

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

From Violence to Coexistence: The Transformation of the Dayak–Madura Conflict in Sampit, 2001–2024

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Abstract

This study examines the peacebuilding process and conflict transformation between the Dayak and Madurese ethnic groups in Sampit, Central Kalimantan, during the period 2001–2024. This topic is important because the Sampit conflict not only resulted in interethnic violence, but also generated long-term impacts on social relations, collective memory, and post-conflict reconciliation processes. This research employs a qualitative method with a historical-sociological approach. Data were collected through online interviews and literature studies, and analysed using Johan Galtung's theory of peace, particularly the concepts of peacebuilding, negative peace, positive peace, and conflict transformation. The findings show that peacebuilding in Sampit developed gradually through security stabilisation, social reconciliation, institutional strengthening, and the creation of spaces for interethnic interaction. Conflict transformation can be observed in the shift of social relations from segregation and suspicion towards more open interaction through education, community activities, religious forums, and peace symbols. Nevertheless, collective trauma, intergenerational prejudice, economic inequality, and the spread of hoaxes through social media remain challenges to sustainable peace. The implications of this study highlight the importance of multicultural education, social trauma healing, early warning systems, and inclusive economic policies in strengthening post-conflict reconciliation. The originality of this research lies in its long-term analysis of the Sampit conflict from 2001 to 2024 and its enrichment of Galtung's theory through local dimensions such as customary values, collective trauma, peace symbols, and the role of younger generations.

Keywords: Sampit conflict; Dayak–Madurese relations; peacebuilding; conflict transformation; positive peace

Introduction

Indonesia is a multicultural society shaped by ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural, and migratory diversity. This diversity constitutes an important form of social capital for national life, yet it may also become a source of vulnerability if it is not managed through inclusive social, political, economic, and cultural mechanisms. Data from Statistics Indonesia show that Indonesia has approximately 1,340 ethnic groups and hundreds of regional languages, indicating that social relations in Indonesia unfold within a highly complex field of identities (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Kotawaringin Timur, 2025). This complexity suggests that plurality should not merely be understood as a demographic fact, but also as a social space that is vulnerable to prejudice, stereotyping, competition over resources, and intergroup conflict when it is not supported by social justice and adequate conflict management.

At the national level, Indonesia's socio-religious harmony has shown positive development. The 2025 National Religious Harmony Index recorded a score of 77.89, placing it in the high category and marking the highest achievement in the last eleven years since 2015. This score is supported by three main dimensions: tolerance at 88.82, equality at 79.35, and cooperation at 65.49 (BMBPSDM Kementerian Agama RI, 2025). These figures indicate that tolerance and equality in Indonesian society are relatively strong. However, the lower score for cooperation compared with the other two dimensions shows that social interaction, cross-group collaboration, and everyday solidarity still need to be strengthened. Therefore, harmony should not be understood merely as mutual acceptance, but must also be realised through active, equal, and sustainable social relations.

One important event that demonstrates the vulnerability of Indonesia's multicultural society is the conflict between the Dayak and Madurese ethnic groups in Sampit, Central Kalimantan, in 2001. This conflict not only caused casualties and physical destruction, but also left long-term impacts in the form of collective trauma, social segregation, changes in settlement patterns, damaged interethnic relations, and weakened social trust. Several reports state that the Sampit conflict caused hundreds of deaths and a large wave of displacement; the government even provided warships to accommodate approximately 34,000 displaced persons (Raharjo & Fitriyani, 2023). These data show that the Sampit conflict was not merely a local episode of violence that ended once physical conflict ceased, but a long-term social problem that continues to shape post-conflict community life.

More than two decades after the conflict, the main issue facing the Sampit community is no longer limited to the cessation of violence, but also concerns how Dayak and Madurese communities rebuild safe, just, and sustainable social relations. Peaceful coexistence has gradually emerged, yet the reconciliation process still leaves unresolved issues, including unhealed trauma, sensitive collective memory, intergenerational prejudice, spatial segregation, and unequal access to economic resources. In this context, peacebuilding must be understood as a long-term social process involving the government, customary leaders, religious leaders, civil society organisations, youth groups, and everyday mechanisms of interaction. Therefore, the study of Dayak–Madurese conflict transformation is important in order to understand how peace is constructed, negotiated, and maintained in post-conflict society.

Research on conflict, reconciliation, and peacebuilding has developed across several tendencies. First, studies on pluralism, multiculturalism, and peace education emphasise the importance of social literacy, tolerance education, and persuasive communication in preventing conflict within plural societies. Jaenudin et al. (2024) show that multicultural education plays an important role in building awareness of coexistence amid diversity. Munir et al. (2022) highlight the importance of peacebuilding literacy based on persuasive *da'wah* within post-conflict Dayak–Madurese communities. These studies provide an important basis for understanding that peace can be built through education and social communication, but they have not yet explained in depth how social relations change in the everyday life of post-conflict Sampit society.

Second, studies on conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and post-conflict development tend to position peace as an institutional, developmental, and social governance agenda. Muliono (2021) argues that post-conflict peace should be linked to sustainable development and community empowerment. Muliono et al. (2023) show that conflict transformation is related to democracy and the social resilience of post-conflict communities. Meanwhile, Sugara (2021) and Contesa et al. (2024) demonstrate the importance of institutional actors and religious leaders in peacebuilding processes. Although these studies are important, this tendency remains largely focused on macro-level and institutional approaches, and therefore does not sufficiently explain local dynamics, social experiences, and changing interethnic relations in the Dayak–Madurese context in Sampit.

Third, studies on ethnic conflict, local identity, and community reconciliation show that conflict is not only related to direct violence, but also to identity, memory, power, and social structure. Bagaskara et al. (2021) show that ethnic identity reconstruction is an important part of post-conflict community recovery. Rohmah (2024) demonstrates that conflict resolution is closely related to power dynamics and social relations. More specifically, Basit et al. (2023) discuss Dayak–Madurese conflict resolution in Sampit through an integrative synergy model that emphasises reconciliation, reconstruction, and mediation. However, these studies remain largely conceptual-normative and have not examined in depth how conflict transformation has taken place over the long period from 2001 to 2024 through the dimensions of collective trauma, peace symbols, youth participation, social media, and local community mechanisms.

Based on these tendencies, the main research gap lies in the limited number of studies that connect local peacebuilding processes with Johan Galtung's theory of conflict transformation in the context of Dayak–Madurese relations in Sampit more than two decades after the conflict. Previous studies have discussed peace education, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and community reconciliation, but few have explained how peace moves from negative peace towards positive peace through changes in social relations, the restoration of trust, the management of collective trauma, symbols of reconciliation, youth agency, and vigilance towards conflict in digital spaces. Therefore, this study is necessary to bridge the gap between conflict resolution studies that tend to be normative and peacebuilding studies that tend to be macro-oriented.

This study aims to analyse the process of peacebuilding and conflict transformation between the Dayak and Madurese ethnic groups in Sampit from 2001 to 2024. Specifically, it explains how social relations between the two groups have changed after the conflict, how local actors have rebuilt trust, and how peace symbols, social forums, economic activities, multicultural education, social media, and youth participation have contributed to sustainable peace. Through this aim, the study seeks to address the gap in previous research, which has not sufficiently examined Dayak–Madurese conflict transformation as a long-term social process taking place at relational, structural, cultural, symbolic, and generational levels.

The main argument of this study is that Dayak–Madurese peacebuilding in Sampit cannot be understood merely as the success of ending physical violence, but must be viewed as a process of conflict transformation that takes place through changing social relations, restoring trust, managing collective trauma, creating spaces for dialogue, and strengthening local mechanisms. From Johan Galtung's perspective, peace cannot stop at negative peace, namely the absence of direct violence, but must move towards positive peace, namely the presence of just, inclusive social relations free from structural and cultural violence (Galtung, 1996).

This study argues that the Sampit case not only confirms Galtung's theory of conflict transformation, but also enriches it through the local Indonesian context. Positive peace in post-conflict ethnic societies does not depend solely on formal policies or peace declarations, but also on the ability of communities to manage trauma, build symbols of reconciliation, strengthen the roles of customary and religious actors, encourage youth participation, and anticipate potential conflict in digital spaces. Thus, the Sampit experience shows that conflict transformation is a layered social process involving structure, culture, memory, identity, and local agency in building sustainable peace.

Methods

The unit of analysis in this study is the process of peacebuilding and conflict transformation between the Dayak and Madurese ethnic groups in Sampit, Central Kalimantan, within the period 2001–2024. The unit of analysis focuses on post-conflict social relations, patterns of interethnic interaction, the roles of local actors, symbols of peace, and the social, cultural, economic, and structural factors influencing the restoration of relations between the two communities. Thus, this study does not position the Sampit conflict merely as a historical event that occurred in 2001, but as a long-term social process that continues to evolve through reconciliation, dialogue, the restoration of trust, and the development of local peace mechanisms. The selection of this unit of analysis is consistent with conflict transformation studies that emphasise the importance of examining changes in social relations, social structures, and peace mechanisms after open violence has ended (Galtung, 1996; Kurniadi et al., 2019; Sugara, 2021).

This study employs a qualitative method with a historical-sociological case study approach. The qualitative method was selected because the study seeks to understand the experiences, meanings, perceptions, and social dynamics of post-conflict communities that cannot be adequately explained solely through statistical measurement (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Miles et

al., 2014). The historical approach is used to trace the background, chronology, and development of the Dayak–Madurese conflict from 2001 to 2024, while the sociological approach is employed to analyse changes in interethnic relations, patterns of social interaction, the roles of local actors, and the process of rebuilding public trust. The case study approach was chosen because the research focuses on a specific social context, namely Sampit, as a post-conflict setting that demonstrates the dynamics of conflict transformation in a particular way (Yin, 2014).

The sources of data in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured online interviews with four informants selected purposively on the basis of their involvement, experience, and knowledge regarding the conflict and the peacebuilding process between the Dayak and Madurese communities in Sampit. The informants included members of the Dayak community, the Madurese community, conflict-affected residents, and young people in Sampit. Interviews were conducted in September 2025 through online communication media, such as WhatsApp calls and written messaging, depending on the availability of the informants. Purposive selection of informants is relevant in qualitative research because it enables researchers to obtain information from individuals considered to possess the most comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2014). In this research, the identities of the informants were presented using their real names based on their consent for academic and research documentation purposes. Secondary data were obtained from books, scholarly articles, research reports, government documents, media archives, and other sources relevant to the Sampit conflict, conflict transformation, reconciliation, and peacebuilding studies.

Data collection techniques consisted of literature study and semi-structured online interviews. The literature study was conducted to gather historical, theoretical, and empirical information concerning the Sampit conflict and peacebuilding practices in post-conflict communities. Interviews were conducted using an interview guide containing questions related to experiences of conflict, changes in Dayak–Madurese relations, the roles of local actors, symbols of peace, obstacles to reconciliation, and expectations regarding sustainable peace. Semi-structured interviews were chosen in order to provide the researcher with a clear direction for questioning whilst still allowing informants to express their experiences and views openly (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Data validity was maintained through source triangulation by comparing interview data with academic literature, official documents, and media archives. Triangulation is important in qualitative research because it enhances the credibility of findings through cross-checking between different data sources (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis within the framework of Johan Galtung's conflict transformation theory. The stages of analysis included data reduction, categorisation, data presentation, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Interview and documentary data were first selected according to their relevance to the focus of the study and then categorised into major themes, such as negative peace, positive peace, collective trauma, changes in social relations, the roles of local actors, symbols of reconciliation, social media, and youth involvement. Thematic analysis was employed because it enables researchers to identify, organise, and interpret patterns of meaning within qualitative data systematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Historical data were analysed to examine continuity and change from the period of conflict to the post-conflict era, while sociological data were analysed to understand patterns of interaction, social structures, and the dynamics of intergroup relations. Through these stages, the study seeks to explain how the Dayak–Madurese peacebuilding process has functioned as a form of conflict transformation operating at relational, structural, cultural, symbolic, and generational levels.

Results

1. The Socio-Historical Context of the Conflict and the Early Transformation of Dayak–Madurese Peacebuilding in Sampit

The findings of this study show that the Dayak–Madurese conflict in Sampit cannot be understood merely as an isolated act of violence, but rather as part of the socio-historical dynamics of the multicultural and multiethnic society of East Kotawaringin Regency, which is characterised by a natural resource-based economic structure. East Kotawaringin Regency is one of the strategic regions in Central Kalimantan Province, with Sampit serving as the regency capital. The region covers approximately 16,796 km² and functions as a centre of trade, transportation, and social interaction in southern Kalimantan (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Kotawaringin Timur, 2025). Data from Statistics Indonesia indicate that the population of East Kotawaringin reached 443,539 in 2024 and increased to approximately 448,180 in 2025 (BPS Kabupaten Kotawaringin Timur, 2024). These conditions demonstrate that Sampit is a multiethnic social space that brings together the Dayak community as the indigenous population with various migrant groups, including the Madurese, Javanese, Banjar, and Bugis communities (Widen, 2021).

The social plurality of Sampit constitutes both social capital and a source of vulnerability when not managed through equitable relations. The Dayak community has a strong attachment to customary land, customary law, and communal traditions, whilst the Madurese community is largely engaged in trade, services, transportation, and the informal economy (Dartiningsih, 2022; Yuliyanto, 2017). These differing socio-economic foundations create spaces of encounter as well as social competition. In certain contexts, unequal economic access, intergroup stereotypes, and weak conflict resolution mechanisms intensified social tensions within the multiethnic community (Hamdani, 2022; Syafi'i, 2016).

The roots of the Dayak–Madurese conflict in Sampit are closely related to migration and transmigration policies that altered the demographic structure and patterns of social interaction within local communities. During the New Order period, transmigration programmes encouraged the movement of populations from densely populated regions such as Java and Madura to Kalimantan, including Sampit, with the aim of redistributing population and opening new economic land (Manda, 2022). The arrival of the Madurese community subsequently created new social dynamics, as they became actively involved in trade, timber, transportation, services, and informal business sectors, whilst many Dayak communities continued to rely on agriculture, shifting cultivation, forest resources, and customary land (Alexandra, 2018). These economic differences did not automatically lead to open conflict, but gradually developed into latent tensions reinforced by social prejudice, cultural differences, and weak mediation mechanisms.

Interview data further confirm that the Sampit conflict represented the culmination of long-standing social tensions. Tuti Maysarah, an informant from the Dayak community, stated:

"The conflict was actually caused by social problems that had accumulated over a long period of time, and then a small incident escalated into a large-scale conflict. For the Dayak people, blood must be repaid with blood." (T. Maysarah, online interview, 29 September 2025)

The 2001 conflict left extensive social impacts, not only in the form of casualties and physical destruction, but also collective trauma, economic paralysis, disruption to education, and the breakdown of social relations. Several studies note that the Sampit conflict resulted in mass displacement, the burning of houses, and changes in settlement patterns that had previously been more ethnically integrated (Isnanto, 2024). Tuti Maysarah explained:

"At that time people experienced fear, sadness, panic, anger, and insecurity because there were so many casualties. Many houses were burned, property was destroyed, thousands of people were displaced, and the trauma caused by the violence was very real, even damaging relations between ethnic groups." (T. Maysarah, online interview, 29 September 2025)

A similar view was expressed by Anna, a conflict-affected resident:

“The riots affected the economy, the town became like a dead city, children could not go to school, there were no activities outside the home, and the situation was extremely tense.” (Anna, online interview, 30 September 2025)

These statements demonstrate that the impacts of the conflict were not merely physical, but also affected psychological well-being, education, economic life, and everyday social relations.

Table 1 Summary of Findings on the Socio-Historical Context of the Conflict and the Early Transformation of Dayak–Madurese Peacebuilding in Sampit

Focus of Findings	Meaning of Findings
Sampit is a multiethnic region characterised by intensive social and economic interaction between communities.	Social diversity functions both as a space of interaction and as a potential source of tension when not managed fairly.
The Dayak–Madurese conflict developed from accumulated social, economic, cultural, and intergroup stereotyping issues.	The Sampit conflict was not a spontaneous event, but a latent conflict that evolved over a long period of time.
The conflict resulted in physical destruction, collective trauma, displacement, and damaged social relations.	The impacts of the conflict were multidimensional and affected the wider social life of the community.
Economic activities, education, and public security were disrupted during the conflict.	The conflict generated not only direct violence, but also a broader social crisis in everyday life.
The initial stage of peacebuilding involved security stabilisation, evacuation, humanitarian assistance, and conflict mediation.	Early peace efforts remained focused on ending violence and creating social security.
Customary leaders, religious leaders, and peace symbols began to play a role in rebuilding social relations.	The early transformation of peace was marked by attempts to restore trust and interethnic reconciliation.

The initial peacebuilding process after the conflict took place through the cessation of violence, security stabilisation, civilian evacuation, humanitarian assistance, and intergroup mediation. At this early stage, both central and local governments sought to control the situation through the deployment of security forces, civilian protection, and emergency recovery measures (Andrian, 2024; Raharjo & Fitriyani, 2023). Tuti Maysarah stated:

“At that time, the government deployed military and police forces, evacuated residents, provided humanitarian assistance, and mediated between the Dayak and Madurese communities in order to end the conflict.” (T. Maysarah, online interview, 29 September 2025)

This initial stage of peacebuilding remained focused on ending violence and creating social security. From Johan Galtung’s perspective, this condition can be understood as a phase of negative peace, namely a situation in which direct violence has ceased, whilst trauma, distrust, and problems within social relations have not yet been fully resolved (Galtung, 1996).

Following the initial stabilisation phase, the peacebuilding process gradually shifted towards rebuilding social relations through dialogue, the involvement of customary and religious leaders, and peace symbols. Customary institutions played an important role because the Dayak community possesses traditions of conflict resolution based on customary law and local values, whilst religious leaders contributed to building communication and reducing intergroup prejudice (Deviana, 2022; Parhan et al., 2025; Yuliyanto, 2017). In addition, the Sampit Peace Monument became a public symbol representing the community’s commitment not to return to past violence (Pramono, 2024). Khairullah, an informant from the Madurese community, explained:

“The peace effort that helped the most was the Peace Monument in East Kotawaringin Regency, especially in Sampit.” (Khairullah, online interview, 30 September 2025)

Based on these findings, four major patterns emerge regarding the socio-historical context of the conflict and the early transformation of Dayak–Madurese peacebuilding in Sampit. First, the Sampit conflict emerged from accumulated historical tensions related to migration, changes in

social structure, economic competition, stereotypes, and weak conflict resolution mechanisms. Second, the conflict produced multidimensional impacts, including physical destruction, collective trauma, economic paralysis, disruption to education, and the breakdown of social trust. Third, the initial stage of peacebuilding focused on security stabilisation, humanitarian assistance, and conflict mediation in order to end open violence. Fourth, the early transformation of peace became visible through dialogue, the involvement of customary and religious leaders, and peace symbols that helped rebuild social relations within society. Thus, this subsection demonstrates that Dayak–Madurese peacebuilding in Sampit began as an effort to end violence and gradually developed into an early process of restoring social relations, although trauma and distrust remain ongoing challenges that must be managed continuously.

2. Phases of Peacebuilding Transformation and the Sustainability of Peace in Sampit

The process of post-conflict peacebuilding between the Dayak and Madurese communities in Sampit from 2001 to 2024 demonstrates a gradual transformation from the cessation of violence towards the establishment of more sustainable peace. From Johan Galtung's perspective, this process may be understood as a shift from negative peace, namely a condition in which direct violence has ceased, towards positive peace, namely a condition in which social relations, social structures, and a culture of coexistence are gradually reconstructed in a more just and harmonious manner (Galtung, 1996). This transformation did not occur instantly, but evolved through several phases involving the state, customary leaders, religious leaders, civil society, youth groups, and local social mechanisms.

During the 2001–2003 phase, peace efforts were still dominated by emergency approaches. Both the central and local governments implemented stabilisation measures through the deployment of security forces, mass evacuation, humanitarian assistance, and the restoration of basic social conditions for affected communities. This phase demonstrates that the primary objective of peacebuilding was to end physical violence and establish a minimum level of security. Social conditions at the time remained highly fragile, as expressed by Tuti Maysarah:

"At that time people experienced fear, sadness, panic, anger, and insecurity because there were so many casualties." (T. Maysarah, online interview, 29 September 2025)

During the 2004–2008 phase, the peacebuilding process gradually shifted from emergency responses towards social reconstruction and early reconciliation. At this stage, peace efforts were no longer centred solely on ending violence, but also on creating spaces for interethnic communication, restoring economic activity, and rebuilding everyday social relations. Interethnic dialogue, mediation by local leaders, market recovery, and economic cooperation became important means of reconnecting Dayak and Madurese communities through shared socio-economic interests. This pattern demonstrates that peace began to move beyond physical security towards the restoration of social relations. This finding is consistent with Kurniadi et al. (2019), who argue that conflict transformation requires the creation of new spaces for interaction, strengthened cooperation, and changes in intergroup relations.

The 2009–2015 phase marked the consolidation and institutionalisation of peace. During this period, peace increasingly became institutionalised through symbols, forums, and social mechanisms. The construction of the Sampit Peace Monument became one of the most important symbols in shaping collective memory and strengthening the community's commitment not to return to past violence. Khairullah, an informant from the Madurese community, stated:

"The peace effort that helped the most was the Peace Monument in East Kotawaringin Regency, especially in Sampit." (Khairullah, online interview, 30 September 2025)

During the 2016–2020 phase, peacebuilding entered a stage of strengthening and social innovation. Peace initiatives expanded through peace education, cultural activities, youth communities, and the use of social media to disseminate messages of tolerance. In this phase,

young people became significant actors because they did not always carry direct memories of the violence of 2001 and were generally more open to forming interethnic friendships. Siti Naya Ramanda explained:

“Among young people, suspicion still exists, but it is gradually decreasing. Nowadays many young people form friendships across ethnic groups, even within the same class, sports team, or community.” (S. N. Ramanda, online interview, 29 September 2025)

However, the phase of social innovation also revealed new challenges because social media possesses an ambivalent character. On the one hand, social media can expand narratives of tolerance and strengthen positive intergroup interaction. On the other hand, it may also become a space for the dissemination of hoaxes, hate speech, and the reproduction of intergroup prejudice. Naya further explained:

“Social media can be a double-edged sword. If it is used to spread tolerance, mutual support, and positive activities, it really helps strengthen relationships. But if it is used to spread hoaxes or hate speech, it can actually trigger new conflicts.” (S. N. Ramanda, online interview, 29 September 2025)

The 2021–2024 phase demonstrates a tendency towards sustainable peace. During this period, peacebuilding increasingly focused on strengthening local capacity, dialogue forums, early warning systems, community participation, and the prevention of recurring conflict. The existence of the Community Early Warning Forum in East Kotawaringin became an important mechanism for detecting potential social conflicts, including ethnic and religious tensions, before they escalated into open violence (Norjani & Hidayat, 2022). This approach demonstrates that peace cannot be maintained solely through symbolic reconciliation, but also requires responsive social and institutional systems capable of addressing potential tensions. Thus, peace in Sampit has gradually shifted from symbolic reconciliation towards more systematic conflict prevention.

Table 2. Phases of Dayak–Madurese Peacebuilding Transformation in Sampit, 2001–2024

Period	Characteristics of the Phase	Forms of Peacebuilding	Meaning of the Transformation
2001–2003	Emergency stabilisation	Deployment of security forces, evacuation of residents, humanitarian assistance, restoration of public security	Peace remained focused on ending violence and creating minimum social security.
2004–2008	Reconstruction and early reconciliation	Interethnic dialogue, mediation by local leaders, market recovery, economic cooperation	Peace began to move from physical security towards the restoration of social relations.
2009–2015	Consolidation and institutionalisation of peace	Peace Monument, social and religious forums, strengthening cross-group communication	Peace became institutionalised through symbols, forums, and collective memory.
2016–2020	Strengthening and social innovation	Peace education, cultural activities, youth communities, use of social media	Peace expanded into everyday spaces, communities, and digital environments.
2021–2024	Sustainable peace	Dialogue forums, early warning systems, community participation, prevention of recurring conflict	Peace was directed towards more preventive, participatory, and sustainable social systems.

The success of peacebuilding in Sampit has been supported by several major factors. First, the roles of customary and religious leaders, who possess strong social legitimacy in mediating tensions and rebuilding intergroup trust. Second, government commitment through security recovery, support for harmony forums, and the establishment of early warning systems. Third, economic interdependence through markets, small businesses, and cross-ethnic cooperation that encourage more productive social interaction. Fourth, the involvement of young people who build interethnic relations through schools, sports, communities, and social media. Fifth, the symbolism of the Peace Monument, which functions as a medium of collective memory and a marker of reconciliation.

Nevertheless, the process of conflict transformation in Sampit still faces several obstacles. Collective trauma has not been fully healed, causing some members of society to avoid discussing past violence for fear of reopening old wounds. Post-conflict geographical segregation also means that everyday interaction between Dayak and Madurese communities does not always occur intensively. In addition, intergenerational prejudice still exists, although it is gradually declining, as indicated by Siti Naya Ramanda's statement that "suspicion still exists, but it is gradually decreasing" (S. N. Ramanda, online interview, 29 September 2025). Other challenges include the uneven implementation of peace education, the potential for conflict within social media, and structural issues such as economic inequality, land access, and resource distribution.

Based on these findings, four major patterns emerge in the transformation of Dayak–Madurese peacebuilding in Sampit. First, the transformation of peace occurred gradually, moving from security stabilisation towards social reconstruction, institutional consolidation, social innovation, and sustainable peace. Second, the actors of peace became increasingly diverse, shifting from the dominance of the state and security forces towards customary leaders, religious leaders, social forums, youth groups, and local communities. Third, spaces of peace expanded from physical security into markets, education, communities, public symbols, and digital media. Fourth, peace has not been fully achieved because trauma, segregation, prejudice, economic inequality, and the risk of digital conflict remain ongoing challenges that must continue to be managed. Thus, this subsection demonstrates that Dayak–Madurese peacebuilding in Sampit represents a gradual process moving from the cessation of violence towards the construction of a more participatory and sustainable positive peace.

3. Forms of Dayak–Madurese Conflict Transformation in Sampit: Relational, Structural, Cultural, and Generational Dimensions

The findings of this study indicate that the transformation of the Dayak–Madurese conflict in Sampit has occurred through several major forms, namely relational, structural, cultural-symbolic, conflict mechanism, and generational transformation. Whilst subsection 3.1 explained the socio-historical context of the conflict and subsection 3.2 described the phases of peacebuilding, this subsection emphasises the substantive forms of change that emerged from those processes. Within Johan Galtung's framework, conflict transformation does not merely refer to the cessation of direct violence, but also to changes in social structures, cultural values, and social relations that enable society to move from negative peace towards positive peace (Galtung, 1996).

The first form of transformation is visible in changing interethnic relations. In the early post-conflict period, relations between the Dayak and Madurese communities were still characterised by caution, fear, and social distance. Communities that had directly experienced the conflict did not immediately return to open social interaction because trauma and distrust remained deeply embedded. Over time, however, these relations gradually changed through economic interaction, education, social activities, and community spaces. Siti Naya Ramanda explained that society has increasingly become capable of distinguishing personal disputes from ethnic conflict, so that individual problems are no longer automatically generalised as interethnic tensions (S. N. Ramanda, online interview, 29 September 2025). This finding demonstrates that relational transformation occurs when society begins to adopt more rational ways of understanding and responding to social tensions.

The second transformation occurred within the socio-economic structure of society. The 2001 conflict altered settlement patterns, economic access, and spaces of social interaction between the Dayak and Madurese communities. Post-conflict segregation restricted social encounters and slowed the restoration of intergroup trust. Nevertheless, the recovery of economic spaces such as markets, small businesses, informal employment, and cross-ethnic cooperation gradually

reopened opportunities for intergroup interaction. In this context, economic structures function not only as mechanisms for restoring livelihoods, but also as social spaces that reconnect groups previously involved in conflict through mutually dependent interests.

The third transformation is visible in the cultural and symbolic dimension. The Dayak–Madurese conflict was shaped not only by economic factors, but also by differences in values, communication patterns, stereotypes, and mechanisms of dispute settlement. Consequently, conflict transformation required a shift in narrative from prejudice towards coexistence. Multicultural education, cultural activities, the strengthening of local values, and peace symbols such as the Sampit Peace Monument became important components in shaping collective memory and social commitment to avoid a return to past violence. In this regard, peace symbols function not merely as monuments, but also as markers of changing meaning from conflict towards coexistence.

The fourth transformation can be observed in conflict resolution mechanisms. In the early post-conflict period, conflict management relied heavily on reactive security approaches. Over time, however, mechanisms of conflict resolution shifted towards more dialogical and preventive approaches through intergroup communication, the involvement of customary and religious leaders, social forums, and early warning systems. This shift demonstrates that society requires not only the cessation of violence, but also social mechanisms capable of preventing minor tensions from escalating into communal conflict. Thus, the transformation of conflict mechanisms can be seen in the transition from violence control towards the prevention of recurring conflict.

Nevertheless, these transformations continue to face challenges related to the management of memory and collective trauma. Tuti Maysarah stated that traumatic memories still remain, and that many members of society avoid discussing past violence for fear of reopening old wounds (T. Maysarah, online interview, 29 September 2025). Such silence may help maintain short-term social stability, but it may also hinder deeper processes of social healing. Therefore, conflict transformation requires safe spaces in which memory, trauma, and social recognition can be addressed without reigniting past hostility.

The fifth transformation is evident in generational change. The generation that directly experienced the conflict still carries trauma and memories of violence, whereas the younger post-conflict generation tends to be more open in developing interethnic relations. Young people increasingly build social relations through schools, sports, communities, and digital spaces, rather than solely through inherited memories of past conflict. However, generational transformation still faces challenges in the form of inherited prejudice transmitted through families and social environments. Social media also presents new challenges because it can be used both to strengthen tolerance and to spread hoaxes, hate speech, and intergroup prejudice. Consequently, the role of younger generations must be supported through peace education, digital literacy, and sustainable spaces for interethnic encounter.

Table 3. Forms of Dayak–Madurese Conflict Transformation in Sampit

Forms of Transformation	Indicators of Findings	Meaning of Transformation
Relational transformation	Declining ethnic generalisation and increasing ability to distinguish personal conflict from communal conflict.	Interethnic relations have gradually shifted from suspicion towards caution, self-restraint, and greater social openness.
Structural transformation	Recovery of economic spaces, markets, small businesses, and cross-ethnic cooperation.	Socio-economic structures have begun to function as spaces for encounter and the restoration of trust.
Cultural-symbolic transformation	Emergence of narratives of coexistence, peace symbols, and strengthened collective memory.	A culture of conflict has gradually been transformed into a culture of peace through symbols, local values, and collective awareness.

Forms of Transformation	Indicators of Findings	Meaning of Transformation
Transformation of conflict mechanisms	Shift from reactive security approaches towards dialogue, mediation, and early warning systems.	Conflict resolution has evolved from violence control towards the prevention of recurring conflict.
Generational transformation	Young people building interethnic relations through schools, communities, sports, and social media.	Peace is increasingly transmitted through new and more inclusive forms of shared social experience.

Based on these findings, four major patterns emerge regarding the transformation of the Dayak–Madurese conflict in Sampit. First, transformation has moved from relations characterised by fear, caution, and social distance towards more open relations through economic interaction, education, and community engagement. Second, transformation has occurred not only at the level of social relations, but also within economic structures and institutional mechanisms that create spaces for interethnic encounter. Third, peace symbols and collective memory have played an important role in transforming narratives of conflict into narratives of coexistence. Fourth, younger generations have become important actors in sustaining peace, although they still face inherited trauma, familial prejudice, and the risks associated with digital conflict. Thus, the transformation of the Dayak–Madurese conflict in Sampit has occurred in layered forms, extending from changes in social relations to transformations in structures, culture, conflict resolution mechanisms, and post-conflict generational consciousness.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Dayak–Madurese conflict in Sampit was not merely an episode of ethnic violence in 2001, but part of a prolonged socio-historical process. The conflict emerged through the accumulation of migration, economic competition, cultural differences, weak conflict resolution mechanisms, and intergroup prejudice. The findings reveal that conflict transformation in Sampit developed gradually through several phases, namely emergency response, reconstruction, consolidation, innovation, and the sustainability of peace. This process was marked not only by the cessation of direct violence, but also by changes in social relations, the strengthening of local mechanisms, the emergence of peace symbols, the involvement of younger generations, and the development of new awareness regarding the importance of coexistence within a multi-ethnic society.

Within Johan Galtung's framework of conflict transformation, the initial post-conflict condition in Sampit can be understood as a form of *negative peace*, namely a situation in which direct violence had ceased, yet trauma, fear, social segregation, and prejudice remained embedded within society. Peace at this stage remained fragile because the community had not fully recovered from the memory of violence. The transition towards *positive peace* began when communities, local government, customary leaders, religious leaders, educational institutions, and youth communities gradually rebuilt spaces for social interaction. Therefore, peace in Sampit did not emerge automatically after the conflict ended, but was continuously produced through dialogue, economic cooperation, multicultural education, reconciliation symbols, and early warning mechanisms.

From an explanatory perspective, conflict transformation in Sampit occurred because of a shared need to rebuild security, restore economic activities, and reorganise interethnic social relations. After the conflict, society could not remain permanently separated because markets, education, employment, public spaces, and everyday life required interaction between groups. These practical needs gradually created new spaces of communication between the Dayak and Madurese communities. Relations that were initially characterised by fear and suspicion slowly

shifted towards cautious interaction and eventually developed into cooperation. This demonstrates that conflict transformation depends not only on formal policies, but also on everyday social processes that gradually rebuild trust.

These findings are consistent with Kurniadi et al. (2019), who emphasised that social conflict transformation requires changes in social relations, cooperation, and the formation of new spaces of interaction. However, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that conflict transformation in Sampit unfolded over a long period from 2001 to 2024 and did not proceed linearly. The peace process evolved through layered phases consisting of emergency management, social recovery, institutional consolidation, peace innovation, and efforts to maintain sustainability. The novelty of this research lies in its interpretation of conflict transformation as a long-term process involving collective trauma, peace symbols, younger generations, social media, multicultural education, and early warning systems.

This study also expands the work of Nurholis (2023) regarding interethnic relations between the Dayak and Madurese communities within family and traditional contexts. While the previous study demonstrated that reconciliation could occur through personal relationships and interethnic marriage, this research shows that reconciliation also operates on a broader social level. Conflict transformation occurs not only within family relations, but also in markets, schools, youth communities, public forums, cultural activities, and digital spaces. Consequently, ethnic identity no longer functions solely as a social boundary, but is increasingly negotiated as a space for new social encounters.

Historically, the findings indicate that the Sampit conflict continues to exist as a collective memory influencing the way communities construct social relations. The history of conflict has not entirely disappeared, but is managed through caution, the avoidance of sensitive narratives, peace symbols, and intergenerational education (Isnanto, 2024). This suggests that peace in Sampit is not a complete separation from the past, but rather a process of managing traumatic memories so that they do not become sources of renewed violence. In this context, history functions both as a warning about the dangers of identity-based conflict and as a foundation for constructing new awareness regarding the importance of reconciliation (Susilo et al., 2025).

Socially, the findings demonstrate that peace is constructed through the rebuilding of intergroup relations within everyday life. Markets, schools, sports activities, youth communities, interethnic forums, cultural events, and digital spaces have become important arenas for reconnecting Dayak and Madurese communities in more constructive ways (Muliono, 2021). Younger generations occupy a strategic position because many of them did not directly experience the conflict, yet they live within its inherited memory. When they build friendships across ethnic boundaries, study together, cooperate, and participate in community activities, they become social agents capable of breaking the intergenerational transmission of prejudice (Sukmana et al., 2024).

Ideologically, this study demonstrates a shift from exclusive identity narratives towards narratives of nationalism and coexistence. The principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) functions as a moral framework through which ethnic differences are reinterpreted as part of collective coexistence rather than as threats (Khadijah, 2018; Lan, 2018; Zulkarnaini et al., 2025). In this context, conflict transformation requires not only structural change, but also a transformation in patterns of thought. Peace becomes possible when society moves from the logic of “us versus them” towards an understanding that diversity forms part of a shared national identity (Ronaldo & Riyanto, 2025).

Reflection upon these findings reveals that peacebuilding in Sampit has played an important function in creating social stability. Peacebuilding has reopened spaces for interethnic interaction, strengthened the role of local leaders, revitalised communication forums, developed symbols of reconciliation, encouraged economic cooperation, and involved younger generations in peace

practices. The Peace Monument, FKUB, FKDM, multicultural education, cross-cultural activities, and youth engagement function as social instruments that help prevent conflict from re-emerging. In this regard, peacebuilding functions not only as a conflict resolution strategy, but also as a process of social education that teaches communities to manage differences more maturely.

Nevertheless, the peacebuilding process also contains several dysfunctions. First, some aspects of peace remain based on the avoidance of conflict memories rather than on deep trauma healing. Second, social segregation and the intergenerational transmission of prejudice may continue to obstruct the development of genuine trust. Third, peace education and tolerance programmes risk becoming merely symbolic if they are not implemented sustainably. Fourth, social media may become a new arena for the spread of hoaxes, hate speech, and identity-based provocation. Fifth, economic inequality and unequal access to resources continue to represent potential sources of latent conflict if not addressed fairly. These dysfunctions indicate that positive peace in Sampit remains incomplete and still requires structural, cultural, and relational strengthening.

Based on these dysfunctions, the necessary course of action is to strengthen reconciliation through integrated trauma healing, peace education, digital literacy, early warning systems, and socio-economic justice. Local government, customary leaders, religious leaders, academics, schools, youth communities, FKUB, and FKDM should provide safe spaces for dialogue in order to manage conflict memories in healthier ways so that trauma is not inherited as intergenerational prejudice. Multicultural and peace education should also be developed as sustainable programmes through school curricula, community activities, cultural festivals, and interethnic forums so that tolerance does not remain limited to ceremonial initiatives. At the same time, digital literacy must be strengthened so that society, particularly younger generations, can recognise hoaxes, hate speech, and identity-based provocation circulating on social media, while also transforming digital spaces into platforms for the dissemination of peaceful narratives. Furthermore, community-based early warning systems should be reinforced through active coordination between interethnic communication forums, local leaders, and government institutions in order to detect and mediate potential conflicts at an early stage. In addition, local government should promote socio-economic justice through joint cooperatives, entrepreneurship training, inclusive markets, digital economic programmes, and the empowerment of interethnic youth, since sustainable peace cannot be maintained solely through reconciliation symbols, but also through the reduction of social inequality and the fair distribution of resources.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the peacebuilding process between the Dayak and Madurese ethnic groups in Sampit during the period 2001–2024 represents a long-term social process that extends beyond the cessation of physical violence. Peace in Sampit gradually moved from negative peace, namely the absence of direct violence, towards positive peace, characterised by more open social relations, more inclusive social structures, and a more sustainable culture of peace. This transformation can be observed through three main dimensions: relational, structural, and cultural. In the relational dimension, interethnic relations gradually shifted from suspicion towards interaction and cooperation. In the structural dimension, government policies, early warning forums, and socio-religious institutions played important roles in maintaining social stability. In the cultural dimension, multicultural education, peace symbols, and the role of local leaders contributed to reducing stereotypes and rebuilding social trust.

The scientific contribution of this study lies in its localised interpretation of Johan Galtung's theory of conflict transformation through the case of Sampit from 2001 to 2024. This research demonstrates that the concepts of negative peace and positive peace remain relevant for

understanding post-conflict peacebuilding processes, yet they need to be enriched through local dimensions such as the role of customary institutions, collective trauma, peace symbols, the intergenerational transmission of prejudice, and the involvement of younger generations. Accordingly, this study confirms that peace is not an instant outcome, but a continuous social process negotiated through relations, structures, culture, and conflict prevention policies.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. It has not explored in depth the psychological experiences of victims, particularly regarding intergenerational trauma and mechanisms of collective healing. In addition, the field data relied mainly on online interviews and literature studies, meaning that the direct dynamics of social interaction within Sampit society were not fully captured. Therefore, future studies are recommended to conduct broader field research involving participants from different generations and communities, as well as comparative studies with other post-conflict regions in Indonesia in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the sustainability of reconciliation within multicultural societies.

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