He emphasizes the strong character of the Madurese, particularly their leadership qualities and courage in dealing with challenges, which he views as beneficial for the safety and smooth operation of trading activities within the market. This positive stereotype goes beyond

general respect and highlights particular traits that are deemed advantageous in the context of Pasar Proyek.

These interviews underscore how positive stereotypes play a significant role in fostering cooperation and mutual support among traders from different ethnic backgrounds. The recognition and appreciation of each other's strengths contribute to a more harmonious working environment, which is vital for the economic well-being of all involved. Positive stereotypes, such as those expressed by Asrori and Rustani, help to reinforce a sense of community among the traders, despite their diverse ethnic origins. By focusing on the positive aspects of different cultures, these traders are able to build stronger relationships and work together more effectively.

The examples provided by the traders at Pasar Proyek demonstrate how positive stereotypes can contribute to the overall functionality of a multicultural marketplace. When traders acknowledge and respect the strengths of their peers from different ethnic backgrounds, they create an environment where everyone can thrive. This mutual recognition and respect not only enhance social harmony but also ensure the smooth continuation of trading activities, which is crucial for the economic success of the market.

After all, the interaction reveals that positive stereotypes are instrumental in maintaining both social and economic stability within the market. By fostering a sense of unity and mutual respect, it helps to mitigate potential conflicts and encourage collaboration among traders from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The perspectives shared by traders like Asrori and Rustani highlight the importance of positive stereotypes in creating a supportive and secure environment where all traders can pursue their economic goals effectively. The findings from these interviews suggest that positive stereotyping, when rooted in mutual respect and understanding, can play a key role in sustaining multicultural communities, particularly in complex and diverse settings like Pasar Proyek.

Negative Stereotypes from Buyers and Sellers in Pasar Proyek, Bekasi

The presence of positive stereotypes among traders is often accompanied by negative stereotypes as well. These negative perceptions typically arise from unfavorable experiences that an individual or group has had with someone from a different background. Such stereotypes are particularly common between immigrants and the native residents of an area, where the latter may feel a sense of superiority over newcomers. This dynamic was evident in the case of a trader from Wonogiri, who expressed a negative stereotype towards the Betawi people. She perceived that individuals from the Betawi tribe tend to be impatient and often expect preferential treatment, avoiding queues during buying and selling activities. This sentiment was conveyed in an interview where the middle-aged woman, who sells meatballs, remarked, "*Biasanya kalau Betawi kan gak bisa tuh, disuruh nunggu, kadang ada juga yang gak mau nunggu lama. Betawi kadang orangnya sifatnya gitu, apalagi orang asli sini ya, maunya diduluin gitu, gak mau nunggu lama*" (Usually, Betawi people can't do it, they are told to wait, sometimes there are those who don't want to wait long. Betawi people are sometimes like that, especially the natives here, they want to come first, they don't want to wait long).

From the interviews conducted, it became clear that such stereotypes develop primarily through frequent interactions between different groups, particularly during trading activities. Additionally, these stereotypes are reinforced when individuals meet new people who share the same ethnicity as their acquaintances, further solidifying their perceptions of that group. The initial traits that contribute to the formation of these stereotypes often include the way people communicate, their manners, friendliness, especially when encountering strangers, their style of joking in casual conversations, and other social behaviors. These observable characteristics lead individuals to form specific perceptions about the nature of a particular tribe or group, which then solidify into stereotypes.

As these interactions continue, these early impressions evolve into more defined stereotypes, becoming ingrained in the way individuals view others from different backgrounds. These stereotypes, whether positive or negative, significantly shape the social dynamics within the market, influencing how traders interact with one another. While positive stereotypes can foster mutual respect and cooperation, negative stereotypes can lead to misunderstandings and tensions, particularly when they are based on assumptions rather than genuine understanding. The example of the Wonogiri trader's perception of the Betawi people illustrates how negative stereotypes can emerge from everyday interactions and contribute to a broader narrative that may not always reflect the true diversity of behaviors within a group.

Overall, the formation of these stereotypes is a complex process, deeply rooted in social interactions and cultural exchanges. They often reflect the broader societal dynamics at play, where power, cultural differences, and individual experiences intersect to shape perceptions. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for addressing the challenges posed by negative stereotypes, as well as for fostering a more inclusive and respectful environment within multicultural settings like Pasar Proyek.

The existence of this positive stereotype will not be separated from other forms of stereotypes, namely negative stereotypes. The occurrence of this negative stereotype is usually due to a bad experience from an individual against another individual or group who has a different background. One factor of this stereotype usually occurs among immigrants and native residents of the place. Where the natives of the place feel they have more power than the newcomers. This negative stereotype is felt by one of the traders from Wonogiri. She considers that residents from the Betawi tribe have an impatient character and want to take precedence or do not need to queue in buying and selling activities that are carried out. This is known by researchers based on interviews conducted by researchers and informant. As said by a middle-aged woman who sells meatball food *"Biasanya kalau Betawi kan gak bisa tuh, disuruh nunggu, kadang ada juga yang gak mau nunggu lama. Betawi kadang orangnya sifatnya gitu, apalagi orang asli sini ya, maunya diduluin gitu, gak mau nunggu lama."* which is translated into English as "Usually, Betawi people can't do it, they are told to wait, sometimes there are those who don't want to wait long. Betawi people are sometimes like that, especially the natives here, they want to come first, they don't want to wait long".

Auto-stereotype of Food Trader in Pasar Proyek, Bekasi

The concept of stereotypes is commonly understood as judgments or assessments that one group makes about another. However, there is also a type of stereotype known as auto-stereotype, which refers to how individuals view their own group. According to Czopp (as cited in Forsyth, 2009), an auto-stereotype, or self-stereotype, is a type of stereotype that is directed at oneself or one's own group.

In this study, the researcher gathered information from food traders about how they perceive their own group's characteristics. For instance, Rico, a 30-year-old seller of Nasi Padang, shared his view on the traits of people from the Padang tribe, particularly those who migrate to other cities. He described, "Ciri-ciri dari orang Padang itu kemana-mana pasti dagang. Berniagalah pokoknya. Kurang banyak kalau perantau (suku) Padang yang kerja di pabrik. Ya gitu (orang dari suku Padang) rajin berdagang, tekun," which translates to, "The characteristics of the Padang people are that wherever they go, they must be trading. Basically, they do business. There are not many Padang migrants who work in factories. Yes, that's right, Padang people are diligent in trading." This statement reflects how Rico views the Padang tribe as industrious and dedicated to business, emphasizing the tribe's commitment to trading.

Similarly, the researcher also collected insights into auto-stereotypes from other traders. Rustani, a 54-year-old dim sum vendor, shared his perception of the Sundanese tribe. He described Sundanese people as having a friendly and approachable nature. Rustani noted, "Kalau orang Sunda itu ramah banget, cepet akrab dan nggak kaku lah. Sama siapa aja ramah. Karakter ini lah yang saya sering terapkan disini," (Sundanese people are very friendly, get along quickly. They are friendly with everyone. This character is what I often apply here). Rustani's comments highlight the positive self-view among the Sundanese, emphasizing their sociable and adaptable nature in their trading practices.

The information gathered from both Rico and Rustani reveals that traders often highlight the positive aspects of their own group's characteristics. They tend to accentuate the unique qualities of their respective tribes in a favorable light, focusing on the strengths and positive traits associated with their group. This self-praise underscores how auto-stereotypes can reinforce a sense of pride and identity within a group while also contributing to their interactions in a multicultural trading environment.

Multiculturalism Among Food Traders

The diversity in cultural backgrounds among traders inevitably makes the process of unification challenging. This difficulty arises from differences in habits, ideologies, and perspectives among various groups, necessitating deliberate actions to minimize potential friction. Recognizing the significance of this issue, the researcher included it as a key topic in interviews to understand how these differences are managed by those involved.

The traders interviewed for this study shared their insights on how to reduce friction in such a diverse environment. For instance, Rico, a 30-year-old

Nasi Padang seller, emphasized the unifying power of the Indonesian language in promoting mutual respect among traders. He stated, "We have one language, Indonesian. So, that's what unites us, mutual respect for all traders. We all have the same fate. Yes, just respect each other." He further noted, "Perhaps each tribe has many differences, many characters. So, we already understand and appreciate each other anyway." Rico's comments reflect a broader understanding that, despite the many differences in character and culture among various ethnic groups, there is a shared commitment to mutual respect and understanding.

Similarly, other traders offered their perspectives on fostering harmony in a multicultural setting. Asrori, a 55-year-old martabak vendor from the Tegal ethnic group, shared his thoughts on minimizing cultural differences while working in Pasar Proyek. He said, "Just appreciate the fellow trader, that's all, especially when we both trade side by side. At least if there are trading friends, there are friends to chat with. The goal is to make a living together, let's just support each other, don't be jealous." Asrori's remarks highlight the importance of camaraderie and support among traders, emphasizing that shared goals, like earning a livelihood, should take precedence over any feelings of jealousy or competition.

The views expressed by these traders underscore the crucial role of a positive attitude and courtesy in their day-to-day interactions. They prioritize self-respect and strive to approach other traders as potential friends rather than competitors. This approach is vital in creating a cooperative and peaceful trading environment, especially in a multicultural and multiethnic marketplace.

A positive attitude is seen as the most effective way to reduce and prevent conflicts among individuals from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In a setting where people from various backgrounds converge, differences in customs, language, and perspectives can easily lead to misunderstandings. However, by focusing on mutual respect and positive interactions, traders can overcome these challenges and build a sense of community. This not only enhances the atmosphere of the marketplace but also contributes to broader social harmony.

Traders' strong belief in a shared national identity further supports their positive outlook. Despite their diverse backgrounds, they recognize that they are all Indonesians, united by a common language and nationality. This shared identity acts as a powerful unifying force, helping them to see beyond their differences and work together peacefully. The Indonesian language, serving as a common means of communication, reinforces this unity and allows for smoother interactions. By fostering a positive and respectful attitude, traders are better able to integrate into new communities when they migrate to other cities for business. They understand that conflicts can harm their business success, leading to a loss of customers and damaging relationships. Thus, by promoting respect and understanding, they create a stable and supportive trading environment that benefits everyone.

CONCLUSION

The interactions among traders of various ethnic backgrounds at Pasar Proyek predominantly foster positive stereotypes. Traders frequently express

admiration for the traits and traditions of other ethnic groups, promoting harmonious social relations by being amicable and respecting the cultural practices of their peers, provided these practices do not negatively impact others. This mutual respect and friendliness contribute to a supportive marketplace atmosphere. Other than to recognize the value of other cultures, traders also exhibit a strong sense of pride in their own ethnic backgrounds, often highlighting and praising the customs of their respective tribes. This positive self-perception, or auto-stereotyping, reflects their appreciation for their cultural heritage. Despite their differences, the traders identify common ground in their shared experiences, particularly the pursuit of livelihood through trading and the use of the Indonesian language as a unifying medium of communication. This shared identity encourages them to acknowledge and respect their cultural differences, fostering a deeper understanding and cooperation among them.

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