

Analysis of the Role of the Community and Religious Affairs Division in Building Harmonious Company-Community Relations Amid Ethnic and Cultural Diversity (A Case Study of PT. Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper)

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ABSTRACT

The ethnic and cultural diversity in Riau Complex of PT Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper (RAPP), with a population of 15,000, 11 ethnic associations, and four religions, requires effective management by the Community and Religious Affairs (CRA) Division. This descriptive qualitative study analyzes CRA's role in 2025, program implementation, and perceptions of 40 informants through in-depth interviews, open-ended questionnaires, participatory observation, and documentation. The study finds that CRA plays a crucial role in religious management, community coordination, neutral mediation, and welfare programs. Its primary functions are delivered through proactive communication and rapid mediation. Programs such as the Cultural Arts Week (92.9% participation) effectively unite individuals across ethnic lines. Respondents' perceptions (100% reporting harmony) indicate significant impacts on tolerance (85%), with associations serving as communication bridges and CRA rated as fair and responsive. These findings underscore the importance of internal approaches such as routine communication and community involvement in promoting harmony. Therefore, the company should sustain, document, and periodically evaluate CRA programs for long-term viability in developing diversity management strategies in the industrial sector.

Keywords: *Social Harmony, Cultural Diversity, Community, Religion, Ethnic Culture*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, with its abundant natural resources and captivating cultural diversity from Sabang to Merauke, is home to various ethnic groups with rich and diverse cultures (Mahdayeni et al., 2019). The country comprises more than 17,000 islands, over 1,200 ethnic groups, and 694 regional languages spread across its territory (BPS, 2020). However, amidst this beauty of diversity, Indonesian society faces a unique challenge: maintaining tolerance among ethnic groups and cultures (Hasni, 2024). In this context, tolerance extends beyond merely coexisting without conflict; it encompasses appreciation and respect for existing differences (Ardiansyah et al., 2024).

History records that this diversity has not always progressed smoothly. It is noted that 93.9% of social conflicts in Indonesia stem from political, economic, and socio-cultural issues. From

2019 to 2025, the number of social conflict incidents has continued to rise (KEMENKO PMK, 2026). Social conflicts have also occurred in Riau, particularly between local Malay ethnic groups and migrant ethnic groups, where inter-ethnic interactions have produced diverse interpretations, both positive and negative. Negative interpretations often trigger violence, such as tensions arising from feelings of being undervalued or lack of mutual understanding, leading to recurring conflicts in several areas. Currently, some regions in Riau are dominated by migrant ethnic groups, with local ethnic groups comprising only a small portion of the population. On the positive side, the Malay ethnic group views migrants as contributors to economic development and progress, while migrants appreciate the hospitality of the Malay ethnic group in accepting their presence. Nevertheless, perceptions of mutual disrespect persist, frequently sparking tensions. Such negative interpretations have repeatedly triggered inter-ethnic conflicts, serving as valuable lessons on the importance of managing diversity to prevent further conflicts (Rio, 2012). Similar phenomena are observed in Pelalawan Regency, Riau, particularly in Pangkalan Kerinci as an economic growth center driven by the presence of major multinational companies such as PT. Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper, which attract residents from various ethnic backgrounds.

These events underscore the importance of fostering values such as mutual respect, tolerance, and harmony, which must be built from within individuals themselves. Every person plays a vital role in realizing a harmonious environment (Arif Fadilah Ahmad et al., 2025). However, this responsibility does not rest solely on individuals but also involves companies and organizations. Therefore, companies must create a friendly and inclusive work environment (Nur Fadhilah et al., 2025). This research is essential given the continuously increasing population of Pangkalan Kerinci each year, which heightens the potential risk of inter-ethnic conflicts (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Pelalawan, 2025). The scarcity of studies examining how multinational companies manage diversity and foster a culture of mutual respect within their internal environments further justifies the need for this research.

Based on the aforementioned background, the following research questions can be formulated: What are the roles and functions of the Community and Religious Affairs Division in building harmonious relations between the company and the community in the Riau Complex in 2025? What are the forms of program or activity implementation carried out by the Community and Religious Affairs Division in maintaining harmonious relations between the company and the community in the Riau Complex? How do the perceptions of the community and paguyuban leaders regarding the effectiveness of the Community and Religious Affairs Division's programs in creating harmony in the Riau Complex environment?

Based on the background and problem formulation, the objectives of this research are: to describe the roles and functions of the Community and Religious Affairs (CRA) Division in building harmonious relations between the company and the community in the Riau Complex; to identify and analyze the forms of program and activity implementation by the CRA Division in maintaining harmonious relations between the company and the community in the Riau Complex; and to analyze the perceptions of the community and paguyuban leaders regarding the effectiveness of the CRA Division's programs in creating harmony in the Riau Complex environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Social Harmony

Social harmony, according to the Father of Indonesian Anthropology (Prof. Dr. Koentjaraningrat, 1975), is defined in his book *Manusia dan Kebudayaan di Indonesia* as the balance and integration among ethnic/cultural groups in Indonesia's multi-ethnic society, where differences (ethnicity, customs, religion) do not lead to conflict but rather complement one another through shared norms such as gotong royong (mutual cooperation) and musyawarah (deliberative consensus). The indicators of social harmony according to Koentjaraningrat are as follows:

- a) Social Integration: A high level of interaction among ethnic/cultural groups, such as inter-ethnic marriages, cross-ethnic trade, and joint festivals.
- b) Solidarity through Gotong Royong: Cooperation in communal activities involving various ethnic groups.
- c) Musyawarah Mufakat: Decision-making through deliberation without conflict, respecting each ethnic group's customs.
- d) Tolerance and Syncretism: The blending of religions and cultures without dominance by any single party.

2. Diversity Theory

Diversity, according to Prof. Dr. Koentjaraningrat, is a concept that explains how societies can manage diversity within their social environment. This theory emphasizes the importance of appreciating and acknowledging cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity in a society. The richness of Indonesia's "multicolored society" serves as the primary capital for national identity (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika—Unity in Diversity), where over 300 ethnic groups, more than 700 languages, and diverse customs form the strength of integration across the archipelago. Indicators of cultural diversity include the number of distinct ethnic groups and languages, the variety of unique ceremonies and customs, harmonious intercultural and interreligious mixing, and regional variations in lifestyles.

In the context of Indonesia's multi-ethnic society, the theory of cultural diversity and social harmony operate in tandem and complement each other. Diversity represents the wealth of "multicolored" ethnicities and customs as a foundation for unity (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika), while harmony constitutes the balanced integration among groups to ensure that diversity does not lead to conflict.

METHODS

1. Sampling

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach. According to Harahap et al. (2024), qualitative research is a scientific activity involving the systematic collection of data, its organization into specific categories, and the description and interpretation of data obtained from interviews or casual conversations, observations, and documentation. Qualitative descriptive research is a type of inquiry aimed at systematically, accurately, and precisely explaining facts, characteristics, and interactions among the phenomena under study. This approach focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon or event from the

perspective of the subjects being researched. The qualitative approach was selected because this study seeks to provide a comprehensive description of the role of the Community and Religious Affairs (CRA) Division in fostering harmonious relations between the company and the community amid ethnic and cultural diversity. Through this method, the researcher can gain a more holistic understanding of social and cultural phenomena from the viewpoints of the informants directly involved in the studied activities.

This research was conducted at PT Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper (RAPP), specifically within the Human Resource Development (HRD) Department, Community and Religious Affairs (CRA) Division. Additionally, data collection was carried out in the Riau Complex, particularly in Townsite I and Townsite II, Pangkalan Kerinci, Pelalawan Regency. These locations were chosen as they serve as the hub for the CRA Division's social and cultural programs and are home to RAPP's diverse community. The researcher conducted preliminary observations starting in September 2024 through an internship program in the relevant division. However, systematic data collection for this thesis took place in May 2025.

Informants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, which involves the deliberate selection of informants based on specific criteria deemed essential for providing the required information (Khusnul Himam Muh et al., 2026). The informants included internal company stakeholders, such as employees and management from the CRA Division; community members residing in the Riau Complex (Townsite I and Townsite II); and leaders of ethnic and cultural organizations (paguyuban) actively involved in CRA programs.

2. Data Collection

Data in this research were collected through several techniques, namely: In-depth Interviews, conducted with key informants from the CRA Division and the community to understand their thoughts and experiences regarding the role and activities of the CRA Division in creating harmonious social relations (Agusta Ivanovich, 2003). Participatory Observation, in which the researcher directly participated during the internship period at the CRA Division. Open-Ended Questionnaires, distributed to community representatives and cultural organization leaders (paguyuban) to obtain broader perspectives on their assessment of the CRA Division's role and influence. Documentation, involving the collection of supporting data from internal company documents, CRA activity reports, cultural program documentation, as well as photo archives and company publications.

The data obtained will be analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves grouping data into specific themes aligned with the research focus (N. Adelliani et al., 2023). The steps in this analysis include: transcription of interview and questionnaire results; categorization of data based on main themes (roles, community and paguyuban leaders' responses, and types of programs); and drawing conclusions based on dominant findings.

3. Measures

To ensure data validity, the researcher applied triangulation from both sources and methods. This involved cross-verifying data from multiple sources (CRA employees, community members, and paguyuban leaders) and using various techniques (interviews, observations, documentation, and open-ended questionnaires). Consequently, the data become more robust and are not reliant on a single perspective. Additionally, member checking was conducted by

reconfirming findings or data interpretations with the interviewed informants. The purpose of member checking is to ensure that the researcher's interpretations do not deviate from the informants' intended meanings, thereby enhancing the credibility of the research results.

RESULTS

This section provides a concise explanation of the research objects related to the study focus, namely PT Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper (RAPP) and the Community and Religious Affairs (CRA) Division, as well as the characteristics of the involved informants.

PT Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper (RAPP) is a company engaged in pulp and paper production and is part of the APRIL Group. The company operates in Pangkalan Kerinci, Pelalawan Regency, Riau Province, Indonesia. Its presence has successfully transformed Pangkalan Kerinci from a small village with 200 households into a sub-district inhabited by 100,000 people (Sustainability Policy | APRIL Group, n.d.).

The primary focus of this research is the diversity embedded in the company's operations, particularly in the Riau Complex area. The Riau Complex is a residential area managed by the company for employees and their families. This area is equipped with various facilities, including housing, hotels, schools, healthcare facilities, recreational spaces, places of worship, and other amenities. According to internal data, the population residing in the Riau Complex exceeds 15,000 individuals, distributed across 30 Neighborhood Units (Rukun Tetangga) and 5 Community Units (Rukun Warga) (Paper Town, n.d.).

This research employed purposive sampling to select key informants based on the depth of their knowledge and involvement in CRA programs. The following are the profiles of the informants involved in this study:

Table 1. Research Informant Profiles (In-Depth Interviews)

Informant Code	Position/Role	Division	Length of Service
I1	Lead CRA	Community and Religious Affairs	28 Years
I2	Senior CRA	Community and Religious Affairs	31 Years
I3	Officer CRA	Community and Religious Affairs	4 Years
I4	Officer CRA	Community and Religious Affairs	4 Years

Table 2. Research Informant Profiles (Paguyuban Leaders' Questionnaires)

Informant Code	Initials of Name / Paguyuban Name	Position
I5	EP / PUNGGAWA	General Chairman
I6	NLG / IKN	General Chairman
I7	FL / HIKMAT	General Chairman
I8	Z / IKASS	General Chairman
I9	MS / PERMASA RK	General Chairman
I10	E / IKMR	General Chairman
I11	LS / IKABA	General Chairman
I12	SS / MERGASILIMA	General Chairman

Table 3. Research Informant Profiles (Riau Complex Community Questionnaires)

Informant Code	Status	Gender	Age	Length of Residence
I13	DMS / Employee's Child	Male	21 Years	16 Years
I14	SFM / Employee's Child	Female	21 Years	19 Years

I15	RJE / Employee's Child	Male	22 Years	5 Years
I16	OS / Employee's Child	Female	21 Years	17 Years
I17	T / Employee	Female	30 Years	9 Years
I18	ECU / Employee's Child	Female	21 Years	21 Years
I19	TMR / Employee's Child	Male	21 Years	17 Years
I20	DP / Employee's Child	Female	21 Years	10 Years
I21	PNS / Employee's Child	Male	22 Years	22 Years
I22	JMK / Employee's Child	Male	21 Years	17 Years
I23	MNH / Employee's Child	Female	22 Years	22 Years
I24	THS / Employee's Child	Male	17 Years	5 Years
I25	FNH / Employee's Child	Female	20 Years	20 Years
I26	M / Employee	Male	27 Years	5 Years
I27	O / Employee's Wife	Female	39 Years	12 Years
I28	L / Employee	Female	46 Years	25 Years
I29	MSS / Employee	Female	25 Years	25 Years
I30	MR / Employee's Child	Male	21 Years	21 Years
I31	JLS / Employee's Child	Female	18 Years	18 Years
I32	KCR / Employee's Child	Female	17 Years	17 Years
I33	G / Employee's Child	Female	18 Years	18 Years
I34	YE / Employee	Female	25 Years	3 Years
I35	NM / Employee	Female	32 Years	6 Years
I36	AAP / Employee's Child	Female	21 Years	21 Years
I37	M / Employee's Child	Female	20 Years	19 Years
I38	R / Employee's Sibling	Male	20 Years	20 Years
I39	SAS / Employee's Child	Female	21 Years	21 Years
I40	DP / Employee's Wife	Female	35 Years	9 Years

DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher presents the field findings obtained through in-depth interviews with 4 key CRA informants, 4 months of observations, open-ended questionnaires completed by paguyuban leaders and Riau Complex community members, and internal company documentation. The primary focus is on the CRA Division's role in managing ethnic and cultural diversity to foster harmony in the Riau Complex in 2025. The findings are detailed as follows.

The roles of the CRA Division in building harmony in 2025 encompass several key functions. These include the management of religious affairs by facilitating worship needs for adherents of the four religions present in the Riau Complex. Additionally, CRA handles community management by serving as a partner to 11 ethnic paguyuban to preserve cultural identities without triggering conflicts, as well as supporting Neighborhood Units (RT/RW) and other social communities. CRA also acts as a neutral party in mediation, resolving disputes between residents or across departments. Furthermore, it manages welfare programs, such as scholarships, healthcare, and recreational activities, to enhance a sense of belonging among the community.

Functions of the CRA Division in Building Harmony in 2025

First, Communication and Coordination. The CRA Division implements proactive communication strategies as the primary foundation for harmony in the Riau Complex. These strategies are designed to ensure that every voice is heard and potential issues are prevented early through various approaches. Routine Discussion Forums are organized regularly with all organizations in the Riau Complex, with agendas covering program evaluations,

community complaints, and activity plans. The aim is to prevent conflicts through open dialogue and swift resolution. This routine communication is also highly effective as a foundation for harmony. A Senior CRA official emphasized that good communication is the key to resolving issues:

"The Riau Complex is already like a miniature Indonesia; almost all religions and ethnic groups are here. This is our position and challenge—how to ensure everyone feels valued and heard. There are many obstacles and differing opinions, but because we hold routine discussions and raise any issues during those meetings, we always find the best solution." – (Senior CRA)

"These routine meetings with all Riau Complex organizations are very good and highly appropriate. There are almost no conflicts in the Riau Complex because of these regular meetings. No matter how small the problem or any impropriety, this forum is the place for discussion, and all issues can ultimately be prevented." – (CRA Officer)

Subsequently, Structured Socialization involves disseminating information directly to the leaders of all organizations in the Riau Complex via face-to-face meetings, WhatsApp groups, or the company's internal public messenger system, with the goal of maximizing participation from the Riau Complex community. Furthermore, a Direct Reporting Line enables the community to contact CRA directly or through their respective RT/RW heads or organization leaders, ensuring issues are immediately forwarded to CRA as a priority for handling at that time.

Second, Conflict Mediation. In the context of high diversity, the potential for social conflicts is natural. However, based on field data, the conflict rate in the Riau Complex is very low. The CRA Division has proactive mediation mechanisms to address potential conflicts before they escalate into serious problems. The mediation mechanisms applied by CRA include a Personal Approach, where, in the event of a conflict, CRA holds separate meetings with both parties to discuss and identify points of resolution. Additionally, Administrative Sanctions are imposed if violations are deemed to contravene company policies or Riau Complex regulations, in accordance with established provisions.

Table 4. CRA Work Programs and Activities in 2025

No	Program Name	Frequency	Implementation Mechanism
1	Cultural Arts Week	Once a year	Preparatory meeting with all members of the Paguyuban executive board
2	Long Service Award	Once a year	Forming a committee and attended by all award recipients
3	Paskibra	Once a year	Selection process for prospective Paskibra members, participated in by students from schools under RAPP's auspices
4	Sports Month	Once a year	Socialization to RT/RW chairpersons to encourage community participation in the event
5	Sayap Garuda Scholarship	Twice a year	Document screening process for prospective scholarship recipients among students
6	Gotong Royong	Once a month	Held rotationally in each RW of Riau Complex
7	Haji Pilgrimage	Once a year	Conducting written selection and interviews, with a quota of 10 individuals per year
8	Day Care	Every day	A child daycare facility provided by the company to support employees in carrying out their work, ensuring that their children receive safe and comfortable care during working hours
9	Posyandu	Tentative	Assessing immunization needs in Riau Complex
10	Estate Roaming Entertainment	Four times a year	Providing funds to each estate, with CRA representatives attending the event

11	Blood Donation	Four times a year	Collaboration with PMI Pekanbaru and Pelalawan to conduct blood donation drives in the Riau Complex community
12	Motivation and Counseling	Once a month	Conducted rotationally across all departments at PT RAPP, specifically targeting departments with work-related complaints based on the company's internal data
13	Indonesian Independence Day	Once a year	Assisting in the formation of the flag-hoisting troop (Paskibra) team and the flag-raising ceremony at Riau Complex
14	Car Free Day	Every three months	Socialization to RT/RW chairpersons to encourage community participation in the event
15	Pre-Retirement Program	Three times a year	Compiling a list of employees scheduled to retire in 2-3 years and offering them participation in the Pre-Retirement Program, attended by employees and their spouses, with each batch comprising 120 participants

Based on the results of open-ended questionnaires completed by association chairpersons, the impact of CRA's role on community harmony in Riau Complex can be identified as follows.

High Level of Harmonization. All respondents, including association chairpersons and Riau Complex residents, stated that relationships within the community are highly harmonious despite diverse ethnic backgrounds, with residents living peacefully side by side and showing mutual respect. As one association chairperson noted:

"Relationships in Riau Complex are very harmonious and inclusive, despite different ethnic backgrounds. They are cordial, friendly, mutually respectful, and supportive of diversity as well as community activities." – (Association Chairperson)

A resident added:

"Inter-resident relationships are highly harmonious and peaceful despite differences in ethnicity, culture, and religion. There is mutual respect, high tolerance, mutual assistance, and activities like the Cultural Arts Week strengthen togetherness, although there are minor notes for improving communication to maintain harmony." – (Resident)

Associations as Communication Bridges. Associations serve as vital bridges for communication between the company and residents or employees. CRA mobilizes these associations to fulfill their functions, thereby achieving comfort and interethnic cooperation. As stated by an association chairperson:

"Associations play a vital role as bridges between the company (CRA) and residents/employees, supporting policies, maintaining relationships, and ensuring cordial interethnic harmony. They always encourage mutual respect for differences, uniting ethnic groups, and supporting programs for collective harmony." – (Association Chairperson)

Active Community Involvement. Riau Complex residents actively participate in CRA programs, fostering close relationships. Residents are also given space to voice their aspirations, either directly or through organizational chairpersons. CRA and association leaders ensure broad community involvement for mutual comfort. Among 28 resident respondents, participation in CRA activities was very high: 92.9% had joined the Cultural Arts Week (PSB), 60.7% the Car Free Day, 50% gotong royong, 46.4% the Riau Complex Sports Month, and 42.9% blood donation drives. Only one respondent (3.6%) had never participated, reflecting widespread active engagement.

Rapid Conflict Resolution. In cases of issues, CRA promptly invites associations to deliberate consensually for the best solutions benefiting both the company and residents or employees. CRA responds quickly to minor frictions by convening association chairpersons to de-escalate situations. As an association chairperson affirmed:

"CRA always invites associations to deliberate consensually for the best solutions benefiting both the company and residents or employees." – (Association Chairperson)

Fairness and Equality. All residents from different ethnic groups are treated equally. CRA is evaluated as highly fair in nurturing residents and social organizations in Riau Complex. A resident commented:

"Residents from different ethnic groups are treated equally and fairly by CRA. There is no differentiation or special treatment, with very fair assessments in nurturing all residents, associations, and social organizations in Riau Complex." – (Resident)

Strengthening Tolerance and Communication. CRA programs have a tangible impact on strengthening tolerance, communication, and interethnic cooperation in Riau Complex. Approximately 90% of respondents stated that the division's activities are effective or highly effective in maintaining harmony, strengthening relationships, and building tolerance among residents of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The Cultural Arts Week was highlighted as the most unifying event, creating positive interactions and mutual respect, though suggestions were made for more frequent and broader involvement (only 2-3 respondents disagreed). Among 28 respondents, the majority (around 85%) reported positive impacts, including greater tolerance, openness, familiarity, and appreciation of ethnic/cultural differences through CRA activities. Many felt they knew their neighbors or colleagues better, fostering unity and reducing prejudices. Only a small fraction (less than 10%) reported no changes or did not participate. As an association chairperson summarized:

"CRA programs have a significant tangible impact on strengthening tolerance, communication, and interethnic cooperation in Riau Complex. Just look at Riau Complex, which has 11 associations with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, yet they live peacefully, mutually respectful, appreciative, and harmonious." – (Association Chairperson)

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Community and Religious Affairs (CRA) Division of PT Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper (RAPP) plays a crucial role in fostering harmony in Riau Complex in 2025. Based on the findings from the preceding sections, CRA's roles encompass religious management (covering four religions), community coordination (11 ethnic associations), neutral mediation, and welfare support. Its primary functions include proactive communication and rapid mediation. CRA implements 15 effective work programs that build harmony. Programs such as the Cultural Arts Week (92.9% participation), gotong royong, and Car Free Day effectively bring together individuals across ethnic lines. Respondents' perceptions (association chairpersons and 28 residents) were overwhelmingly positive: 100% reported high harmony, associations served as communication bridges, participation was high, 85% noted impacts on tolerance, and CRA was rated as fair, creating a cordial and cohesive

environment. This aligns with Koentjaraningrat's theory, embodying *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), and positions PT RAPP Riau Complex as a "miniature Indonesia."

LIMITATION

This study has several limitations reflected in its design and implementation. The research sample size appears highly limited, involving only 40 informants out of a total population of 15,000 residents in Riau Complex, comprising 4 CRA employees, 8 association chairpersons, and 28 community respondents. The geographical focus is narrow, centered solely on the Riau Complex area (Townsite I and II), without comparisons to other PT RAPP operational areas or similar multinational companies in the pulp and paper industry. The data collection period is short, confined to May 2025 with four months of participatory observation, thus unable to capture long-term dynamics of social harmony.

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