The Significance of the Existence of Tabe' Culture on the Social Behavior of the Buginese Tribe in Rappang

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ABSTRACT

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the significance of the Tabe' culture on the social behavior of the Bugis tribe in Rappang. The study aims to identify how the Tabe' culture influences social interactions and the prevailing norms within the Bugis community, as well as to understand the community's perception of the values embedded in this cultural practice. The research focuses on both the younger and older generations to evaluate how Tabe' values are viewed and applied in everyday life. The findings reveal that Tabe' culture significantly influences social behavior, especially in promoting respect for elders, community solidarity, and the observance of traditions. Participants noted that Tabe' provides a strong moral framework for social interaction, contributing to a collective sense of identity and togetherness. However, the younger generation exhibits a shift in practice, with the cultural expression of Tabe' becoming less frequent, influenced by modernization and technological advances. The study concludes that Tabe' culture remains an essential aspect of the Bugis social fabric in Rappang. Yet, its practice is at risk of fading due to generational changes and the erosion of traditional values. The research highlights the need for educational and community-driven efforts to preserve this valuable cultural heritage in the face of modern challenges.

Keywords: Tabe' Culture, Buginese Tribe, Social Behavior

INTRODUCTION

Culture is a way of life that evolves within a community, passed down through generations. According to Lilivery (2003), "humans are inherently interconnected and inseparable, serving as the primary custodians and preservers of cultural traditions." However, as societies progress, traditional customs often decline. This shift can be observed in various ethnic groups across South Sulawesi, such as the Bugis, Makassar, Toraja, Mandar, and other communities in the region. Each group has a distinct culture, influenced by ancestral traditions passed down over generations. Culture can be understood as a collective way of living in a community, encompassing both tangible and intangible elements.

Wening Kidung (2018) explained that "culture includes material products, traditions, and spiritual values, all of which form the core identity of a group or nation." Among the Bugis tribe, one of the prominent cultural practices is the Tabe' culture, which emphasizes politeness and respect in social interactions. The term "tabe" signifies a gesture of asking for permission or showing respect, especially towards older individuals. It is more than a verbal expression; it represents a comprehensive social behavior that includes actions like bowing or stepping aside when passing others, demonstrating humility and respect (Damayanti, 2020).

Tabe' culture plays a vital role in shaping the social behavior of the Bugis tribe in South Sulawesi. It serves as a norm that encourages harmonious interactions and mitigates potential conflicts. As a reflection of noble values, this tradition is not just a form of positive social interaction but also contributes to moral education, particularly for children. Through the practice of Tabe', children are taught to respect their elders and understand proper manners from an early age. Preserving these values is essential in nurturing a generation that prioritizes social harmony and moral integrity. The Bugis people believe that the Tabe' culture can reduce negative behaviors like indifference and interpersonal conflicts, fostering a more peaceful and respectful society. Furthermore, this tradition helps strengthen a harmonious environment by promoting mutual respect. The significance of Tabe' extends to character education, where children learn the importance of decency and respect, ensuring the continuation of these values in daily life.

Despite its importance, the practice of Tabe' culture is gradually declining, particularly among the younger generation. Research by Firdausi (2020) highlights the challenges faced by Tabe' culture in modern society, where technological advancements and changing social attitudes contribute to its

neglect. As a result, these traditional values are weakening social bonds, potentially leading to conflicts and diminishing community harmony.

Tabe' culture remains a cornerstone of social life among the Bugis tribe, especially in the Rappang area. Tabe', meaning "excuse me" in Bugis, is not just an expression of good manners; it embodies the noble values that govern interactions between individuals. In the Bugis community, Tabe' symbolizes respect for elders and is an integral part of daily social etiquette.

In the context of the Bugis tribe, the "Old Generation" refers to those born before 1945, who have an important role in preserving the traditions and culture of the Bugis people. These individuals are considered guardians of Bugis culture, passing on values and traditions to the younger generation. They are seen as spiritual leaders and sources of inspiration for the community.

The Tabe' culture has a long history, firmly rooted in the Bugis tribe's traditions. The values embedded in Tabe'—such as "*sipakatau*" (mutual respect), "*sipakalebbi*" (reminding one another), and "*sipakainge*" (encouraging one another)—form the foundation of a society that upholds norms of politeness and mutual respect. Previous studies have shown that the understanding of Tabe' culture among the Bugis is viewed as an effort to create a harmonious and peaceful social environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The topic of this research is the existence of Tabe' culture in the social behavior of the Bugis tribe in Rappang. To analyze this, the study draws on various theories, including Geertz's concept of "Thick Description," interpretive anthropology, and phenomenology. These theories offer unique perspectives on understanding cultural practices and social behavior. Clifford Geertz, in his seminal work The Interpretation of Cultures (1973), defines culture as a "complex system of meaning" and emphasizes the importance of understanding cultural context when analyzing social actions. He criticizes overly objective scientific approaches and argues that human behavior can only be understood by considering the symbols and meanings within a given social and historical context. Geertz's thick description goes beyond simply observing actions; it involves interpreting the deeper meanings embedded in cultural practices, making it a useful lens for examining the Tabe' culture.

Geertz's concept of "thick description" provides a deeper understanding of social behavior by encouraging researchers to explore the symbolic

meanings within cultural practices. For Geertz, culture is a system of meanings constructed by society, and understanding these meanings requires a comprehensive exploration of the context in which these symbols are used. This approach contrasts with superficial descriptions that only document facts without delving into their cultural significance.

By applying thick description, researchers can uncover the hidden meanings behind cultural practices like Tabe', thus providing a more nuanced understanding of how these practices influence social interactions within a community. Another theoretical approach used in this study is interpretive anthropology, which also derives from Geertz's thought. This approach emphasizes the need to view culture as a network of meanings constructed by individuals in society. In the case of Tabe', the practice is seen as a symbol of the values of politeness and respect that govern social interaction among the Bugis tribe. Interpretive anthropology helps researchers explore how the Tabe' tradition shapes social identities and behavioral norms in society. It enables the exploration of how individuals interpret and enact cultural symbols, such as Tabe', and how these symbols influence the broader social structure.

Phenomenology, the third theoretical approach, focuses on the subjective experiences of individuals and how they perceive the world around them. In the context of this research, phenomenology is used to explore how the Bugis people feel and interpret the practice of Tabe' in their daily lives. Through interviews and observations, researchers gather personal narratives that describe individual experiences with Tabe' culture. This phenomenological approach provides deeper insights into the role of Tabe' in shaping social behavior, offering a more individualized perspective on how the culture is experienced and internalized by different members of the community. In addition to the theoretical frameworks, this study also reviews previous research related to the topic of Tabe' culture. For instance, a study on cultural communication among Bugis youth found that Tabe' culture is undergoing a shift in values, particularly among adolescents. The practice of respect that Tabe' embodies is beginning to fade, as younger generations are increasingly influenced by modernization. This research underscores the need to find ways to preserve cultural values in the face of changing times. Another study by Rahma (2023) highlighted the gap between the appreciation of Tabe' culture and its actual practice among students. Despite 92.9% of students acknowledging its importance, only 71.4% consistently implement Tabe' in their daily lives.

Other studies have also addressed the challenges that Tabe' culture faces due to globalization and technological advancements. Research by

Kulyawan Sri Wahyuni and Roy (2023) explored the fading of good manners within the Tabe' culture, particularly due to inconsistent education. Ervina's (2023) research on the Mappatabe tradition found that Tabe' still plays a significant role in character education, emphasizing the importance of preserving this tradition to instill social values in younger generations. These studies collectively point to the cultural and educational gaps that need to be addressed to preserve Tabe' culture.

The Tabe' culture, deeply embedded in Bugis society, is not only a cultural heritage but also a framework for shaping positive social behavior. The practice of Tabe' serves to reinforce values such as respect, politeness, and mutual consideration. According to Fadlan Azrialsyah et al. (2020), Tabe' culture helps create social harmony by promoting mutual respect and reducing conflicts within society. This cultural practice plays a crucial role in character education, particularly for the younger generation, as it instills respect for social norms and encourages positive interactions. Tabe' culture also contributes significantly to social behavior, particularly in fostering solidarity and reducing conflicts. It functions as a social norm that regulates interactions between individuals, ensuring that respect for one another is maintained. This cultural practice is especially important in shaping the character of young people, guiding them toward social harmony and ethical conduct. As the study highlights, preserving and promoting Tabe' culture is vital not only for maintaining cultural identity but also for fostering a respectful and harmonious society, especially in the face of globalization and modern social changes.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive design. According to Moleong (2017), qualitative research aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects—such as behaviors, perceptions, and actions—holistically and contextually. Rather than generalizing results, this method seeks to uncover meaning through in-depth analysis in a natural setting. The Tabe' culture, which encompasses symbolic values and social behaviors, is best explored through this approach, as it allows researchers to investigate its role within the social fabric of the Bugis community.

The research was conducted in Rappang Village, Panca Rijang District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi. This village was chosen due to its strong representation of Bugis cultural traditions, where Tabe' practices are still observable in daily interactions.

The informants were selected using purposive sampling, targeting individuals deemed most knowledgeable and relevant to the research topic. According to Sugiyono (2016), purposive sampling is suitable for selecting participants based on specific characteristics. Informants included traditional leaders, community elders, and younger members of the Bugis tribe in Rappang, all of whom have direct experience with Tabe' culture.

Instrument and Procedures

To collect data, this study employed three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly witness the practice of Tabe' in the community's daily life, allowing the researcher to identify patterns of social behavior and cultural expression. As Agrosino (2007) emphasizes, observation enables the researcher to capture the dynamics of real-life cultural interactions. Interviews were conducted using a structured format to maintain consistency while allowing for in-depth responses. These interviews involved community leaders and youth, offering diverse perspectives on the role and evolution of Tabe' within social life (Sugiyono, 2016). Documentation was carried out by collecting supporting materials such as photographs, community records, and literature related to Tabe'. This method served to reinforce and contextualize the primary data by providing historical and background information (Sugiyono, 2016). The data sources were categorized into two types: primary data, which was gathered through direct interaction with informants via interviews and observations (Ghozali, 2013), and secondary data, which was obtained from books, research articles, and official documents relevant to the Tabe' culture (Sugiyono, 2015).

Data Analysis

The data in this study were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis, which involves systematically organizing and interpreting textual information collected from interviews, observations, and documents. The analysis aimed to identify recurring themes, symbolic meanings, and cultural values embedded in the practice of Tabe'. To guide the analysis, the researcher adopted the model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes three key steps. The first step, data reduction, involved summarizing, selecting, and focusing on the most relevant information from the data collected. The second step, data display, was carried out by organizing the information in the form of descriptive narratives and visual representations to facilitate interpretation. The final step was conclusion drawing and verification, in which the findings were

interpreted and validated through triangulation of sources and techniques to ensure their reliability and credibility. This method enabled the researcher to gain a deep understanding of how Tabe' culture is internalized, practiced, and perceived by different generations within the Bugis community, particularly in the face of modern social changes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The following section presents the findings of this study based on the research objectives. Through interviews, observations, and documentation, the data were analyzed to understand how Tabe' culture is currently practiced, how it has changed across generations, and what cultural significance it holds in shaping the social behavior of the Bugis community in Rappang.

The Current Practice of Tabe' Culture in Rappang

This research investigated the ongoing presence of Tabe' culture within the social life of the Bugis community in Rappang through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings show that Tabe', as a symbol of respect and politeness, is still practiced, particularly in formal settings and interactions with elders. Older community members consistently use the term "Tabe" accompanied by respectful gestures such as bowing slightly or lowering one's body when passing in front of others. These actions demonstrate the deep-rooted nature of the tradition in everyday interactions. Observational data confirmed that Tabe' is still recognized as a cultural marker of courtesy. It continues to be used in religious gatherings, traditional ceremonies, and when addressing community leaders. However, its usage is mostly preserved by older generations and appears to be declining among youth. While the tradition has not been entirely abandoned, it is becoming more selective in practice.

Intergenerational Shifts in the Practice of *Tabe'*

One of the major findings of this study is the noticeable gap between generations in the understanding and practice of *Tabe'*. Interviews with both older and younger informants revealed contrasting perspectives. The older generation emphasized the moral and social importance of *Tabe'*, describing it as a critical tool for teaching manners and preserving community harmony. In contrast, younger participants admitted to using the term less frequently and replacing it with more casual greetings influenced by digital communication and contemporary social norms.
Several younger informants shared that they feel uncomfortable or embarrassed using "Tabe," considering it old-fashioned or irrelevant in

modern contexts. This sentiment reflects the growing influence of globalization, technological advances, and changing value systems. The decline in practice is also attributed to reduced parental emphasis on traditional customs and the lack of formal cultural education in schools.

The Cultural Significance of *Tabe'* in Social Behavior

Despite the reduced frequency of use, *Tabe'* continues to be viewed as an essential cultural value. Informants across age groups acknowledged its symbolic importance, especially as a reflection of Bugis identity and a tool for promoting respect and social harmony. Community elders like Hariyadi (50 years old) highlighted that *Tabe'* is not just a gesture or word, but a reflection of deeply embedded values such as humility, deference, and mutual consideration. The study confirms that *Tabe'* plays a crucial role in shaping ethical behavior and social interactions within the community. It fosters intergenerational respect and reduces social friction by reinforcing positive communication patterns. As such, many informants called for stronger efforts to preserve this tradition. They emphasized the need for family, schools, and community leaders to collaborate in revitalizing *Tabe'* through education, awareness, and cultural programs.

Overall, this study reveals that Tabe' culture remains a valued but declining practice in Rappang. Its current use is uneven across generations, and its meaning is at risk of being lost without intentional preservation efforts. To ensure its continuity, the research recommends educational initiatives and community-based programs that emphasize the relevance of Tabe' in modern society. Strengthening cultural awareness among youth is key to bridging the gap between tradition and modern life while maintaining the social values embedded in Bugis heritage.

The Tabe' culture of the Bugis people teaches respect and humility in both behavior and language. As part of the Bugis community's social values, Tabe' emphasizes respect for elders and encourages mutual respect and good conduct among peers. It is a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation, fostering a society built on strong moral principles and mutual appreciation. The Tabe' culture is a vital aspect of the Bugis identity, which helps shape a generation that is respectful, educated, and grounded in cultural values.

In Rappang, the Tabe' culture is deeply embedded in everyday interactions. The practice of bowing when passing elders or others seated is a physical manifestation of respect. It reflects not only personal etiquette but also the values of politeness and humility ingrained in the community. Scholars such as Dr. Ahmad, a cultural anthropologist, and Prof. Dr. Suryadi, a

cultural sociologist, affirm that Tabe' is a cultural act that reinforces social norms and relationships, particularly between younger and older generations. Through these gestures, the younger generation is taught to respect their elders, ensuring the transmission of important social values.

Despite the cultural significance, the application of Tabe' has changed over the years. The findings from this research indicate that while the younger generation still acknowledges the importance of Tabe' culture, its practice has diminished. This is particularly evident in the younger generation's reduced use of the word "Tabe" in daily interactions. Many informants noted that technological advancements and modernization have led to shifts in social behavior, with young people opting for more casual or digital forms of interaction, which bypass traditional customs such as Tabe'. This shift highlights the growing influence of globalization and technological change on local customs.

The decline in the practice of Tabe' can be linked to the weakening of traditional socialization agents, particularly the family. As many respondents noted, the younger generation is no longer taught or given consistent examples of Tabe' behavior by their parents or elders. This lack of reinforcement, coupled with the increasing prevalence of digital communication, has led to a disconnect between cultural knowledge and actual behavior. Social media, in particular, plays a significant role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of young people, often overshadowing traditional cultural practices such as Tabe'.

However, the research also suggests opportunities for revitalizing Tabe' culture. The importance of integrating local cultural values into educational curricula and using modern communication channels such as social media to spread awareness of Tabe' culture was emphasized by several respondents. Through creative content, such as videos and digital campaigns, Tabe' could be adapted to resonate with the younger generation while still preserving its cultural significance. This could ensure that Tabe' culture remains an integral part of the Rappang community's identity and social fabric, bridging the gap between tradition and modernity.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted through observation and interviews with both the younger and older generations in the Rappang area, it can be concluded that while Tabe' culture still holds significance in the social life of the community, there has been a noticeable decline in its practice, particularly among the younger generation. The older generation understands Tabe' as a normative cultural value that reflects manners,

empathy, and self-awareness, essential components of the Bugis character. However, this understanding has not been fully passed down or internalized by the younger generation. A key observation is that the younger generation tends to use the word "Tabe" less frequently in daily interactions, reflecting a shift in values influenced by globalization and digital media.

The decline in Tabe' culture is further exacerbated by the changing social environment. The younger generation's shift towards individualistic values, coupled with the dominance of digital media and a more casual approach to social interactions, has led to a decrease in the traditional practice of Tabe'. The research also reveals that the weakening of Tabe' culture is largely due to the diminishing role of parents and the broader environment in instilling these values from an early age. Many young people lack role models and regular exposure to local cultural values, which are further compounded by the absence of such content in the school curriculum. Additionally, there is a perception among some young people that Tabe' is old-fashioned, further contributing to its marginalization.

Despite the decline, there is still significant potential to revitalize Tabe' culture through a collaborative approach involving local governments, educational institutions, families, and communities. Formal education systems can integrate Tabe' into the curriculum and extracurricular activities, while families can take the lead in modeling the practice of Tabe' at home. Moreover, social media offers an opportunity to creatively promote and teach Tabe' culture in a format that resonates with younger audiences. By combining these efforts, Tabe' culture can be preserved and revitalized, ensuring that it remains an integral part of the Bugis community's identity in the face of modernization.

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