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## Abstract

*This article examines the role of kyai as cultural religious authorities in responding to environmental crises through ecological fatwas in Indonesia. Previous studies on environmental fatwas have primarily examined institutional eco-fatwas, emphasizing practical limitations in addressing ecological crises. This study fills the gap by showing how pesantren-based scholars integrate classical fiqh with contemporary environmental challenges through social and maqasid-oriented approaches. It focuses on the thoughts of Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie as two influential scholars who successfully translated classical Islamic teachings into contextual environmental ethics. Using a qualitative approach based on document analysis, this research reviews the writings, fatwas, lectures, and public statements of both figures related to environmental issues. The findings show that ecological fatwas function not only as religious legal arguments but also as social instruments that shape collective awareness regarding human responsibility toward nature. Sahal Mahfudh emphasizes a social fiqh approach oriented toward public welfare, while Ali Yafie develops environmental fiqh based on maqasid al-shari'ah. The cultural authority of kyai through networks*

of pesantren, religious study sessions, and social leadership makes fatwas more easily accepted and translated into community practice. This study contributes to of Islamic cultural studies demonstrating that the effectiveness of ecological fatwas in Indonesia depends not only on normative arguments but also on the social legitimacy of kyai as mediators between Islamic tradition and contemporary ecological challenges. The implication is that strengthening environmental policies in Muslim communities needs to involve local religious authorities so that ecological values are more effectively accepted, practiced, and sustained.

Artikel ini mengkaji peran kyai sebagai otoritas keagamaan kultural dalam merespons krisis lingkungan melalui fatwa ekologis di Indonesia. Studi-studi terdahulu mengenai fatwa lingkungan sebagian besar berfokus pada fatwa ekologis yang dikeluarkan oleh institusi resmi, dengan menekankan keterbatasan praktis dalam mengatasi krisis ekologi. Penelitian ini mengisi kekosongan tersebut dengan menunjukkan bagaimana para ulama berbasis pesantren mengintegrasikan fikih klasik dengan tantangan lingkungan kontemporer melalui pendekatan sosial dan berorientasi maqasid. Penelitian ini berfokus pada pemikiran Sahal Mahfudh dan Ali Yafie sebagai dua ulama berpengaruh yang berhasil menerjemahkan ajaran Islam klasik menjadi etika lingkungan yang kontekstual. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis analisis dokumen, penelitian ini meninjau tulisan, fatwa, ceramah, dan pernyataan publik dari kedua tokoh tersebut yang terkait dengan isu-isu lingkungan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa fatwa ekologis berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai argumen hukum agama, tetapi juga sebagai instrumen sosial yang membentuk kesadaran kolektif mengenai tanggung jawab manusia terhadap alam. Sahal Mahfudh menekankan pendekatan fikih sosial yang berorientasi pada kemaslahatan publik, sedangkan Ali Yafie mengembangkan fikih lingkungan berbasis maqasid al-shari'ah. Otoritas kultural kyai melalui jaringan pesantren, pengajian keagamaan, dan kepemimpinan sosial membuat fatwa lebih mudah diterima dan diterjemahkan ke dalam praktik masyarakat. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi bagi studi budaya Islam dengan menunjukkan bahwa efektivitas fatwa ekologis di Indonesia tidak hanya bergantung pada argumen normatif, tetapi juga pada legitimasi sosial kyai sebagai mediator antara tradisi Islam dan tantangan ekologis kontemporer. Implikasinya adalah bahwa penguatan kebijakan lingkungan di komunitas Muslim perlu melibatkan otoritas keagamaan lokal agar nilai-nilai ekologis dapat diterima, dipraktikkan, dan dipertahankan secara lebih efektif.

**Keywords:** ecological fatwas, environmental crisis, Indonesian Islam, Islamic environmental jurisprudence, religious authority

## Introduction

Natural disasters do not occur solely due to natural processes, but are largely influenced by human activities. Floods, landslides, and droughts are

often the result of poor environmental management, such as deforestation, uncontrolled land conversion, urbanization in vulnerable areas, and weak environmental governance. This condition shows that humans are not only victims, but also major contributors to the ecological crisis and the increasing risk of disasters (Ceddia et al., 2013; Damasceno et al., 2007; Rockström & Lambin, 2009). Indonesia is one of the countries with the highest disaster risk in the world. The high social, economic, and environmental vulnerability causes floods, landslides, extreme weather, and various other disasters to continually occur in many areas. National data shows thousands of disaster incidents each year that result in casualties, infrastructure damage, and socio-economic disruptions. This condition affirms that the environmental crisis in Indonesia is a serious issue that requires a comprehensive response (Pangaribuan et al., 2019; WRI, 2022; BNPB, 2023; Monalia & Noorratri, 2024).

Religion as a source of values and ethics plays an important role in building public awareness of the environmental crisis. In Islam, humans are positioned as caliphs who are responsible for maintaining the balance of nature, not exploiting it. In Indonesia, attention to environmental issues has increasingly developed through religious discussions, pesantren education, as well as fatwas that emphasize the importance of ecological ethics. This shows that the environmental crisis is not only understood as a technical issue but also as a moral and spiritual issue that requires the active involvement of religious authorities and the community (Jabar-NU, 2025; *kompas*, 2024; Muhammadiyah, 2025). In this context, kyai have a strategic position as local religious authorities with significant influence in shaping the views and behaviors of the community. Through fatwas, sermons, religious study sessions, and pesantren networks, kyai play a role in translating Islamic teachings into social responsibilities for environmental stewardship. Compared to formal regulations, the cultural authority of kyai is often more effective in instilling collective awareness at the grassroots level.

So far, studies on environmental fatwas have focused more on institutional fatwas such as those of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), which serve as moral guidelines in responding to climate change, forest fires, and the exploitation of natural resources (Iskandar & Sofuoglu, 2025; Mufid, 2020). Harnowo and Habib (2024) emphasized the importance of religious involvement in addressing the widespread impacts of climate change and the global environmental crisis. Ansori et al. (2025) showed that the eco-fatwas of local scholars in Riau attempt to respond to environmental damage

are limited to the representation of ideas, narratives, and arguments written in the sources rather than to the direct measurement of social effectiveness in the field. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and cross-reading between documents (Bowen, 2009; Morgan, 2022).

## Findings and Discussion

### *The Scriptural Basics in the Ecological Fatwa of Kiai*

Contemporary environmental crises, such as climate change, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and recurrent disasters, have driven the emergence of new ethical and legal reflections within religious traditions (Humaida, 2024). In the context of Indonesian Islam, one important response has emerged through the ecological fatwas of the kyai. These fatwas are not merely moral appeals, but a form of Islamic legal-ethical reasoning based on the Qur'an, Sunnah, as well as the treasury of *fiqh* and *ushul fiqh* in responding to modern environmental damage (Suryanullah et al., 2025; Rohmah et al., 2021).

The foundation of revelation plays an important role in the formation of ecological fatwas by kyai because Islamic law is inseparable from religious sources. The Qur'an serves as the main normative framework through the concepts of *fasad fi al-ard* (corruption on earth), *khalifah* (human responsibility), *amanah* (trust), and *mizan* (balance), which position environmental destruction as both a moral and legal issue (Noviani, 2024). Within this framework, the exploitation of nature is understood as a violation of the divine order rather than merely being viewed as a neutral impact of development (Hariati, 2025; Mufid, 2020).

The Sunnah reinforces the ecological principles of the Qur'an through hadiths about the prohibition of causing harm (*la darar wa la dirar*), protection of water, trees, animals, and public spaces. In the context of Indonesia, these hadiths are combined with *fiqh* rules so that environmental damage can be assessed ethically as well as legally. Classical *fiqh* and *ushul fiqh* become the next methodological basis through discussions on water rights, land use, public welfare, and prevention of harm. References such as *al-Muwafaqat*, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, and *fiqh al-mu'amalat* show the continuity between *fiqh* tradition and contemporary ecological issues (Mutakin & Rahman, 2023; Mangunjaya, 2022; Thahir, 2015).

The prominence of Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie as authorities on ecological fatwas in Indonesia is rooted in their scholarly capacity, institutional leadership, and ability to respond to contemporary issues. Both come from

through the approaches of *fiqh al-bi'ah* and *maqasid al-shari'ah*, but their implementation still faces economic constraints, allowing exploitative practices to remain dominant.

In this context, Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie are two important figures. Sahal Mahfudh is known for his concept of social *fiqh* oriented towards public welfare, whereas Ali Yafie is known as a pioneer of environmental *fiqh* based on *maqasid al-shari'ah*. Both represent pesantren scholars who are able to bridge the tradition of classical *fiqh* with modern ecological challenges. Based on this, this article examines the construction of ecological fatwas by Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie and the role of *kyai* authority in shaping environmental ethics in Indonesia. This study emphasizes that the effectiveness of environmental fatwas is not only determined by normative evidence but also by the social legitimacy of the *kyai* as cultural authorities within society.

## **Method**

This study uses a qualitative approach based on document analysis to examine the construction of Islamic legal-ethical reasoning in ecological fatwas and statements by Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie. Document analysis is a qualitative method that examines texts systematically to understand both the explicit and implicit meanings contained within them (Bowen, 2009; Nabilah & Jumadi, 2022). The unit of analysis in this study consists of documents that directly contain the views of both figures on the environment, disasters, social responsibility, and Islamic ethics. The primary data corpus includes the works of Sahal Mahfudh, such as *Nuansa Fiqh Sosial* and related writings, as well as the works of Ali Yafie, such as *Merintis Fiqh Lingkungan Hidup*, articles, written fatwas, sermons, lectures, and documented public statements. Secondary data in the form of journal articles, institutional reports, and relevant media coverage, were used as supporting context. The documents analyzed were purposively selected based on theme relevance, clarity of author attribution, source credibility, and the publication timeframe relevant to the research focus.

Data analysis was conducted through qualitative content analysis with stages of document identification, theme categorization, content coding, discourse interpretation, and comparison between documents. The analysis focused on patterns of religious argumentation, the use of normative evidence, the *maqasid al-shari'ah* approach, social *fiqh*, and the construction of *kyai* authority in environmental issues. Because this research is document-based, the findings

the Shafi'i pesantren tradition with a strong foundation in fiqh and *usul fiqh*. Sahal Mahfudh, through social fiqh, emphasizes public welfare, while Ali Yafie uses *maqasid al-shari'ah* by placing environmental preservation as part of the protection of life. Their positions in Nahdlatul Ulama and the Indonesian Ulama Council have extended the influence of these ideas into the public sphere through forums such as *Bahtsul Mass'il* (Rasyid, 2020; Mahfudh, 2020).

Within this framework, environmental damage is understood not as a peripheral issue, but as a threat to the main objectives of sharia (Danhas, 2024; Huda, 2023; Rusli, 2018). Sahal Mahfudh specifically views ecological damage as a form of collective injustice that must be addressed through Islamic law that is responsive to social realities (Abdillah, 2025; Romdloni & Djazilan, 2019).

In the Indonesian Islamic intellectual landscape, Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie represent progressive fiqh rooted in the pesantren tradition and classical fiqh, yet open to contextual reasoning (Siddiq, 2014). Sahal Mahfudh, through social fiqh, views environmental damage as a collective injustice that must be addressed through public welfare (Asmani, 2015). Meanwhile, Ali Yafie formulated *fiqh al-bi'ah* by linking environmental ethics and *maqasid al-shari'ah*, and emphasized the importance of a sustainable environment for the protection of life and human well-being. (Falah, 2018). Both figures demonstrate that fiqh can remain traditional in epistemology while being progressive in application (Husein, 2020). Their ecological fatwas are not merely moral rhetoric, but also normative instruments that translate the Qur'an, Sunnah, and classical fiqh into responses to contemporary environmental crises (Ratnasari & Fadil, 2025; Zahroh, 2024).

### ***Qur'anic Reasoning in the Ecological Fatwas of Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie***

The results of the document analysis show that the Qur'an occupies a central position in the construction of ecological fatwas by Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie. Both figures do not interpret ecological verses literally, but rather thematically, transforming Qur'anic values into legal-ethical principles. The main themes that emerge are *fasad fi al-ard*, *khalifah*, *amanah*, *mizan*, and *islah*, which form the basis for the prohibition of environmental destruction and the obligation to preserve the environment (Mahfudz, 2003; Yafie, 2006).

The verse most commonly used is QS. al-Rum: 41 concerning destruction on land and sea caused by human actions (Syarifah et al., 2024). Both figures

interpret this verse as the basis for understanding that deforestation, river pollution, and ecological disasters are modern forms of *fasad* originating from human actions. Therefore, environmental damage is positioned as a prohibited act because it causes widespread harm to society (Mahfudz, 2003; Yafie, 2006). Although both figures share the same scriptural foundation, they differ in emphasis. Sahal Mahfudh tends to relate these verses to social welfare through a social fiqh approach, while Ali Yafie develops them more systematically within the framework of *fiqh al-bi'ah* and *maqasid al-shari'ah*.

The concept of the khalifah in QS. al-Baqarah: 30 serves as an important reference in the ecological fatwas of Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie. Both interpret the verse not as a justification for exploiting nature, but as a basis for human responsibility to manage (*ri'ayah*) and protect (*himayah*) the environment. Ali Yafie emphasizes that the status of khalifah places humans as legal subjects responsible for the ecological impact of their actions, so that negligence or environmental destruction can be regarded as a violation of shar'i law (Mahfudz, 2003; Yafie, 2006). QS. al-Ahzab: 72 regarding *amanah* also reinforces this construction. Sahal Mahfudh interprets *amanah* as a moral and legal responsibility to maintain the order of life, including environmental sustainability. Within the framework of an ecological fatwa, *amanah* is not understood abstractly, but is operationalized as an obligation to prevent damage that threatens communal life. Therefore, violations against the environment are positioned as a form of betrayal of divine trust, which carries both ethical and legal implications (Mahfudz, 2003).

The concept of *mizan* in QS. Al-Rahman: 7-9 also serves as the foundation for environmental ethics. These verses affirm that nature was created in balance and humans are forbidden from destroying it. Sahal Mahfudh uses this concept to assess that economic development that disregards ecological balance contradicts the principles of creation. In fiqh reasoning, violations against *mizan* are understood as actions that cause structural harm (Mahfudz, 2003). Explicit prohibitions against environmental destruction are also found in QS. al-A'raf: 56, *wa la tufsidu fi al-ard ba'da islahiha*. Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie interpret *islah* not only as social reform, but also as environmental sustainability that must be maintained. Therefore, this verse serves as the basis for preventive prohibitions against activities that have the potential to damage the environment, even before actual damage occurs (Mahfudz, 2003; Yafie, 2006).

Through a thematic and integrative reading, verses about *fasad*, *khalifah*,

*amanah*, *mizan*, and *islah* become a strong textual foundation for the ecological fatwas of the kyai (Mahfudz, 2003; Yafie, 2006). These verses not only reaffirm the moral prohibition against environmental destruction, but also provide a rational framework for legal assessment of contemporary ecological practices. This finding indicates that the Qur'an functions not merely as moral legitimacy, but as a basis for legal argumentation that keeps ecological fatwas in Indonesia faithful to the text while responding to modern environmental crises.

### ***Hadith Reasoning in the Ecological Fatwas of Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie***

The Prophet's hadith plays an important role in the formation of ecological fatwas by Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie because it serves as a normative bridge between the cosmological principles of the Qur'an and the operationalization of Islamic law in social life (Mahfudz, 2003; Yafie, 2006). In the tradition of fiqh, hadith is not only understood as the second source of law, but also as an exposition of the values of revelation that can be applied to contemporary issues (Suryanullah et al., 2025). Therefore, both figures use hadiths about the prohibition of danger, resource management, and the protection of living beings to build an environmental ethic that has legal implications (Mahfudz, 2003; Yafie, 2006). The hadith *la darar wa la dirar* becomes the most fundamental basis in their ecological fatwas. From this hadith, the principle *al-darar yuzal* (harm must be removed) arises, which Sahal Mahfudh uses to assess deforestation, river pollution, and other ecological damage as *darar 'amm* (public harm) that contradicts the purposes of sharia (Mahfudz, 2003; Yafie, 2006; Sari, 2024). The hadith prohibiting wasteful use of water, even when performing ablution in a flowing river, was used by Ali Yafie to emphasize the principles of efficiency and ecological responsibility. Water is understood not merely as a means of worship, but as a shared resource that determines public welfare. Therefore, this hadith becomes an ethical-legal basis for criticizing excessive and unjust exploitation of water (Mahfudz, 2003; Yafie, 2006).

Hadiths about the recommendation to plant trees and the prohibition of destroying vegetation also hold an important position in ecological fatwas (Mangunjaya & Praharawati, 2019). The tradition that planting trees is considered a form of charity as long as it provides benefits is understood as Islam's recognition of long-term ecological value. Sahal Mahfudh connects it with the principle of *jalb al-masalih* to support forest and green space conservation policies, while Ali Yafie views the prohibition of illegal logging as a historical

basis for environmental regulation in Islam. Animal protection also becomes an important dimension of the ecological ethics of hadith. The stories of punishment for those who mistreat cats and forgiveness for those who give water to dogs are understood as a basis for the idea that non-human creatures have value recognized by sharia. Sahal Mahfudh uses this principle to criticize economic practices that cause mass suffering to animals and environmental damage (Mahfudz, 2003; Yafie, 2006).

Hadiths about the protection of public spaces, such as prohibiting disturbances to roads, shelters, and water sources, expand environmental ethics into the realm of spatial planning and public rights. Ali Yafie interprets this as a basis for understanding that environmental pollution, blocking access to water, and destroying green spaces constitute violations of the collective rights of the community (Yafie, 2006; Mukti & Efendi, 2020). In general, Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie do not read hadiths literally, but connect them with *maqasid al-shari'ah* and fiqh principles. Therefore, hadiths concerning the prohibition of dangers, water management, protection of vegetation, animals, and public spaces become an important foundation for ecological fatwas that remain faithful to tradition while being responsive to modern environmental crises (Mahfudz, 2003; Bisri, 2025).

### ***Reinterpreting Classical Fiqh for Contemporary Ecological Crisis***

Research findings show that the ecological fatwas of Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie are rooted in the classical fiqh tradition, which is reinterpreted contextually. References to the 'yellow books' indicate that environmental issues are understood through established Islamic legal concepts, such as public welfare, harm prevention, and the management of shared resources. Thus, their ecological reasoning does not break with tradition but rather reactualizes the fiqh heritage to address contemporary crises (Mangunjaya, 2014). One important reference is *al-Muwafaqat* by Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi, which serves as the basis for the approach of *maqasid al-shari'ah*. The principle of realizing benefits and preventing harm is used by Sahal Mahfudh to assert that environmental protection is an inherent part of the objectives of the sharia, especially through a framework of social fiqh oriented towards public welfare (Rahmani & Alwi, 2025). Meanwhile, Ali Yafie enriches environmental fiqh through the ethical dimension derived from *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali. Values such as self-control, criticism of greed, and moral responsibility are used to interpret environmental damage as a form of modern

ethical crisis (Musta'inah, 2021).

The dimension of public resource management and the responsibility of political authorities towards the environment gain a strong foundation in Al-Mawardi's *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah*. The discussion regarding the state's obligation to regulate water, land, and public facilities shows that classical fiqh has long recognized the potential social harm caused by the unjust distribution of resources (Wijayanti et al., 2024). Sahal Mahfudh uses this reference to assert that environmental regulation by the state has strong legitimacy within the Islamic public law tradition, rather than being viewed as a foreign secular intervention (Mangunjaya, 2015).

The idea of the right to water (*huquq al-miyah*) and land use (*isti'mal al-ard*) is also widely found in the literature of fiqh *mu'amalat* and *hisbah*. In the Shafi'i tradition that developed in pesantrens, water is viewed as a shared resource that should not be monopolized if it harms the broader community. This principle was then actualized by the kyai to criticize the privatization of water and the exploitation of natural resources that disregard public rights (Arifin et al., 2023).

In recent developments, Ali Yafie places *fiqh al-bi'ah* as a synthesis between classical fiqh, *maqasid al-shari'ah*, and modern ecological challenges. By referring to principles such as *al-darar yuzal* and *tasarruf al-imam manut bi al-maslahah*, he shows that the normative framework for environmental protection has actually been available within the Islamic legal tradition, although it requires a contextual re-reading (Ibrahim et al., 2024).

This pattern shows that the use of the yellow book in ecological fatwas rejects the dichotomy between tradition and reform. Sahal Mahfudh emphasizes social fiqh oriented towards collective welfare and the legitimacy of public policy, while Ali Yafie is more practical in translating the legacy of fiqh into concrete issues such as water management, forest conservation, and the protection of shared living spaces. Beyond the juridical dimension, the reinterpretation of classical fiqh can also be enriched by spiritual ethics in the Sufi tradition. Values such as trustworthiness, simplicity, self-control, and criticism of greed provide a moral foundation for human relations with nature. In this context, environmental destruction is understood not only as a legal violation but also as a symptom of an ethical crisis and the loss of spiritual responsibility. This perspective complements the fiqh approaches of Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie by positioning environmental protection as both a legal and moral obligation.

### ***Two Models of Ecological Reasoning: Social Fiqh and Maqasid al-Shari'ah***

Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie both use the framework of Islamic law to respond to the environmental crisis, but with different methodological emphases. Ali Yafie highlights the *maqasid al-shari'ah* approach, while Sahal Mahfudh develops social fiqh oriented towards societal realities and public welfare. This difference shows the existence of two complementary models of ecological reasoning within the Indonesian Islamic legal tradition.

For Ali Yafie, environmental damage is a form of *ifsad al-bi'ah* that threatens the fundamental objectives of sharia. Water pollution, forest degradation, and ecological disasters are understood as threats to *hifz al-nafs* (protection of life), *hifz al-mal* (protection of property), and even the sustainability of future generations. Therefore, environmental protection is not positioned as a new legal objective, but rather as a prerequisite for the realization of the classical *maqasid*. Through this framework, he places the prevention of ecological damage as a *shar'i* obligation rooted in the principle of avoiding harm and realizing benefits (Auda, 2022; Islam, 2025; Raimi et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, Sahal Mahfudh develops a social fiqh approach by placing environmental issues as part of the structural problems of society. Deforestation, floods, pollution, and unequal access to resources are understood not merely as technical issues, but as issues of social justice that require responses from Islamic law. Therefore, environmental protection is understood as part of *maslahah 'ammah* and collective responsibility. This approach expands the function of fiqh from merely establishing normative law to becoming an instrument of social transformation that responds to the needs of society.

Although the emphasis is different, both figures use universal principles such as *al-darar yuzal* (harm must be eliminated) and *tasarruf al-imam manut bi al-maslahah* (the policy of public authority must be oriented towards the common good). This shows that the reasoning of *maqasid* and social fiqh are not two conflicting approaches, but rather two paths of *ijtihad* that both strive to translate Islamic principles into concrete ecological responsibility.

### ***The Cultural Authority of Kyai and the Social Effectiveness of Ecological Fatwas***

In Indonesia, a fatwa does not merely function as a normative legal product, but also as a socio-cultural instrument intertwined with the structure of local religious authority (Ztf, 2012). In the context of pesantren and rural

communities, fatwas delivered by kyai have a strong social binding power because they are formulated and communicated by taking into account normative fiqh as well as *'urf* (local customs). This condition shows that religious practices in Indonesia take place through the indigenization of Islamic values, rather than through the negation of local culture (Bahren, 2025; Fauzi, 2017). Institutional reports and field data (2024–2026) also show that kyai play an active role in mediating Sharia values with the interests of social harmony and environmental sustainability. Within this framework, fatwas are present not merely as legal-formal orders, but as collective ethical guidelines that operate through cultural language and social habits (Fauzi, 2017; Luthfi et al., 2024).

The manifestation of this cultural authority is evident in various community-based ecological practices. In several pesantren and santri villages, river and environmental cleanliness is presented as part of faith, making communal work understood not only as a social obligation but also as the internalization of religious teachings. This approach is considered more effective in encouraging community participation compared to mere administrative appeals, as seen in the environmental cleanliness movement initiated by young kyai in East Java (Yusuf, 2024). In some other regions, the ban on throwing garbage into rivers is reinforced through socially based sanctions rooted in customary law, such as the concept of *pamali*. This practice shows the integration between Islamic normative principles—for example, the prohibition against causing damage to the earth—and local social control mechanisms, thereby increasing community compliance, especially in flood-prone areas (Mitra, 2025).

Similar dimensions are also seen in ecological rituals based on prayer and charity. The traditions of *istisqa'*, river charity, and modified village feasts by kyai demonstrate how symbolic religious practices can be transformed into concrete ecological actions. In the Brantas and Citarum regions, for example, communal prayers are often accompanied by river cleaning activities and environmental education. This transformation marks a shift in rituals from symbolic expression to faith-based ecological movements (Pranoto & Tondok, 2024; Rindiani & Nabila, 2025).

At the national level, normative legitimacy is reinforced through a fatwa of the Indonesian Ulama Council issued during the 11th National Deliberation in 2025, which stipulates the prohibition of throwing garbage into rivers, seas, and lakes. The statement by the head of the fatwa commission affirms that waste management is part of social worship (*mu'amalah*) as well as a religious response to the environmental crisis (CNA, 2025; Mitra, 2025). However, the

effectiveness of the fatwa greatly depends on the role of the kyai as a translators of normative values into sermons, religious studies, pesantren education, and daily social actions, so that the fatwa transforms from a legal document into a collective cultural movement.

In ecological disaster situations such as floods, the social function of fatwas becomes increasingly apparent. Fatwas do not stop at halal-haram assessments but serve as ethical instruments that encourage collective action. Within Ali Yafie's framework of thought, environmental disasters are a form of *mafsadah 'ammah* that require responses based on *maqasid al-shari'ah*, particularly the protection of life (*hifz al-nafs*) and the sustainability of social life. In line with this, Sahal Mahfudh places fatwas within the framework of social fiqh, namely Islamic law aimed at resolving real societal problems. Therefore, ecological fatwas function as moral legitimization for emergency actions and social solidarity (Nayab, 2025).

Various national and local media reports indicate that networks of Islamic boarding schools and student communities are actively involved in flood response, ranging from evacuating victims, distributing logistics, to post-disaster cleaning, which is often preceded by religious calls (Humas Polri, 2025; MUI Jatim, 2022). From Sahal Mahfudh's perspective, this reflects the function of religious policies that are oriented towards public welfare. Meanwhile, according to Ali Yafie, collective involvement in emergency conditions can be categorized as a socio-religious obligation (*wajib kifayah*), and even becomes *wajib 'ayn* when life safety is threatened.

Ethically, ecological fatwas also shift the public's perspective on disasters: from merely natural calamities to a collective human responsibility as *khalifah fi al-ard*. Documentation of pesantren activities, reports from religious organizations, and official social media of Islamic organizations show that the fatwa narrative encourages the emergence of faith-based solidarity, not just administrative compliance. In Indonesia's religious social structure, kyai therefore function as community-based mitigation agents who bridge sharia values with the practical needs of society. This underscores that the effectiveness of ecological fatwas in Indonesia is highly determined by the kyai's cultural authority and their ability to translate Islamic law into social actions that are adaptive, sustainable, and responsive to environmental crises.

In that context, Sahal Mahfudh represents a model of kyai authority that emphasizes social fiqh, namely the translation of Islamic law into the resolution of real societal problems through public welfare. Meanwhile, Ali

Yafie presents a pattern of normative-intellectual authority that connects environmental issues with the *maqasid al-shari'ah* and the moral responsibility of the community. Both approaches demonstrate how religious leadership operates through social as well as normative channels.

## **Conclusion**

This study shows that the ecological fatwas developed by Sahal Mahfudh and Ali Yafie represent a dynamic synthesis between Islamic scholarly tradition and contemporary environmental challenges in Indonesia. There are three main findings in this study. First, the ecological reasoning of both figures is rooted in sources of Islamic teachings, religious principles, and classical intellectual heritage, which are reinterpreted to respond to modern environmental issues. Second, both figures developed complementary approaches: Sahal Mahfudh emphasized a social orientation focused on public welfare and structural societal problems, while Ali Yafie employed the *maqasid al-shari'ah* approach, positioning environmental protection as part of safeguarding life, well-being, and collective sustainability. Third, the social effectiveness of ecological fatwas is determined not only by the strength of normative arguments but also by the cultural and institutional authority of the kyai who interpret them. Third, the social effectiveness of ecological fatwas is also shaped by the ability of kyai to translate religious teachings into concrete practices through sermons, pesantren networks, and community social mobilization.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the study of Islamic culture by showing that Islamic normative traditions do not function as a static system, but rather as a living ethical framework capable of adapting to changes in social contexts. This study also emphasizes the importance of viewing religious authority not only through formal institutions, but also through the role of kyai as cultural mediators who bridge religious texts, local customs, and ecological actions. In this regard, the case of Indonesia offers an important model of how religious authority can contribute to environmental governance in Muslim communities.

This research has several limitations. As a qualitative study based on document analysis, the research findings rely on texts, public statements, institutional reports, and documented practices, and thus do not yet include direct field observations or interviews with religious actors and the community. Therefore, this study cannot yet comprehensively measure the factual impact of ecological fatwas on changes in community behavior at the grassroots

level. Further research can strengthen these findings through field studies on pesantren environmental movements, comparisons of kyai networks in different regions, or quantitative measurements of the influence of religious authority on community ecological attitudes and practices.

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## THE REWANDA OFFERING TRADITION: AN ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

*This study examines the symbolic meanings and environmental ethical dimensions embedded in the Sesaji Rewanda tradition practiced at Kreo Cave. Previous studies on the Sesaji Rewanda tradition have mainly focused on symbolic meanings and cultural tourism, with limited attention to local communities' experiences and perspectives. However, the tradition represents a cultural ritual associated with respect for the monkeys inhabiting the area and forms part of the historical memory preserved by the local community. This research employs a qualitative ethnographic approach to understand the cultural practices and meanings constructed by the community in performing the ritual. Data were collected through non-participant observation, in-depth interviews with community leaders, local vendors, and tourism managers, as well as documentation of symbolic practices throughout the Sesaji Rewanda procession. The data were analyzed interpretatively through data reduction, thematic categorization, and meaning interpretation by integrating perspectives from cultural anthropology and Islamic environmental ethics. The findings reveal that the Sesaji Rewanda tradition reflects a symbolic relationship between humans, nature, and religious values that fosters ecological awareness within the community. In addition, the tradition strengthens social solidarity while supporting local economic activities surrounding the Kreo Cave tourism area. These findings indicate that local cultural practices can serve as cultural mechanisms linking environmental conservation, cultural identity, and community social life. Therefore, stakeholders*

should promote sustainable ecotourism at Kreo Cave through environmental conservation, regulated tourism management, community participation, Islamic ecological ethics, and equitable economic benefits. Collaborative efforts among governments, communities, religious leaders, academics, and tourism managers are essential to preserving cultural and ecological sustainability.

Penelitian ini mengkaji makna simbolik dan dimensi etika lingkungan yang terkandung dalam tradisi Sesaji Rewanda yang dipraktikkan di Goa Kreo. Penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya mengenai tradisi Sesaji Rewanda umumnya berfokus pada makna simbolik dan pariwisata budaya, dengan perhatian yang masih terbatas terhadap pengalaman dan perspektif masyarakat lokal. Namun demikian, tradisi ini merupakan ritual budaya yang berkaitan dengan penghormatan terhadap monyet-monyet yang mendiami kawasan tersebut serta menjadi bagian dari memori historis yang dijaga oleh masyarakat setempat. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan etnografi kualitatif untuk memahami praktik budaya dan makna yang dibangun masyarakat dalam pelaksanaan ritual tersebut. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi nonpartisipan, wawancara mendalam dengan tokoh masyarakat, pedagang lokal, dan pengelola wisata, serta dokumentasi praktik-praktik simbolik selama prosesi Sesaji Rewanda berlangsung. Data dianalisis secara interpretatif melalui reduksi data, kategorisasi tematik, dan interpretasi makna dengan mengintegrasikan perspektif antropologi budaya dan etika lingkungan Islam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tradisi Sesaji Rewanda merefleksikan hubungan simbolik antara manusia, alam, dan nilai-nilai keagamaan yang menumbuhkan kesadaran ekologis dalam masyarakat. Selain itu, tradisi ini memperkuat solidaritas sosial sekaligus mendukung aktivitas ekonomi masyarakat di sekitar kawasan wisata Goa Kreo. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa praktik budaya lokal dapat berfungsi sebagai mekanisme budaya yang menghubungkan konservasi lingkungan, identitas budaya, dan kehidupan sosial masyarakat. Oleh karena itu, para pemangku kepentingan perlu mendorong pengembangan ekowisata berkelanjutan di Goa Kreo melalui konservasi lingkungan, pengelolaan wisata yang teratur, partisipasi masyarakat, penerapan etika ekologi Islam, dan distribusi manfaat ekonomi yang adil. Upaya kolaboratif antara pemerintah, masyarakat, tokoh agama, akademisi, dan pengelola wisata sangat penting untuk menjaga keberlanjutan budaya dan ekologi.

**Keywords:** *ecological awareness, ethnography; Islamic environmental ethics, local wisdom, Sesaji Rewanda*

## Introduction

Traditional rituals constitute an important part of intangible cultural heritage that represents the values, beliefs, and social practices of a community. In anthropological and cultural studies, rituals are understood as social practices closely related to collective identity and value systems transmitted

across generations. Rituals also function as spaces of social interaction that reveal the relationship between communities and the cultural environments in which these practices take place. Studies on cultural rituals indicate that ritual practices are closely connected to the social dynamics of communities as well as the economic activities that develop around them (Ariwibowo et al., 2025).

In contemporary developments, ritual traditions are no longer perceived solely as cultural practices but are also embedded within broader social, economic, and cultural tourism dynamics. Recent studies suggest that traditional rituals often undergo transformation when interacting with tourism interests, local economic activities, and regional cultural promotion (Suharti & Sari, 2023). Such transformations can be observed in various cultural festivals that were originally sacred in nature but have gradually evolved into cultural attractions involving broader community participation and tourism audiences (Li et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, many ritual traditions continue to be preserved as forms of local wisdom that represent the relationship between humans, nature, and belief systems. One of these traditions is the *Sesaji Rewanda* ritual practiced by the local community in the area of Goa Kreo, located in Kandri, Gunungpati District, Semarang. This tradition involves the offering of ritual food to the monkeys inhabiting the Goa Kreo area as a form of respect linked to the historical narrative of Sunan Kalijaga in relation to the construction of the Great Mosque of Demak. The ritual is performed annually during the Islamic month of Shawwal and has become an important component of the cultural identity of the local community (Fauzia et al., 2022).

Previous research on the *Sesaji Rewanda* tradition has primarily focused on linguistic aspects and the symbolic meanings embedded in ritual terminology through an ethnolinguistic approach. These studies demonstrate that the terminology used in the ritual reflects the cultural values of the community as well as the way people perceive life and their surrounding social environment (Fauzia et al., 2022). Meanwhile, studies examining cultural rituals within the framework of cultural tourism highlight that ritual practices can evolve into elements of local social and economic activities (Aini, 2023; Chen et al., 2024). Cultural rituals frequently interact with economic activities in surrounding areas, including trade, services, and other forms of local economic engagement that emerge alongside cultural events (Baswarani & Novianto, 2025).

Despite the growing body of research on cultural rituals and intangible

cultural heritage, studies specifically addressing how local communities interpret the Sesaji Rewanda tradition within their social lives, its connection to local economic activities, and its ecological meanings remain limited in the academic literature. Previous studies have tended to emphasize linguistic symbolism or broader cultural tourism development, thereby providing limited empirical explanations regarding the experiences and perspectives of local communities who directly engage with the ritual practice. This limitation reveals an important research gap in understanding the Sesaji Rewanda tradition not merely as a symbolic practice or linguistic phenomenon, but as a living social practice embedded in community life and closely related to local economic dynamics. Without examining the experiences and perspectives of local communities, analyses of the tradition remain confined to symbolic dimensions and fail to fully explain how the ritual is interpreted and practiced in everyday social life.

Based on this research gap, this study aims to analyze the significance of the Sesaji Rewanda tradition for the community in the Goa Kreo area, to identify its relationship with the social and economic activities of the surrounding community, and to examine its ecological meanings from the perspective of Islamic environmental ethics. This research contributes to the development of cultural and local anthropological studies by providing an empirical analysis of traditional ritual practices within community life. Furthermore, the study also contributes to discussions on intangible cultural heritage by demonstrating how local traditions are preserved and interpreted by the communities who live around the ritual site.

## **Method**

This study employs a qualitative approach to understand the social, religious, and ecological meanings embedded in the Sesaji Rewanda tradition practiced within the local community. The approach is intended to explain the relationship between community cultural practices, religious space, and the natural environment from the perspective of Islamic environmental ethics. The research analysis integrates ethnographic, theological, and thematic approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the cultural meanings contained in this traditional practice. The ethnographic approach in this study refers to the analytical framework developed by Spradley (2007), which positions field research as an effort to understand cultural meaning systems from the perspective of the community that practices them. Through this

approach, the study seeks to explain cultural practices, ritual symbols, and social meanings that develop within the Sesaji Rewanda tradition among communities surrounding Goa Kreo.

A theological approach is employed to interpret environmental ethical values in Islamic teachings related to the relationship between humans and nature. The analysis focuses on several Qur'anic verses that discuss human responsibility toward the environment, including QS. Al-Baqarah (2:30) concerning the concept of *khalifah* (human stewardship), QS. Ar-Rahman (55:7-9) regarding the principle of ecological balance (*mizan*), and QS. Ar-Rum (30:41) which explains environmental degradation (*fasad*) caused by human behavior. These verses provide a normative framework for understanding the ethical responsibility of humans in maintaining environmental sustainability.

This theological framework is further interpreted through the perspectives of several scholars of Islamic environmental ethics, including Mawil Izzi Dien, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Richard C. Foltz. Their works emphasize that Islamic teachings contain a strong ethical foundation regarding the harmony between humans, nature, and divine responsibility. Within this perspective, humans are understood not as absolute owners of nature but as moral trustees responsible for maintaining ecological balance. This theological perspective is used in this study to interpret the relationship between community cultural practices and environmental ethical values within the context of the Sesaji Rewanda tradition.

This research was conducted in the area of Goa Kreo, which is closely associated with the Sesaji Rewanda tradition. The ritual activities are centered around Masjid Al-Mabrur Goa Kreo, located on Jalan Raya Goa Kreo, Kandri, Gunungpati District, Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. The area is associated with local historical narratives related to Sunan Kalijaga and is also known as a habitat for a population of monkeys that forms part of the cultural context of the tradition. In addition, the Goa Kreo area has developed into a tourism destination that creates interactions between community cultural practices, the natural environment, and local economic activities.

The study involved three informants selected through purposive sampling based on their knowledge and involvement in the social life of the community in the Goa Kreo area. In academic publication, the identities of informants are presented using pseudonyms as part of research ethics. The first informant, "Mr. K." (62 years old), is recognized as a local traditional figure who possesses knowledge regarding the history and practices of the

Sesaji Rewanda tradition. The second informant, “Mrs. R.” (45 years old), works as a food vendor at a stall near the Goa Kreo area and is a resident of Kandri Village. The third informant, “Mrs. S.” (55 years old), is also a food vendor operating near the Goa Kreo area and resides in the surrounding community of Kandri Village.

Data were collected through non-participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted through the researcher’s presence in the Goa Kreo area to understand the social and environmental context of the surrounding community without directly participating in or observing the Sesaji Rewanda ritual performance. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the three informants to obtain information regarding the history of the tradition, the symbolic meanings of the ritual, and the dynamics of social life and economic activities among local residents. Documentation in the form of field notes and related records was also used as supporting data.

Data analysis followed the ethnographic model developed by Spradley (2007) through the stages of domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, componential analysis, and cultural theme identification in order to reveal the structure of cultural meanings embedded in the Sesaji Rewanda tradition. In addition, thematic analysis was used to classify data based on themes related to cultural practices, religious values, human–environment relations, and community economic activities. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing information obtained from interviews, observation, and documentation. The study also applied research ethics principles by maintaining the confidentiality of informants through the use of pseudonyms and by obtaining informed consent from participants prior to the interview process.

## **Finding and Discussion**

### ***History and Meaning of the Rewanda Sesaji Tradition***

The Sesaji Rewanda tradition is a cultural practice embedded in the social life of the community of Kandri Village in the area of Goa Kreo, located in Gunungpati District, Semarang. This tradition is expressed through symbols, ritual performances, and customary taboos that regulate community interaction with the surrounding environment. Within the framework of Javanese cosmology, nature is perceived as an integral component of the community’s social and spiritual life. In this cosmological system, the relationship between humans and

nature is not understood as exploitative but as a reciprocal relationship that requires balance and respect. Ritual practices therefore function as symbolic media that reaffirm this relationship through collective actions performed periodically by the community. From the perspective of symbolic anthropology, ritual can be understood as a system of meaning that shapes how societies interpret social, moral, and ecological realities (Geertz, 1973).

The term *Sesaji Rewanda* is derived from two words: *sesaji* and *rewanda*. The word *sesaji* refers to the practice of presenting food offerings such as fruits, rice, and agricultural products as an expression of gratitude for nature as the source of life. Meanwhile, the term *rewanda* refers to the monkeys inhabiting the area of Goa Kreo and its surroundings. Thus, *Sesaji Rewanda* can be interpreted as a symbolic ritual representing the reciprocal relationship between humans and other living beings within the same ecosystem. The *Sesaji Rewanda* ceremony is celebrated festively and serves not only as an expression of gratitude but also as a cultural event that attracts community participation. The celebration includes various activities such as carnivals, cultural processions (*kirab*, a traditional ceremonial parade), communal prayers (*tahlilan*, a collective Islamic prayer gathering), and a traditional dance known as *Wanoro Tarisuko*, which symbolically depicts joyful monkey movements. During the procession, participants are required to carry *gunungan*, cone-shaped ceremonial structures made from agricultural produce and food offerings, consisting of fruits, rice, *ketupat* (rice cakes wrapped in woven coconut leaves, locally known as *klepat-klepet*), and other agricultural products prepared by local residents. The fruit offerings include fifteen types of fruit, among which pineapple, starfruit, and *pisang raja* (a traditional Indonesian banana variety commonly used in ritual and ceremonial contexts) are considered mandatory components. Pineapples are arranged symbolically, with one placed at the top of the cone and four positioned at the corners of the structure. In addition, a rice offering known as *nasi ulamsari*, locally referred to as *sego kethek* (monkey rice), is prepared and carried collectively, with each *gunungan* supported by four participants during the procession.

From the perspective of cultural anthropology, rituals such as *Sesaji Rewanda* can be understood as symbolic systems that shape the collective meaning of a community toward its environment. According to Geertz (1973), cultural practices do not merely function as social activities but also operate as symbolic texts that contain moral and cosmological meanings for the communities that perform them. Within this framework, the ritual offering (*sesaji*) represents a

symbolic expression of human awareness of interconnectedness with nature. It also reflects the recognition that the continuity of human life depends on maintaining the balance of the surrounding ecosystem.

Over time, this tradition underwent a process of transformation as Islam spread across the island of Java. During the period of Islamization, religious scholars did not eliminate cultural practices that had long existed within society; instead, they reinterpreted their meanings to align with the principles of Islamic monotheism. Prayers that were previously animistic in nature were gradually replaced with Islamic prayers, while the ritual offering (*sesaji*) came to be understood as a form of charity and an expression of gratitude to God for the abundance of nature. This transformation reflects a dynamic process of cultural acculturation between local traditions and Islamic teachings, resulting in a new form of tradition that preserves local identity while simultaneously gaining religious legitimacy (Fauzia et al., 2022).

In practice, the *Sesaji Rewanda* ritual is performed annually during the month of Shawwal through a series of cultural activities such as the *gunungan* procession, *tahlilan* (communal prayers), and traditional art performances. The *gunungan* carried in the procession consists of various agricultural products, including fruits, rice, and crops, arranged in a cone-shaped structure. This structure not only functions as a symbol of the agrarian prosperity of the community but also represents the relationship between humans and nature as the source of life. The symbols used in the ritual, such as fruits, agricultural products, and traditional foods, illustrate the connection between cultural practices and the agrarian economic system of the community. These symbols represent the sources of life derived from nature and reflect the community's dependence on the local ecosystem. In ecological anthropology, ritual symbols often function as mechanisms for transmitting ecological values that are passed down to subsequent generations through cultural practices (Descola, 2013). Thus, the symbols embedded in the *Sesaji Rewanda* tradition not only carry spiritual meanings but also serve as a medium for ecological education within the community.

The transformation of ritual meaning can also be observed in the process of integration between local traditions and Islamic values that developed within Javanese society. This integration did not eliminate the symbolic structure of the ritual; rather, it provided a religious reinterpretation of pre-existing cultural practices. In studies of Islamic history in the Indonesian archipelago, the process of Islamization often occurred through cultural approaches that

allowed local traditions to be maintained within a framework of religious values (Azra, 2004). Therefore, the Sesaji Rewanda tradition reflects a form of dialectical interaction between local culture and religious values within the community.

Spradley (2007) provides an analytical framework for examining ritual practices through domain, taxonomic, and componential analysis. Componential analysis shows that each ritual symbol possesses a clear meaning and is consistently applied by the community. Through this framework, ritual practices can be systematically understood, including the rules, sequences, and taboos that regulate their implementation. From an ethnographic perspective, cultural practices such as the Sesaji Rewanda tradition can be analyzed using the cultural domain approach developed by Spradley. He explains that every cultural practice consists of domains of meaning that structure the community's knowledge system. In the context of the Sesaji Rewanda tradition, several cultural domains can be identified, including the domain of ritual thanksgiving, the domain of human-nature relations, and the domain of social solidarity. These domains collectively form a value system that regulates how the community interacts with its surrounding environment (Multazam et al., 2025).

The domain of ritual thanksgiving is reflected in the presentation of *gunungan* containing various agricultural products such as fruits, rice, and *palawija* (secondary crops). The *gunungan* symbolizes the abundance of nature that serves as the primary source of livelihood for agrarian communities. The domain of human-nature relations is reflected in the practice of providing food to the monkeys and the customary prohibition against damaging the forest area surrounding Goa Kreo. Meanwhile, the domain of social solidarity is manifested in the community's collective cooperation (*gotong royong*) in preparing and organizing the ritual activities. Thus, the Sesaji Rewanda tradition can be understood as a cultural system that integrates symbolic, ecological, and social dimensions within community life. Through this ritual, the community not only expresses gratitude for the abundance of nature but also strengthens collective awareness of the importance of maintaining environmental balance, a perspective consistent with the cultural ecology framework (Steward, 1955).

Rituals create a liminal phase in which the boundaries of everyday social structures dissolve, producing intense collective interaction. Turner (1969) emphasized that liminality enhances social cohesion and solidarity among community members. Interviews with Pak K., Bu R., and Bu S.

indicate that interactions during the ritual involve symbolic exchanges, social assistance, and a shared understanding of cultural values. These practices demonstrate the emergence of social order through the collective experience of participating in the ritual. The findings of this study show that the Sesaji Rewanda tradition functions not merely as a ceremonial activity but also as a cultural mechanism that regulates human relationships with the ecological space surrounding the Goa Kreo area (Adam et al., 2025). The ritual affirms the forest area and wildlife habitat as spaces that hold moral and social value for the community. In the anthropology of ritual, such practices create social structures that strengthen community solidarity through shared participation in ritual activities (Turner et al., 1969). Thus, Sesaji Rewanda operates as a social mechanism that connects the cultural identity of the community with the environment in which they live.

Qur'anic values are also reflected in the ritual practices of Sesaji Rewanda. The principle of *khalifah* (Qur'an 2:30) regulates the human role as stewards of the earth, *mizan* (Qur'an 55:7-9) emphasizes the balance of nature, and the prohibition of *fasad* (Qur'an 30:41) highlights the consequences of environmental destruction. The prohibition against indiscriminate tree cutting and the protection of the monkeys' habitat represent concrete implementations of these values in cultural practice. These symbols and customary rules illustrate a direct relationship between cultural traditions and Islamic environmental ethics (Zulkifli et al., 2023).

### ***Ecological Dimension in the Sesaji Rewanda Tradition***

Interviews with Bu R. and Bu S. indicate that the implementation of the Sesaji Rewanda ritual influences the economic activities of traders around the Goa Kreo area. Traders make specific preparations, such as providing additional food supplies and preparing goods for visitors attending the ritual. Spradley (2007) structures this type of activity within the domain of "ritual economic activity" and the subdomain of "social interaction and redistribution." Field data demonstrate a clear relationship between the performance of the ritual and the economic practices of the local community. The findings also show that the Sesaji Rewanda tradition is directly related to environmental management in the Goa Kreo area, particularly through the protection of wildlife habitats and forest vegetation. The presence of customary rules and taboos regulating certain activities in the area creates a social mechanism that limits excessive environmental exploitation (Fauzia et al., 2022). Within the

perspective of cultural ecology, local belief systems often function as a form of traditional ecological knowledge that regulates human interaction with the environment in a sustainable manner (Berkes, 2008). This ecological knowledge is embedded within cultural practices and transmitted through the collective experiences of the community.

During the ritual, traders support one another through the exchange of food supplies and assistance in distributing goods. Spradley (2007) categorizes this practice within the domain of “socio-economic redistribution,” while Geertz (1973) interprets it as an expression of social responsibility embedded in cultural practice. Meanwhile, Turner (1969) explains that the liminal phase of ritual strengthens collective interaction and solidarity among community members. These findings demonstrate a direct relationship between ritual practices, social interaction, and the application of cultural norms within the community (Dewi, 2025)

The relationship between humans and animals within this ritual also illustrates an ecological relational structure that does not position humans as the dominant center over nature. The act of providing food to the monkeys in this tradition reflects an acknowledgment of the presence of other living beings within the same environmental system. In studies of social-ecological systems, environmental sustainability depends on maintaining a balance between human activities and ecosystem stability (Folke et al., 2010). Cultural rituals therefore function as social mechanisms that reinforce collective awareness of this relationship.

In addition, the forest area surrounding Goa Kreo plays an important ecological role in maintaining environmental balance. The prohibition against cutting trees and engaging in activities that damage the forest area indicates the presence of social regulations that limit the exploitation of natural resources. In environmental anthropology, sacred spaces often function as a form of traditional conservation that protects ecosystems through cultural legitimacy (Sponsel, 2012). This mechanism demonstrates that cultural practices can operate as effective environmental management systems within local communities.

Culturally based conservation practices within the Sesaji Rewanda tradition also reflect the integration of social values and community ecological responsibility. Community involvement in protecting the Goa Kreo area shows that environmental management does not rely solely on formal regulations but also on cultural norms that develop within society. In studies of environmental sustainability, the participation of local communities is

considered a crucial factor in maintaining ecosystem stability (Ostrom, 2009). Therefore, cultural traditions can function as social institutions that support sustainable environmental governance.

The practices of food distribution and cooperation among traders reflect the Islamic principles of *'adl* (justice) and *amanah* (trust). Spradley (2007) categorizes these practices within the domain of “socio-economic ethical principles,” while Geertz (1973) interprets them as expressions of social symbolism, and Victor Turner highlights the role of collective experience in ritual practices. These activities demonstrate the application of Islamic values within the socio-economic interactions of the community. Overall, these findings emphasize that ritual practices are empirically connected to social norms, ecological awareness, and religious principles, rather than being merely symbolic cultural activities.

### ***Human–Environment Interaction***

Interview results with Pak K. indicate the existence of a prohibition against indiscriminate tree cutting during the ritual. The community also maintains the habitat of the monkeys living around the Goa Kreo area. Spradley (2007) categorizes this practice within the domain of “ecological taboos” and the subdomain of “conservation practices.” The cultural ecology approach emphasizes the relationship between humans and the environment, in which social rules regulate interactions with local ecosystems (Rappaport, 1999). Ritual symbols and the arrangement of offerings also convey ecological values to the community, such as the importance of maintaining environmental balance and respecting natural habitats. Geertz (1973) interprets ritual symbols as a medium through which communities develop a collective understanding of ecological responsibility. Spradley (2007) structures these practices into clearly defined domains and subdomains, making patterns of conservation visible. These findings demonstrate a systematic relationship between ritual practices and the ecological behavior of the community (Zulkifli et al., 2023).

Field observations also show that the Sesaji Rewanda tradition pays close attention to ecological balance in the Goa Kreo area. The community consciously protects trees, flora, and the monkey population as part of a ritual that connects humans with nature. From Geertz’s perspective (1973), these actions carry symbolic meaning that reflects spiritual harmony and ecological responsibility. The principle of *mizan* in the Qur’an emphasizes the importance of maintaining the balance of nature in order to prevent environmental

destruction (*fasad*) caused by human actions (Qur'an 55:7-9; 30:41).



Figure 1. Well-preserved tree ecology along Goa Kreo road

Figure 1 illustrates that residents around Kandri Village and the Goa Kreo area maintain ecosystem balance by avoiding indiscriminate tree cutting. The road to Goa Kreo remains lined with trees that supports local monkey habitats. The Sesaji Rewanda ritual functions as a form of environmental conservation through active community participation. According to Mrs. R. and Mrs. S., during the ritual, residents ensure cleanliness and avoid disturbing wildlife. Geertz (1973) highlights the symbolic meaning of this practice, Turner emphasizes social interactions during the ritual, and cultural ecology explains patterns of human adaptation to the environment. Islamic principles reinforce these actions, emphasizing human responsibility as *khalifah* (stewardship) to maintain environmental balance (QS. Al-Baqarah 2:30).

Islamic teachings not only guide religious rituals but also instill strong environmental ethics through the concepts of *khalifah* (stewardship) and *mizan* (balance), forming a moral foundation for sustainable environmental management. Qur'anic verses stress that humans must preserve ecological balance and avoid corruption (*fasad*) on earth, framing ecosystem protection as a moral obligation. In the Sesaji Rewanda tradition, prohibitions on tree cutting and care for monkey habitats reflect Qur'anic environmental ethics, embodying the *amanah* (trust) associated with the role of *khalifah*. From this perspective, maintaining ecological balance and preventing environmental harm become integral aspects of Islamic moral responsibility.

Within the framework of Islamic environmental ethics, the Sesaji

Rewanda tradition is better understood as a practice that actively embodies the principle of *mizan* (balance) rather than opposing it, as long as the practice does not cause wastefulness or environmental damage. First, the presentation of the *gunungan*, which contains various agricultural products such as fruits, symbolizes recognition of the balance between humans and nature. Fruits are the result of ecological processes that depend on soil fertility, water, and natural cycles, so their use in rituals reflects an awareness that human life relies on the order of natural systems. From the perspective of symbolic anthropology, ritual symbols such as agricultural products serve to express the relationship between humans and the cosmological and environmental order in which they live (Geertz, 1973). This representation aligns with the Qur'anic concept of *mizan*, which emphasizes that nature was created in a state of balance that humans are responsible for maintaining.

Second, the practice of distributing fruits to the community after the ritual procession reflects a collective sharing of natural resources. This action demonstrates the proportional use of resources rather than concentrating them in the hands of specific individuals. In Islamic environmental ethics, the fair and moderate utilization of natural products is part of maintaining social and ecological balance (Nasr, 1996). Therefore, this practice of distribution reinforces the dimension of balance inherent in the concept of *mizan*.

Third, the presence of the ritual in the Goa Kreo area is also associated with respect for the monkey habitats that form part of the local ecological landscape. The community's awareness of preserving this area demonstrates a connection between cultural practices and environmental stewardship. In cultural ecology studies, local traditions often serve as social mechanisms that regulate human interactions with ecosystems (Berkes, 2008). Thus, the Sesaji Rewanda tradition can be understood as a cultural practice that affirms a balanced relationship among humans, nature, and social values.

Considering this, the Sesaji Rewanda tradition does not conflict with the principle of *mizan*. On the contrary, the practice reflects cultural awareness of the interconnectedness between humans and nature through the use of agricultural symbols, social distribution, and respect for the environment. This interpretation suggests that local traditions can serve as a medium for expressing ecological balance values, which are also emphasized in Islamic environmental ethics. Human-environment interactions in the Sesaji Rewanda tradition demonstrate a synergy between religious values, social practices, and ecological consciousness. Ritual symbols and traditional rules guide

the community to behave harmoniously toward nature and fellow humans. Turner emphasizes the liminal dimension that strengthens social cohesion, while Geertz highlights the cultural meaning embedded in each ritual element. Overall, this practice reflects Islamic principles that integrate *khalifah*, *mizan*, and the avoidance of *fasad*, making the tradition both a vehicle for cultural education and a mechanism for ecological conservation.

### ***Social and Economic Dimensions in the Sesaji Rewanda Tradition***

Interviews with Mrs. R. and Mrs. S. indicate that the Sesaji Rewanda tradition is closely linked to the economic dynamics of the communities surrounding the Goa Kreo tourist area. Mrs. R., who has been running a stall since 2011, explained that in the early stages of the tourist area's development, nearly all kiosks around the site were operational and received a substantial number of visitors. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, visitor numbers have declined, directly impacting the income of vendors and resulting in only a small number of kiosks remaining operational. This situation demonstrates that the local community's economic activities are strongly influenced by the intensity of tourist visits as well as the timing of cultural events held in the area.

The interview findings also show that trade activities increase significantly during the Sesaji Rewanda ritual on the 7th of Syawal. During this period, vendors not only sell food to visitors but also receive deposits of food ingredients used in the ritual activities. This phenomenon indicates that cultural ritual practices can create spaces for economic interaction between local communities and visitors. In studies of cultural tourism, ritual activities often function as cultural attractions that can stimulate local economic activity by increasing tourist visits (Richards, 2018).

Nevertheless, field data also indicate that the economic benefits of these cultural activities are temporary and dependent on the occurrence of specific events. When there are no cultural events or festivals, the economic activity of vendors around the tourist area tends to decline. This suggests that the Sesaji Rewanda tradition functions as a catalyst for local economic activity but does not yet provide sustainable economic stability for the community. Therefore, managing cultural traditions as part of tourism development requires a more integrated strategy to ensure that economic benefits are distributed more consistently among the local population.

The implications of this study indicate that the preservation of local

traditions such as Sesaji Rewanda is not only related to safeguarding cultural heritage but also has the potential to support community-based tourism development. Cultural traditions can serve as tourist attractions that strengthen local identity while creating economic opportunities for surrounding communities. However, managing traditions as tourist attractions must be done carefully to avoid undermining the symbolic meaning and cultural values they embody.

Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of integrating cultural preservation and environmental management in tourism development. Cultural values, such as prohibitions against environmental destruction, can serve as a foundation for building sustainable tourism management models. Thus, the Sesaji Rewanda tradition can be understood not only as a local cultural practice but also as a source of ecological knowledge with the potential to support sustainable tourism development strategies around Goa Kreo area.

### ***Islamic Environmental Ethics***

The Sesaji Rewanda tradition in the Goa Kreo area involves the presentation of agricultural products and the offering of food to the monkeys living in the surrounding area as part of the community's annual ritual. This practice can be understood through the lens of Islamic environmental ethics, which emphasizes a harmonious relationship between humans and nature as part of God's created order. Nasr (1996) explains that within the Islamic tradition, nature is viewed as part of a cosmic order with a spiritual dimension, and therefore, cannot be treated merely as an object of human exploitation. Consequently, the ritual practices associated with the Sesaji Rewanda tradition can be interpreted as a form of cultural awareness in which nature is regarded as an essential aspect of life that must be preserved.

Within the social practices of the communities around Goa Kreo, there are also various unwritten rules, such as prohibitions against indiscriminate tree cutting and efforts to protect the habitats of monkeys in the area. This phenomenon can be analyzed through the concept of *khalifah* in Islamic environmental ethics, which positions humans as stewards of the earth with moral responsibility for ecological preservation. Dien (2000) explains that the *khalifah* concept not only grants humans the right to utilize natural resources but also demands moral responsibility to maintain ecosystem balance. Therefore, the social practices embedded in the Sesaji Rewanda tradition demonstrate that local cultural values can function as social mechanisms that guide community behavior in environmental stewardship.

Moreover, the continuity of the Sesaji Rewanda tradition indicates that cultural practices can foster ecological awareness through ritual symbols passed down through generations. Symbols such as the gunungan of agricultural products and the distribution of food to the community illustrate the connection between ritual practices and the social and ecological values embedded within society. Foltz et al. (2003) argue that religious values often serve as important sources for forming environmental ethics, as religion provides a moral framework for regulating human interaction with nature. Thus, the Sesaji Rewanda tradition functions not only as a cultural ritual but also as a medium that strengthens collective awareness of the importance of maintaining balance among humans, nature, and religious values.

### Conclusion

This study concludes that the Sesaji Rewanda tradition at Kreo Cave is not merely a cultural ritual but also an ecological practice that embodies important conservation values grounded in local wisdom, as reflected in customary taboos, the management of sacred areas, and the protection of monkey habitats. These values are consistent with Islamic environmental ethics, particularly the concepts of *khalifah*, *mizan*, and *fasad*, which position humans as stewards of the Earth who are responsible for maintaining ecological balance and avoiding environmental degradation. Socio-economically, the tradition contributes positively to local livelihoods through the development of micro-enterprises and tourism services, although it also presents challenges related to excessive commercialization, ecological pressure, and unequal benefit distribution. Therefore, the management of the Kreo Cave area requires a sustainable ecotourism model that integrates cultural values, Islamic ethical principles, and active community participation, allowing Sesaji Rewanda to function as a model demonstrating the synergy among local tradition, religious ethics, and environmental conservation.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates its relevance to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) through the preservation of cultural heritage and community-based tourism, SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) through the promotion of sustainable tourism practices and environmental responsibility, SDG 15 (Life on Land) through the protection of biodiversity and monkey habitats around Kreo Cave, and SDG 13 (Climate Action) by encouraging environmental awareness and conservation-oriented local practices. In addition,

the community empowerment generated through local economic activities also supports SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Thus, the Sesaji Rewanda tradition demonstrates how local wisdom and religious ethics can contribute to sustainable development by balancing ecological preservation, cultural continuity, and socio-economic well-being.

Based on these findings, several practical implications and recommendations can be proposed for related stakeholders. For local governments and tourism authorities, it is recommended to formulate sustainable ecotourism policies that prioritize environmental conservation, regulate visitor activities, and prevent excessive commercialization in the Kreo Cave area. Community participation should be strengthened through inclusive decision-making processes, capacity-building programs, and equitable distribution of tourism benefits to ensure long-term socio-economic sustainability. Religious and cultural leaders are encouraged to continue promoting environmental awareness by integrating Islamic ecological ethics and local wisdom into cultural education and public discourse. In addition, tourism managers should implement conservation-based tourism practices, including proper waste management, habitat protection, visitor education, and limitations on activities that may disturb wildlife or damage the ecosystem. Educational institutions and researchers are also encouraged to further explore the integration of indigenous traditions, religious values, and environmental sustainability as a model for culturally rooted conservation practices in other regions. Through collaborative efforts among government institutions, local communities, religious leaders, academics, and tourism stakeholders, the Sesaji Rewanda tradition can be preserved not only as a cultural heritage but also as a sustainable ecological and socio-economic asset for future generations.

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# ISLAMIC ECOLOGY TRADITION, INDEPENDENCE, AND GLOBAL CONTRIBUTION

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## Abstract

*The escalating global environmental crisis demands a reevaluation of humanity's relationship with nature, where scientific approaches must be complemented by ethical and spiritual frameworks. Islam provides a comprehensive foundation for addressing these challenges through the Qur'an and Sunnah emphasizing Tawhid (divine unity), which imbues all creation with intrinsic value as signs of God; khalifah (vicegerency), positioning humans as accountable trustees of the Earth; and mizan (cosmic balance), promoting moderation and prohibiting waste (israf) and corruption (fasad). This study examines the theological foundations of Islamic environmental ethics, critiques anthropocentric interpretations of khalifah, and develops a holistic Islamic ecotheology grounded in authoritative sources. It also contrasts Islamic ecology with dominant Western paradigms associated with anthropocentrism, capitalism, and the secular desacralization of nature. This research employed a qualitative multi-method approach using normative-hermeneutical, historical, comparative, and critical discourse analysis of Qur'anic and Hadith sources. Through eco-critical hermeneutics, selected texts were analyzed linguistically and contextually alongside classical tafsir and contemporary environmental issues, while emphasizing maqasid alshari'ah and reinterpreting khalifah as accountable stewardship rather than domination. Drawing on historical records from the Islamic Golden Age and contemporary initiatives in Muslim-majority societies, including Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama intellectuals, the study proposes an "Islamic Green Policy Model" encompassing green Islamic finance, Sharia-compliant environmental policies, educational reform, faith-based environmental campaigns, and stronger intra-Islamic cooperation. The study concludes that*

*authentic Islamic ecology offers a spiritually grounded and ethically coherent framework for advancing global sustainability, resilience, and community-based environmental action. The study recommends Sharia-based sustainability policies, environmental education, faith-based activism, and further research on Islamic ecological ethics implementation.*

Krisis lingkungan global yang semakin meningkat menuntut adanya peninjauan kembali terhadap hubungan manusia dengan alam, di mana pendekatan ilmiah perlu dilengkapi dengan kerangka etis dan spiritual. Islam menyediakan landasan yang komprehensif untuk menghadapi tantangan tersebut melalui Al-Qur'an dan Sunnah dengan menekankan konsep tawhid (kesatuan ilahi), yang memandang seluruh ciptaan memiliki nilai intrinsik sebagai tanda-tanda kebesaran Tuhan; khalifah (perwakilan/pengelola bumi), yang menempatkan manusia sebagai pemegang amanah yang bertanggung jawab atas bumi; serta mizan (keseimbangan kosmis), yang mendorong moderasi dan melarang pemborosan (*israf*) serta kerusakan (*fasad*). Penelitian ini mengkaji landasan teologis etika lingkungan Islam, mengkritisi interpretasi antroposentrik terhadap konsep khalifah, serta mengembangkan ekoteologi Islam yang holistik berdasarkan sumber-sumber otoritatif. Penelitian ini juga membandingkan ekologi Islam dengan paradigma Barat dominan yang berkaitan dengan antroposentrisme, kapitalisme, dan desakralisasi sekuler terhadap alam. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif multi-metode melalui analisis normatif-hermeneutik, historis, komparatif, dan analisis wacana kritis terhadap sumber Al-Qur'an dan Hadis. Melalui hermeneutika ekokritis, teks-teks terpilih dianalisis secara linguistik dan kontekstual dengan mengaitkannya pada tafsir klasik dan isu-isu lingkungan kontemporer, sambil menekankan maqasid al-shari'ah serta menafsirkan kembali khalifah sebagai amanah dan tanggung jawab, bukan dominasi. Dengan merujuk pada catatan sejarah Zaman Keemasan Islam dan berbagai inisiatif kontemporer di masyarakat mayoritas Muslim, termasuk intelektual progresif Nahdlatul Ulama di Indonesia, penelitian ini menawarkan "Model Kebijakan Hijau Islam" yang mencakup keuangan hijau berbasis Islam, kebijakan lingkungan yang sesuai syariah, reformasi pendidikan, kampanye lingkungan berbasis keagamaan, dan penguatan kerja sama intra-Islam. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa ekologi Islam yang autentik menawarkan kerangka yang berlandaskan spiritualitas dan etika yang koheren untuk mendorong keberlanjutan global, ketahanan sosial, dan aksi lingkungan berbasis komunitas. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan kebijakan keberlanjutan berbasis syariah, pendidikan lingkungan, aktivisme berbasis keagamaan, serta penelitian lanjutan mengenai implementasi etika ekologi Islam.

**Keywords:** *ecotheology, Islamic environmental ethics, khalifah, sustainability, tawhid*

## Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed an unprecedented escalation of ecological challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, air and water pollution, soil degradation, and resource depletion. These issues transcend national boundaries, affecting material resources, human health, social stability, and moral values worldwide. While technological and policy interventions remain essential, growing evidence indicates that scientific solutions alone are insufficient without addressing underlying the ethical and spiritual dimensions (Aswati et al., 2026; Khudoyberdiyev et al., 2025).

With an estimated 2.03 billion adherents projected to be the world's largest religious population by 2070 (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2024; Khan, 2015) Islam represents a profound demographic and ethical force. Therefore, studying "Islamic ecology" is not merely an academic niche. It is an imperative for understanding a major, faith-based driver of potential global sustainability, offering unique spiritual and ethical frameworks to motivate nearly a quarter of humanity (Husamah et al., 2025).

Existing literature on environmental ethics has largely focused on secular frameworks, such as the United Nations Environment Programme's Faith for Earth Initiative (2021), which highlights religion's potential to shape ecological consciousness (UNEP, 2022). Within religious studies, Christian ecotheology has responded extensively to critiques such as Lynn White Jr.'s (1967) thesis, which attributed environmental degradation to biblical notions of dominion, leading to reinterpretations of stewardship as care rather than domination (White, 1967). Islamic scholarship, by contrast, has emphasized inherent principles from the Qur'an and Hadith, portraying nature as divine signs (*ayat*) reflecting God's wisdom, order, and mercy, rather than merely a resource for exploitation (Khudoyberdiyev et al., 2025)

Recent studies have explored the historical roots of environmental awareness in classical Islamic tradition (Ramin, 2025) and parallels between past climatic fluctuations and modern challenges in Muslim-majority regions (Iqbal & Jamil, 2025). Other works critique Western anthropocentrism and capitalism as primary drivers of degradation, while exonerating Islamic theology (Fazlhashemi, 2025; Feise-Nasr, 2023). Progressive interpretations in Indonesia, through Nahdlatul Ulama intellectuals, integrate spiritual ecology with local socio-ecological issues (Yakub et al., 2023).

Despite these contributions, several limitations persist. Many analyses remain descriptive, focusing on isolated Qur'anic verses or Hadith texts without

employing systematic hermeneutics. Institutional applications often face external influences that dilute their autonomy, and the integration of historical records with contemporary science and policy remains underdeveloped. These gaps hinder the development of a fully coherent and independent Islamic ecotheology capable of informing practical governance. This paper addresses these limitations by examining the theological foundations of Islamic environmental ethics, critiquing anthropocentric interpretations of *khalifah*, and proposing a holistic hermeneutic approach to primary sources. It contrasts Islamic ecology with Western paradigms, highlights historical and contemporary applications, and outlines a practical “Islamic Green Policy Model” for sustainability. The primary objective is to demonstrate how the integration of Qur’anic principles, such as *tawhid*, *khalifah*, *mizan*, and *wasatiyyah* with historical insights and modern science can provide a robust faith-based framework for global environmental justice and resilience in the Muslim world.

In the course of the study, the author formulated and substantiated two main hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that Islamic environmental ethics, based on the principles of *tawhid* (divine unity), *khalifah* (vicegerency/trusteeship), *mizan* (balance), and *wasatiyyah* (moderation), constitutes a holistic, anti-anthropocentric system. This system intrinsically rejects the exploitation of nature and surpasses secular approaches in its capacity for motivation and long-term sustainability (Kamal Gueye, & Mohamed, 2023).

Evidence for this hypothesis is derived from the analysis of primary sources (the Qur’an and Sunnah) and classical texts, which demonstrate that nature is perceived as *ayat* (signs of Allah), and humans are regarded as responsible custodians (*khalifah*), rather than dominators. The prohibitions against *israf* (wastefulness) and *fasad* (corruption), alongside the principle of *la darar wa la dirar* (no harm shall be inflicted or reciprocated), frame environmental responsibility as a religious duty with eschatological consequences. This argument is supported by the works of Khudoyberdiyev et al. (2025), Ramin (2025), and Fazlhashemi (2025).

The second hypothesis posits that contemporary Islamic environmental initiatives suffer from external influence and a lack of systematic hermeneutics. However, by returning to authentic sources and reinterpreting *khalifah* as a concept of care rather than domination, these initiatives possess the potential to become an independent and effective contribution to global sustainability. Support for this hypothesis comes from a comparative and critical analysis, which reveals that Western anthropocentrism, capitalism, and the desacralization

of nature, as argued by Nasr (1996), Fazlhashemi (2025), and Feise-Nasr (2023), are among the primary drivers of the current ecological crisis, whereas Islamic theology inherently rejects these paradigms. Practical applications in Indonesia, particularly through the work of Nahdlatul Ulama intellectuals, and the proposed Islamic Green Policy model—utilizing instruments such as green *sukuk* (Islamic bonds), the traditional *waqf* (endowment) system, and Sharia-compliant environmental taxes—demonstrate the practical viability of an independent Islamic ecological approach (Yakub et al., 2023; Iqbal & Jamil, 2025).

### Method

This research is primarily qualitative in nature, employing a multi-methodological approach to investigate Islamic environmental ethics and its contemporary relevance. The study adopts a normative-hermeneutical framework combined with historical, comparative, and critical discourse analysis. Primary sources (the Qur'an and Hadith) were identified and selected through thematic relevance. Verses and traditions were identified based on their relevance to core ecological themes, including tawhid (divine unity), khalifah (vicegerency), mizan (balance), wasatiyyah (moderation), israf (waste), fasad (corruption), and la darar wa *la dirar* (no harm). The selection process involved systematic keyword searches in major Qur'anic concordances and Hadith collections (e.g., Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim), followed by close readings to ensure contextual appropriateness.

The core method employed in this study is eco-critical hermeneutics. Selected verses and traditions were re-read through an ecological lens to uncover embedded environmental ethics. This involved: (1) literal and linguistic analysis, (2) comparison with classical tafsir (e.g., Al-Tabari, Al-Razi, and Ibn Kathir), (3) contextualization within contemporary environmental issues, and (4) interpretation guided by the principles of maqasid al-shari'ah, treating environmental preservation as a fundamental maqsad for protecting life, religion, intellect, progeny, and wealth. Special attention was paid to addressing anthropocentric misinterpretations of khalifah as domination rather than accountable stewardship (Feise-Nasr, 2023; Fazlhashemi, 2025).

Historical analysis traces the roots of environmental awareness in classical Islamic tradition. This includes an examination of early scholarly works (including *tafsir*, *fiqh*, and meteorological records from the Islamic Golden Age), such as those by Al-Kindi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Khaldun, to identify

patterns of climatic observation and ethical reflection (Ramin, 2025; Iqbal & Jamil, 2025). Comparative analysis juxtaposes Islamic ecotheology with Western and Christian approaches. It contrasts Islamic principles of *tawhid* and *khalifah* with Christian reinterpretations of stewardship and dominion (White, 1967; Francis, 2015), highlighting differences in anthropocentrism, critiques of desacralization, and normative enforcement (Fazlhashemi, 2025; Feise-Nasr, 2023).

Critical discourse analysis evaluates contemporary institutional practices (e.g., OIC and IFEES) and progressive initiatives (such as those promoted by Nahdlatul Ulama intellectuals in Indonesia), assessing their autonomy, authenticity, and degree of external influence (Yakub et al., 2023). This multi-layered methodological approach ensures both fidelity to primary Islamic sources and meaningful engagement with contemporary sustainability challenges. No quantitative methods were applied, as the research prioritizes interpretive depth over statistical measurement. Data sources include peer-reviewed articles, classical texts, and policy documents, selected for their relevance and scholarly rigor. Triangulation across theological, historical, and comparative lenses enhances the validity and reliability of the findings.

### **Findings and Discussion**

This study synthesizes theological, historical, and contemporary dimensions of Islamic environmental ethics, revealing a coherent tradition capable of addressing modern ecological crises. The findings indicate that the Qur'an presents nature as divine signs (*ayat*) reflecting Allah's wisdom and order, rather than as merely a resource for exploitation. Key concepts—*khalifah* (stewardship as responsible trusteeship), *mizan* (cosmic balance), and *wasatiyyah* (moderation) establish a normative ethical framework that prohibits waste (*israf*) and corruption (*fasad*), thereby making environmental protection an intrinsic religious duty (Khudoyberdiyev et al., 2025).

These principles relate directly to the research objectives because they provide a faith-based alternative to secular environmentalism and challenge anthropocentric interpretations of *khalifah*. The hermeneutical re-examination confirms that stewardship entails accountability (*hisab*) and care, rather than domination, aligning with the aim of developing a consistent Islamic ecotheology. Historical records from the Islamic Golden Age further demonstrate early empirical observations of climatic patterns, offering relevant insights for contemporary climate adaptation in drought-prone Muslim-majority regions

(Iqbal & Jamil, 2025).

The findings are consistent with prior scholarship that critiques Western anthropocentrism and Cartesian desacralization as primary drivers of environmental degradation while emphasizing that such tendencies are not inherent within Islamic theology (Fazlhashemi, 2025; Feise-Nasr, 2023). Progressive interpretations, such as those advanced by Nahdlatul Ulama intellectuals in Indonesia, demonstrate practical applications of spiritual ecology by integrating theological principles with local socio-ecological realities (Yakub et al., 2023). This supports the argument that Islamic ecology can operate independently of external normative frameworks, as it offers culturally resonant and faith-based approaches to environmental sustainability.

The proposed “Islamic Green Policy Model” translates these theological principles into actionable policy instruments and governance strategies. For instance, the concept of *khalifah* (accountable trusteeship) directly informs the development of green *sukuk* and the revitalization of *waqf* as mechanisms for long-term environmental stewardship. The principle of *mizan* (cosmic balance) underpins Sharia-compliant environmental taxes and pollution levies, justified through the legal maxim *la darar wa la dirar* (no harm shall be inflicted or reciprocated). Similarly, *tawhid* (divine unity) and *wasatiyyah* (moderation) guide educational integration and faith-based awareness campaigns, fostering a holistic ecological consciousness within Muslim communities. In addition, intra-OIC cooperation through a proposed Green Islamic Fund operationalizes the principle of collective responsibility (*fard kifayah*) and Islamic solidarity (*ukhuwwah*).

### ***Theological Foundations of Islamic Environmental Ethics***

Contemporary discussions on Islamic environmental ethics emphasize the need for ecological frameworks rooted in Islamic theological and intellectual traditions. In this perspective, nature is viewed as part of a divinely created order that requires protection, balance, and ethical responsibility. Consequently, scholars have increasingly re-examined the concept of *khalifah* (stewardship or vicegerency) to develop a more ecologically responsive understanding of human-nature relations.

The assertion that the traditional interpretation of the Islamic concept of *khalifah* is inherently anthropocentric has become a significant point of debate within contemporary Islamic environmental scholarship. This critique forms a core argument for researchers who advocate a theological and hermeneutical

reevaluation of humanity’s role within creation. At its heart, this perspective challenges readings that have, either explicitly or implicitly, framed the *khalifah* mandate as a license for human dominion and unrestricted exploitation of natural resources. Critics argue that such an interpretation is a product of modern, secular frameworks of progress and resource extraction, rather than a faithful extraction from the Quranic text itself. They contend that the divine trust (*amanah*) implied in *khalifah* is fundamentally one of responsibility and accountability (*hisab*), not ownership or supremacy.

**Table 1.** Comparative Analysis of Islamic and Secular (UNEP) Environmental Model

Comparison Criterion	Islamic Ecology (e.g., OIC, IFEES)	Secular Model (e.g., UNEP)
<b>Philosophical Foundation</b>	<i>Tawhid</i> (Divine Unity), <i>Khalifah</i> (Vicegerency), nature as <i>Ayat</i> (Divine Sign)	Empirical science, anthropocentrism, secular humanism
<b>Source of Ethics</b>	Divine revelation (Qur’an, Sunnah), <i>Shari’ah</i>	Human reason, international law, utilitarianism
<b>Core Motivation</b>	Religious duty, accountability to God ( <i>Hisab</i> ), eschatological consequences	Economic incentives, legal norms, environmental awareness
<b>Key Principles</b>	<i>Mizan</i> (Balance), prohibition of <i>Israf</i> (waste), “ <i>La Darar</i> ” (no harm)	Sustainable development, risk management, precautionary principle
<b>Mobilization Mechanism</b>	Religious community ( <i>Ummah</i> ), mosques, <i>waqf</i> endowments, Islamic banks	Intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, corporations, scientific networks
<b>Ultimate Goal</b>	Harmony with the Creator and creation, fulfillment of the divine trust ( <i>Amanah</i> )	Technical sustainability, human well-being, ecosystem preservation

Table 1 presents a comparative of Islamic and secular environmental models. The comparison illustrates important differences in their philosophical foundations, sources of authority, motivational frameworks, and environmental objectives. This framework supports the argument that Islamic environmental ethics offers a theocentric and spiritually grounded approach that complements contemporary environmental discourse while providing distinctive moral and religious motivations for environmental responsibility.

A number of contemporary scholars of Islamic environmental ethics, including Nawal Ammar, Ibrahim Ozdemir, and Mawil Izzi Dien, advocate a paradigm shift toward re-conceptualizing human responsibility as that of a conscientious caretaker (*hafiz*), custodian (*wakil*), or benevolent participant within the cosmic order. This perspective emphasizes service, maintenance, and preservation as central themes within Islamic environmental thought. The role of humans is understood not as mastery over a subservient nature, but as an integral part of a sacred, interconnected community of beings (*ummah* of creation), all glorifying the Creator. Endowed with intellect (*'aql*), humans are charged with upholding the intricate balance (*mizan*) established by God, acting as moral agents within—not above—this delicate system (Kamal Gueye & Mohamed, 2023).

Parallel to this critique is a call for developing a consistent and comprehensive hermeneutic approach to the authoritative Islamic sources—the Qur’an and the Prophetic tradition (*Sunnah*). Scholars such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Anna M. Gade argue that ad-hoc citations of “green” verses are insufficient. What is required is a holistic methodological approach that re-examines the entire corpus through an ecological lens, applying principles of *usul al-fiqh* and *maqasid al-shari’ah* to explicitly include environmental preservation as a fundamental objective.

**Table 2.** Core Concepts of Islamic Environmental Ethics

Term (Arabic/ Translit.)	Literal Meaning	Ecological Interpretation	Source / Example
<b>Tawhid</b>	Unity, Monotheism	All creation is interconnected. as a sign of the One Creator. Basis for a holistic worldview.	Foundational in the Qur’an
<b>Khalifah</b>	Vicegerent, Successor	Human as a responsible trustee of the Earth, not its owner. A divine trust ( <i>amanah</i> ).	Qur’an 2:30
<b>Mizan</b>	Balance, Scale	The divine equilibrium in nature, which humans are obliged to preserve.	Qur’an 55:7-9
<b>Ayah (pl. Ayat)</b>	Sign, Proof	Every element of nature is a sign pointing to Allah’s wisdom and power.	Pervasive in the Qur’an

Term (Arabic/ Translit.)	Literal Meaning	Ecological Interpretation	Source / Example
Israf	Extravagance, Waste	Prohibition of overconsumption and resource depletion. A sin.	Qur'an 7:31
Fasad	Corruption, Decay	Prohibition of environmental degradation and disruption of Earth's harmony.	Qur'an 7:56
“La Darar...”	“No harm shall be inflicted...”	A key legal maxim prohibiting any damage to people or ecosystems.	Prophetic Hadith

The ultimate goal of this dual project—reconceptualizing *khalifah* and refining hermeneutical approach—is to construct a theologically coherent and intellectually rigorous foundation for Muslim environmental thought and practice. This foundational work is essential for Muslim-majority societies seeking to develop environmentally responsive policies rooted in Islamic ethical principles and to contribute to global ecological discourse from a distinctively Islamic perspective. In this view, a truly Islamic environmental ethic must be rooted in a consistent rereading of its primary sources, transforming the human role from one of perceived domination to one of humble and responsible participation within a divinely ordered natural system (Feise-Nasr, 2023).

However, translating this theological foundation into effective institutional practice and international engagement remains challenging, raising questions about the autonomy and authenticity of existing Islamic environmental institutions. Organizations such as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES) represent different approaches to promoting Islamic environmental ethics at international and community levels, although their effectiveness is often shaped by broader political, economic, and institutional contexts. Their experiences illustrate both the opportunities and the limitations involved in implementing Islamic ecological principles through practical environmental initiatives across diverse settings.

To better understand these dynamics, it is useful to compare Islamic environmental initiatives with mainstream secular environmental approach. UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme), established in 1972 through General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII), and the World Charter for Nature (1982, resolution 37/7), operate primarily within secular and scientific policy frameworks. UNEP promotes evidence-based sustainable development, global

partnerships, and conservation without religious references, focusing on human well-being, equity and risk reduction through international cooperation (United Nations, 2026). The Charter emphasizes respect for nature, biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource management, and pollution prevention as universal norms.

This perspective, furthermore, highlights the critical role of Prophetic traditions (hadith) in reinforcing ecological consciousness through specific, actionable injunctions. These traditions move beyond broad theological principles to offer direct guidance for daily conduct. Key examples include the strict prohibition of wastefulness (*israf*), exemplified by the command to conserve water during ritual ablution (*wudu*) even when taking it from a flowing river. Similarly, the prohibition against causing harm (*darar*) extends moral consideration to all living beings, as illustrated in narratives promoting kindness to animals and condemning purposeless sport hunting. The Prophet Muhammad's encouragement to plant trees, framing it as a form of continuous charity (*sadaqah jariyah*), provides a timeless religious mandate for reforestation and ecosystem restoration. Most significantly, the explicit prohibition of *ifsad fi al-ard* (corruption on earth) directly addresses the root causes of modern ecological crises unchecked exploitation and industrial pollution by casting them as a profound violation of humanity's divine trust (*amanah*). These hadiths translate abstract ethical concepts into tangible spiritual duties, embedding environmental stewardship within the fabric of Islamic piety and practice.

The contemporary relevance and universal potential of this faith-based framework are increasingly acknowledged in global sustainability discourse. A prime example is the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Faith for Earth Initiative (2021), which strategically partners with religious communities worldwide. This initiative recognizes that religious teachings, rituals, and networks possess a unique capacity to inspire deep-seated behavioral change and foster a sense of sacred responsibility towards the planet, complementing secular policy and scientific approaches. By systematically linking foundational Qur'anic ethics and Prophetic directives with contemporary environmental necessities, such as climate mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable consumption Islamic environmental thought does not merely offer an internal corrective. It actively positions Islam as a significant and constructive contributor to global discussions on sustainability and environmental justice. This engagement provides a holistic model that integrates spiritual motivation with practical action, addressing what proponents argue is the "spiritual malaise" underlying

the ecological crisis.

In summary, this discussion leads to three main observations: (1) Prophetic traditions (hadith) provide a crucial, practical layer to Islamic environmental ethics, transforming stewardship from a theological concept into a mandated daily practice through injunctions against waste, harm, and corruption of the earth. (2) The alignment of Islamic ecological principles with global initiatives like UNEP's Faith for Earth demonstrates the recognized potential of religious frameworks to motivate profound and lasting ecological responsibility beyond secular paradigms. (3) By articulating its environmental teachings, Islam can contribute a unique, spiritually grounded perspective to the global sustainability dialogue, advocating for a model of environmental justice rooted in ethical accountability and intergenerational trust (Khudoyberdiyev et al., 2025).

However, this constructive engagement on a shared platform should not obscure the distinct, foundational differences between a religiously grounded ecological paradigm and a secular-scientific one. While initiatives like Faith for Earth seek synergy, the core operational frameworks remain divergent. In contrast, three key differences distinguish Islamic programs (OIC and IFEES) from UNEP: (1) Theological foundation versus secular science—Islamic initiatives root environmental ethics in *tawhid* (oneness of God), *khilafah* (stewardship), and *mizan* (balance), viewing nature as *ayat* (divine signs). UNEP relies on empirical data and policy without metaphysical grounding (Fazlhashemi, 2025). (2) Moral accountability and prohibition of harm—Islamic ecology invokes *la darar wa la dirar* (no harm shall be inflicted or reciprocated) and *israf* (waste prohibition) as religious duties with eschatological consequences. UNEP focuses on voluntary guidelines and economic incentives (Khasani, 2025). (3) Community and faith-based mobilization—OIC and IFEES emphasize intra-Islamic solidarity, *waqf* (endowments), green *sukuk*, and mosque-led initiatives (e.g., Green Ramadan and agroforestry in mosques). UNEP prioritizes intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder secular mechanisms (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, various declarations).

The divided approach offers benefits but also redundancies. Three advantages of separation are: (1) It provides a spiritually motivating framework that can inspire deeper behavioral change among Muslims than abstract secular appeals; (2) It enables culturally resonant solutions, such as Sharia-compliant finance for climate projects; and (3) It fosters an independent voice in global forums, countering Western-dominated narratives (Fazlhashemi, 2025).

Three drawbacks of such an approach include: (1) resource wastage through

duplicated institutions and bureaucratic multiplication; (2) fragmentation that may weaken unified global action, as Muslims create parallel structures instead of strengthening universal ones; and (3) the risk of isolationism, where Islamic efforts remain marginal, potentially reducing their overall impact on planetary crises (Hadi, 2025, pp. 22-25).

Rather than being understood as a national or geographical framework, Islamic ecology represents a religiously grounded ethical perspective derived from Islamic teachings. In this regard, Islamic ecology offers several distinctive contributions to contemporary environmental discourse: (1) a holistic, divinely anchored ethic that integrates spirituality with practice, addressing what some scholars describe as the spiritual dimensions of ecological degradation (Nasr, as discussed in Fazlhashemi, 2025); (2) an emphasis on intergenerational justice and trust (*amanah*), providing moral motivation for long-term sustainability; and (3) the potential to mobilize large Muslims communities through faith-based networks, creating grassroots resilience and innovative tools like faith-aligned digital campaigns (Iqbal & Jamil, 2025).

Islam presents a comprehensive worldview where the physical environment is not a separate or secular domain but an integral part of a divine creation. It establishes a clear ethical framework for humanity's interaction with nature, derived from its core theological principles. This framework is built upon several foundational concepts, including nature as a purposeful creation, humans as entrusted custodians, and the avoidance of waste and harm as a religious duty. The Islamic understanding begins with the principle of *tawhid*, the absolute oneness of God. This unity implies that all elements of the universe are interconnected because they originate from a single divine source.

Nature, therefore, is not viewed as random or autonomous. Rather, it is understood as *ayat* (signs) that reflect God's wisdom, power, and creativity. The orderly cycles of seasons, ecological balance, and the complexity of living organisms are regarded as manifestation of divine design. Consequently, the natural world commands respect and environmental degradation may be understood not only as an ecological problem but also as a failure to appreciate the blessings and signs of God.

Within this creation, humans occupy a unique position. The Holy Quran states that God appointed humanity as a *khalifah* (vicegerent) on Earth. This role represents a profound trust rather than a license for domination. Although humans are permitted to utilize natural resources for their sustenance and development, such utilization must be conducted responsibly and within ethical

limits. The concept of *mizan* (balance), which is repeatedly emphasized in the Quran, teaches that God created the world in a state of equilibrium and that humans have a responsibility to preserve that balance. Excessive exploitation, environmental degradation, and resource depletion therefore constitute violations of this entrusted responsibility (Zafar & Abu-Hussin, 2025).

Practical ethical guidelines flow from this theological foundation. The prohibition of waste and extravagance (*israf*) constitutes a major theme in Islamic teachings. The Quran explicitly labels those who waste as “the brothers of the devils,” a principle that can be applied directly to contemporary concerns regarding overconsumption and resource misuse. Conservation, therefore, may be understood not only as an environmental practice but also as a form of spiritual act of obedience.

These principles are further reinforced through prophetic traditions (*sunnah*), including the instruction to conserve water even when performing ablution in a flowing river and the encouragement to plant trees as acts of ongoing charity, while the legal maxim *la darar wa la dirar* provides a jurisprudential basis for prohibiting environmental damage and promoting ecological responsibility. Together, these principles demonstrate that environmental stewardship occupies a fundamental place within Islamic ethical thought, as concepts such as *tawhid*, *khalifah*, *mizan*, and *amanah* provide a comprehensive framework linking spiritual values with ecological responsibility and understanding environmental protection as both a practical necessity and a manifestation of faith and moral accountability. In this context, strengthening Islamic ecological awareness may support contemporary sustainability efforts through responsible environmental behavior, community participation, and long-term commitment to ecological balance, consistent with the Qur’anic principle (13:11) that meaningful transformation begins with human willingness to reform attitudes and actions.

### ***Islamic Environmentalism in Practice: Case Studies and Policy Models***

Islamic environmental ethics is not limited to theological principles but is also reflected in various environmental initiatives implemented across Muslim-majority countries. These initiatives can be understood in light of the Qur’anic injunction in Al-A’raf 7:56: “And do not cause corruption on the earth after it has been set in order” (*wa la tufsidu fi al-ard ba’da islahiha*), which prohibits ecological disruption and emphasizes the preservation of environmental harmony (Ramin, 2025, p. 11).

**Table 3.** Analysis of Environmental Initiatives in Muslim-Majority Countries (Case Studies)

Country	Initiative/Project	Goal / Scale	Achievements (Data)	Challenges / Critique
Saudi Arabia	Vision 2030, Afforestation	Planting 10 billion trees	1 billion (10%) planted (2022-2024)	Combating desertification, water stress
Pakistan	“10 Billion Tree Tsunami”	Massive reforestation drive	1.29 billion saplings (2019-2024)	Sapling survival rate ~40%
UAE	Masdar City	100% renewable energy city	Pioneering project	Target: 44% renewable energy by 2050
Indonesia	Crackdown on illegal logging	Stricter law enforcement	52% reduction by 2023	Persistent deforestation in Kalimantan/Sumatra

Table 3 demonstrates that Muslim-majority countries have adopted diverse strategies to address environmental challenges, including afforestation programs, renewable energy development, and stronger environmental regulations. Despite these efforts, significant ecological challenges remain across many regions. In the Indonesian context, previous studies have identified persistent environmental issues such as deforestation in Kalimantan and Sumatra, river pollution in Java, and coastal plastic waste, despite Indonesia being the world’s largest Muslim-majority nation (Ramin, 2025, p. 12). Data from the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) indicate that there were over 1,500 hydrometeorological disasters in 2023, many of which were associated with ecological degradation (Ramin, 2025, p. 12).

The paper conducts a critical review of current climate initiatives in the Muslim world, highlighting both achievements and ongoing challenges. On the positive side, it identifies several large-scale national projects: (1) Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 includes an ambitious target to plant 10 billion trees to combat desertification. A cited study notes that between 2022 and 2024, the Kingdom planted 1 billion trees, achieving 10% of its target; (2) Pakistan’s “10 Billion Tree Tsunami” represents a major reforestation initiative under which 1.29 billion trees were planted between 2019 and 2024. However, a

study points out a significant challenge: only about 40% of the planted saplings survived due to inadequate post-planting maintenance; (3) The United Arab Emirates is home to Masdar City, a pioneering project designed to operate on 100% clean energy. The UAE aims to meet 44% of its energy needs from renewable sources by 2050; and (4) Indonesia and Malaysia have implemented stricter regulations to address deforestation. Indonesia’s policies reportedly contributed to a 52% reduction in illegal logging by 2023.

Despite these efforts, the findings indicate several persistent challenges, including continued economic dependence on fossil fuels, particularly in Gulf countries, limited public environmental awareness, and weakness in policy implementation and enforcement. To address this challenges, table 4 presents the proposed Islamic green policy model as a roadmap for strengthening environmental governance in Muslim-majority countries.

**Table 4.** The “Islamic Green Policy Model” - A Roadmap

Policy Area	Specific Measure / Instrument	Justification in Islamic Ethics	Expected Outcome / Example
Finance	Green <i>Sukuk</i> (bonds), Environmental <i>Waqf</i> (endowment)	Prohibition of <i>Riba</i> (usury), principle of <i>Maslahah</i> (public good)	Funding for renewables, forest restoration (Saudi Arabia, Pakistan)
Fiscal Policy	Carbon tax, pollution levies	Principle of “ <i>La Dararwa La Dirar</i> ” (no harm inflicted or reciprocated)	Reduction of industrial emissions, creation of an OIC “Green Islamic Fund”
Education	Integrating ecology into <i>madrassa</i> and university curricula	Pursuit of knowledge ( <i>‘Ilm</i> ), wisdom ( <i>Hikmah</i> )	Human resource development and long-term mindset change
Awareness	Environmental <i>Khutbas</i> (sermons), campaigns in Islamic media	Enjoining good ( <i>Amr bilMa’ruf</i> ), responsibility of the <i>Khalifah</i>	Community mobilization, “Green Ramadan”, mosque-based agroforestry

Policy Area	Specific Measure / Instrument	Justification in Islamic Ethics	Expected Outcome / Example
International Cooperation	Establishing a “Green Islamic Fund” under the OIC	Islamic solidarity ( <i>Ukhuwwah</i> ), collective duty ( <i>Fard Kifayah</i> )	25% reduction in collective OIC carbon emissions, technology transfer

To address existing challenges and better align environmental governance with Islamic ethical principles, the paper proposes a multi-pronged policy framework. Its key recommendations include: (1) Green Islamic Finance, which leverages Islamic financial instruments such as environmentally oriented *sukuk* (bonds) and revitalizes the traditional *waqf* (endowment) system to provide sustainable funding for environmental projects; (2) Sharia-Compliant Fiscal Policy, which introduces environmental taxes or pollution levies justified through the principle “*la darar*” (no harm), including potential carbon taxes and industrial pollution charges; (3) Educational Reform, which integrates environmental sciences with Islamic teachings in madrasa and university curricula, thereby fostering ecological awareness and environmental responsibility among future generations (Syafaruddin, 2025); (4) Awareness Campaigns, which utilize Friday sermons (*khutbas*) and Islamic media platforms to strengthen public environmental consciousness; and (5) Enhanced International Cooperation, which encourages the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to establish a dedicated “Green Islamic Fund” and facilitate technology transfer among member states.

These initiatives suggest that Muslim-majority nations possess both a religious foundation and practical policy instruments for contributing to global environmental sustainability. By recognizing environmental protection as an important dimension of *khilafah* (stewardship), these countries may develop sustainability models that integrate spiritual values, ethical economics, and technological innovation (Fozia & Zeeshan, 2025, pp. 1270–1276).

Similarly, the prevention of harm (*darar*) is a fundamental legal maxim in Islamic law. It is derived from the Prophetic injunction that “there should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm.” This principle renders environmental pollution, which causes harm to human health, animal life, and ecosystem integrity, ethically unacceptable. It also encourages consideration of the broader consequences of human actions for both present and future generations.

Islamic teachings also extend moral consideration to animals and plants. The Prophet Muhammad encouraged kindness toward animals, prohibited unnecessary suffering, and emphasized the virtue of acts such as providing water to thirsty animals. He also condemned purposeless hunting and advocated compassionate treatment of animals used for labor. Likewise, plant life receives ethical protection, as Islamic teachings discourage the unnecessary destruction of trees and vegetation, including during periods of conflict.

This environmental ethic is not merely a contemporary concern but is embedded within everyday religious practice. The ritual of ablution (*wudu*) performed before prayer, requires the use of water while simultaneously encouraging moderation and conservation, even when water is abundant. Similarly, the annual pilgrimage (*hajj*) has strict prohibitions against harming animals, plants, and other living creatures within the sacred precincts of Mecca, reflecting principles of ecological protection and respect for life.

In essence, the Islamic approach connects environmental responsibility with faith and worship. Caring for the Earth is understood as part of fulfilling the trust of *khalifah*, while environmental destruction and waste are viewed as violations of that responsibility. Consequently, Islamic environmental ethics presents a holistic framework in which ecological stewardships forms an integral part of a broader moral and spiritual order, encouraging balanced, respectful, and sustainable relationship with the natural world He created and entrusted to our care (Wersal, 1995, pp. 452-456).

### ***Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Mobilization***

The teachings of Prophet Muhammad establish a clear and practical environmental ethic based on core values derived from his Hadiths. These values are not abstract ideals but provide direct guidance for daily conduct. The tradition emphasizes cleanliness as an act of faith, linking personal and environmental hygiene to spiritual purity, and strictly prohibits waste, especially the waste of water, even during essential rituals like ablution. Furthermore, it mandates compassion for all living beings, illustrating through vivid narratives that kindness to animals is a moral duty with spiritual consequences.

This framework extends to active stewardship and the prevention of harm. The Prophet strongly encouraged **planting trees**, framing it as a continuous charity that benefits all creatures, a principle that supports modern reforestation and sustainability efforts. Most significantly, he explicitly forbade environmental destruction (*ifsad*). This overarching prohibition against

corrupting the Earth after its proper ordering addresses the root causes of today's ecological crisis—including unchecked exploitation and industrial harm—by casting them as a breach of humanity's divine trust. Together, these values from the Hadiths provide a concise, actionable foundation for building ecological awareness and sustainable practices within Muslim societies and beyond (Khasani, 2025, pp. 315-318).

This ethical foundation, rooted in revelation, was not confined to theory but inspired a centuries-long tradition of observing, understanding, and living in harmony with the natural world, as reflected in historical records from the Islamic Golden Age. Muslim scholars from the eighth to fourteenth centuries documented meteorological phenomena, droughts, floods, and seasonal cycles with empirical rigor while integrating moral and theological reflections, with figures such as Al-Kindi, Al-Mas'udi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Khaldun exploring the relationships among climate, geography, health, and societal development. These records reveal patterns of environmental stress, including recurring droughts in Mesopotamia and Nile failures that affected caliphates and dynasties, and provide insights into climatic variability and adaptive responses that, when combined with modern science, may inform resilient strategies for addressing contemporary challenges such as water scarcity and instability in Muslim-majority regions.

Today, the fusion of this rich tradition, ranging from Prophetic guidance to historical wisdom, with contemporary challenges opens new pathways for action. In the context of today's climate crisis, Islamic ecology provides a cogent moral foundation for community-based governance, adaptation, and mitigation. Faith-based initiatives rooted in these teachings emphasizing moderation (*wasatiyyah*), stewardship, and the avoidance of waste, can mobilize Muslims toward sustainable practices. While historical analyses show climate fluctuations influencing civilizational trajectories (e.g., during the Abbasid decline or the Little Ice Age), they also highlight resilience through adaptive institutions and ethical norms. Looking forward, this tradition can inspire digital responses to ecological crises, such as leveraging technology for awareness, behavioral change, and green innovation while aligning with Islamic values. For instance, digital platforms could amplify faith-based environmental campaigns, promote eco-friendly practices, or support Sharia-compliant sustainable finance. By fusing historical Islamic knowledge, theological ethics, and contemporary tools, Muslims can strengthen societal resilience and contribute meaningfully to global climate action (Iqbal & Nurul, 2025, pp. 122-125).

### ***Islamic Ecotheology and the Global Discourse: A Civilizational Critique***

In the ongoing global discourse on environmental destruction, global warming, and humanity's role in greenhouse gas emissions, Muslim thinkers actively engage with these issues while recognizing them as planetary threats. Western debates frequently target religion, particularly Christianity's creation narrative and the notion of human dominion. Islamic theology also contains passages that have been interpreted as placing humans in a privileged position within creation. This has prompted Muslim theologians to address key questions: Does Islamic creation theology contribute to resource overexploitation? How should the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation be interpreted? And does Islam form part of the problem or offer a solution?

Muslim scholars largely reject any causal link between Islamic theology and the current ecological crisis. Instead, they advance a civilizational critique of the West, attributing primary responsibility for environmental degradation to European and Western anthropocentrism, individualism, Cartesian mechanism thought, industrialism, colonialism, capitalism's relentless pursuit of profit, and the desacralization of nature (Fazlhashemi, 2025; Nasr, 1996).

Seyyed Hossein Nasr traces the roots of the ecological crisis to the European Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution, which replaced a theocentric worldview with anthropocentrism, elevating humanity to a god-like status and reducing nature to a mechanistic resource devoid of sacredness, thereby enabling unrestricted exploitation without ethical or spiritual constraints. In contrast, Islamic ecotheology offers a holistic, theocentric alternative rooted in tawhid (divine unity), khalifah (accountable trusteeship), and mizan (cosmic balance), emphasizing the resacralization of nature and moral accountability often absent in secular paradigms. This civilizational critique positions Islamic ecotheology not merely as a defensive response but as a distinctive contribution to global environmental discourse by integrating spiritual motivation, ethical accountability, and intergenerational justice.

### ***Comparison of Islamic and Christian Ecotheology***

Christian ecotheology emerged largely as a response to Lynn White Jr.'s (1907-1987) critique, which blamed the biblical notion of human "dominion" over nature (Genesis 1:28) for fostering an exploitative attitude toward the environment, contributing to the modern ecological crisis (White, 1967). This critique prompted a reevaluation of dominion as responsible stewardship

rather than domination. Key figures include: (1) Rosemary Radford Ruether, a pioneer of ecofeminism, who linked gender oppression with environmental exploitation, advocating ecojustice and reinterpreting dominion as mutual care and healing (Ruether, 1992, pp. 15-25); (2) Jürgen Moltmann, who developed a social trinitarian theology where the Holy Spirit indwells creation, emphasizing solidarity with the natural world and eschatological hope for renewal (Moltmann, 1993, pp. 90-102); and (3) Pope Francis, whose encyclical *Laudato si'* (2015) introduced the concept of “integral ecology,” connecting environmental care with social justice, poverty alleviation, and the rejection of consumerism, while framing stewardship service to God’s gift of creation (Francis, 2015).

Christian approaches often retain elements of anthropocentrism by placing humans in a central theological position, while simultaneously promoting virtues such as humility and ecojustice (Bouma-Prediger, 1995, pp. 150-155). Islamic ecotheology, in contrast, is rooted in *tawhid* (God’s absolute oneness), viewing all creation as interconnected signs (*ayat*) of the Divine, and *khalifah* (vicegerency/stewardship), in which humans act as accountable trustees rather than dominators (Nasr, 1996, pp. 72-90). Principles like *mizan* (balance) and prohibitions against *israf* (waste) and *fasad* (corruption) make environmental protection a religious duty with eschatological consequences (Fazlhashemi, 2025).

Both traditions strongly emphasize human responsibility toward the natural world, manifested as stewardship in Christianity and *khalifah* (vicegerency) in Islam. However, the two approaches differ in their conceptual foundations. Christian theology has often responded to critiques of the Genesis “dominion” mandate by reinterpreting it in terms of responsible care and service (Francis, 2015). In contrast, Islamic environmental ethics reject exploitative attitudes through the principle of *tawhid* (the absolute oneness of God) and the legal maxim of *la darar* (no harm), which establish ethical boundaries against environmental degradation (Iqbal & Jamil, 2025).

Christian ecotheology tends to integrate ecological concerns with social justice (ecojustice) and eschatological hope for the renewal of creation. Islamic environmental ethics, by comparison, are more explicitly normative, drawing on Sharia principles to promote moderation (*wasatiyyah*), balance, and the concept of *amanah* (trust), which emphasizes responsibility toward future generations and discourages the depletion of natural resources for short-term gain. Both frameworks connect ecology closely with spirituality,

although they do so through different theological lenses. Christianity links environmental responsibility to doctrines of grace and cosmic redemption, whereas Islam grounds it in submission (*Islam*) to the divine will and the recognition of natural phenomena as *ayat* (sacred signs) of God. In addition, some Muslim scholars critique modern secularism as a force that contributes to the desacralization of nature and weakens its perceived spiritual significance (Fazlhashemi, 2025).

Taken together, these traditions offer complementary intellectual and ethical resources for addressing global sustainability challenges. Christianity contributes influential papal teachings and ecofeminist perspectives, whereas Islam offers a holistic vision grounded in *tawhid* and a normative ethical framework capable of informing both individual conduct and public policy. This complementarity suggests fertile ground for interfaith collaboration in environmental ethics and environmental action.

### ***Islamic Spiritual Ecology in Practice: Insights from NU in Indonesia***

In contemporary Indonesian Islam, Islamic ecology manifests through localized spiritual frameworks and environmental initiatives that respond to specific socio-ecological challenges. A notable example is the progressive thought within Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's largest Islamic organization, where intellectuals articulate spiritual ecology as a holistic response to environmental degradation driven by economic liberalization and extractive industries (Mustofa et al., 2025; Yakub et al., 2023).

First, Roy Murtadho critiques economic liberalization for enabling resource exploitation by elites and industries, which exacerbates socio-ecological imbalances. He proposes forms of spiritually grounded resistance that integrate Islamic ethics with environmental justice, framing ecological protection as a moral imperative in response to capitalist overreach. Second, Muhammad Al-Fayyadl develops the concept of Cosmic Islam, which stresses religiosity and Islamic teachings in preserving cosmic order (*mizan*). He views nature as an interconnected expression of divine unity (*tawhid*), where human actions must maintain harmony between the spiritual and material realms. This approach roots environmental responsibility in theological principles rather than relying solely on secular policy frameworks. Third, Muhammad Jadul Maula emphasizes that care for nature and disaster mitigation are already embedded in the spiritual practices of traditionalist NU communities. He highlights existing grassroots mechanisms within religious networks, arguing

that ecological awareness is not simply imported but is also inherent in the lived Islamic spirituality in Indonesian communities (Yakub et al., 2023).

These perspectives illustrate how Islamic spiritual ecology combines theology, spirituality, and practical action. Unlike secular environmentalism, these approaches critique capitalist exploitation while promoting stewardship (*khilafah*) and balance through religious discourse. The perspectives developed by NU intellectuals offer a culturally resonant model that blends tradition with contemporary needs, demonstrating the potential of faith-based and locally grounded environmental initiatives in the Global South (Yakub et al., 2023). This localized expression of Islamic environmental thought reinforces the broader argument that Islamic ecological ethics can contribute to addressing contemporary environmental challenges while remaining rooted in religious values and local contexts.

### Conclusion

This study systematically examined the theological, historical, and practical dimensions of Islamic environmental ethics and demonstrated its relevance for addressing contemporary ecological crises. Analysis of the Qur'an and Hadith reveals that nature is consistently portrayed as divine signs (*ayat*) that reflect Allah's wisdom, order, and mercy, rather than as objects for unrestricted human exploitation. Foundational principles such as *tawhid* (divine unity), *khalifah* (responsible stewardship), *mizan* (balance), *wasatiyyah* (moderation), *israf* (prohibition of waste), and *la darar wa la dirar* (the prohibition of harm) collectively establish a comprehensive ethical framework that integrates environmental responsibility with faith, worship, and everyday conduct.

The study further demonstrated that a hermeneutical re-evaluation of *khalifah* as trusteeship and caretaking, rather than domination, helps correct anthropocentric interpretations of the concept. Historical evidence from the Islamic Golden Age also confirms that Muslim scholars developed empirical observations of environmental patterns, providing insights that remain relevant for present-day adaptation in drought-prone Muslim-majority societies. Comparative engagement with Christian ecotheology highlights Islam's strong emphasis on the sacredness and interconnectedness of creation through *tawhid*, while also critiquing modern paradigms of desacralization, excessive capitalism, and consumerism that contribute significantly to global environmental degradation.

To translate theological principles into practical governance, this study

proposed an “Islamic Green Policy Model” that includes the development of green sukuk and waqf for sustainable financing, Sharia-compliant environmental taxation, ecological integration into madrasa and university curricula, faith-based environmental awareness through khutbahs and media, and stronger environmental cooperation among OIC member states through a dedicated Green Islamic Fund. These initiatives illustrate that Islamic environmental governance can be both culturally grounded and institutionally effective.

The Indonesian context, particularly through the initiatives of progressive Nahdlatul Ulama intellectuals, further demonstrates how Islamic ecological values can be implemented through spiritual ecology and community-based environmental action. Such localized approaches show that Islamic environmental frameworks can contribute meaningfully to global sustainability while remaining rooted in religious tradition and local cultural realities.

Overall, the study concludes that Islamic ecology constitutes a holistic ethical framework grounded in the interconnected principles of *tawhid*, *khalifah*, and *mizan*. By integrating metaphysical, legal, and moral dimensions, Islamic environmental ethics offers a faith-based perspective alongside existing environmental paradigms and provides valuable conceptual and practical resources for promoting environmental justice, resilience, and intergenerational responsibility. Nevertheless, the study also recognizes several challenges. Contemporary environmental initiatives in some Muslim institutions remain influenced by external political, economic, and secular frameworks, which may affect the application interpretation of Islamic ecological principles. Therefore, a more consistent engagement with primary Islamic sources and classical scholarship is necessary to strengthen contextually relevant approaches to Islamic environmental thought.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be proposed. First, Muslim-majority governments and Islamic organizations should institutionalize environmentally sustainable policies through Sharia-compliant financial instruments, green development programs, and regional cooperation frameworks. Second, educational institutions should integrate Islamic environmental ethics into formal curricula to cultivate ecological awareness from an early age. Third, religious leaders, scholars, and community organizations should expand faith-based environmental campaigns through sermons, public education, and grassroots activism. Finally, future research should explore empirical applications of Islamic ecological ethics in different socio-political contexts and assess their effectiveness in addressing climate change, environmental

degradation, and sustainable development challenges.

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# LOCAL WISDOM-BASED GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE PARENTING FOR PREVENTING CHILD VIOLENCE IN MUSLIM COMMUNITIES OF WEST NUSA TENGGARA

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## Abstract

*Violence against children remains a serious social problem in Indonesia, including in the West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) region, which is inhabited by three major ethnic groups: Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo (Sasambo). The problem lies not only in economic and educational factors but also in gender-insensitive child-rearing practices that overlook local values. This article examines gender-transformative parenting based on local wisdom as a strategy to prevent violence against children among these three ethnic groups. It employs a descriptive qualitative approach within a phenomenological paradigm, drawing on literature reviews and field data analysis. The study shows that child-rearing patterns in the Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo (Sasambo) communities are still influenced by patriarchal structures. However, these communities also uphold noble values such as respect, responsibility, cooperation, and compassion, which can serve as a foundation for preventing violence. A gender perspective plays an important role in balancing the roles of fathers and mothers in parenting. At the same time, local wisdom practices, such as deliberation (Pepaduan in the Sasak, Satemung Panangar*

in the Samawa, and Mbolu Weki in the Mbojo) and communal responsibility in problem-solving (Wirang in the Sasak, Basiru in the Samawa, and Karawi Kabuju in the Mbojo), function as social mechanisms for shaping children's character in a humanistic manner. This study confirms that the synergy between cultural values and a gender-equality approach to parenting is an effective strategy for preventing violence against children. Future studies should explore more diverse local wisdom-based parenting models beyond this setting to prevent child violence.

Kekerasan terhadap anak masih menjadi masalah sosial yang serius di Indonesia, termasuk di wilayah Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB), yang dihuni oleh tiga kelompok etnis utama, yaitu Sasak, Samawa, dan Mbojo (Sasambo). Permasalahan ini tidak hanya terletak pada faktor ekonomi dan pendidikan, tetapi juga pada pola pengasuhan anak yang tidak sensitif gender dan mengabaikan nilai-nilai lokal. Artikel ini mengkaji pengasuhan transformatif gender berbasis kearifan lokal sebagai strategi untuk mencegah kekerasan terhadap anak di antara ketiga kelompok etnis tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dalam paradigma fenomenologi dengan memanfaatkan kajian pustaka dan analisis data lapangan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pola pengasuhan anak dalam masyarakat Sasak, Samawa, dan Mbojo (Sasambo) masih dipengaruhi oleh struktur patriarki. Namun demikian, masyarakat tersebut juga menjunjung tinggi nilai-nilai luhur seperti rasa hormat, tanggung jawab, kerja sama, dan kasih sayang yang dapat menjadi dasar pencegahan kekerasan. Perspektif gender berperan penting dalam menyeimbangkan peran ayah dan ibu dalam pengasuhan. Pada saat yang sama, praktik kearifan lokal seperti musyawarah (Pepaduan pada masyarakat Sasak, Satemung Panangar pada masyarakat Samawa, dan Mbolu Weki pada masyarakat Mbojo), serta tanggung jawab komunal dalam penyelesaian masalah (Wirang pada masyarakat Sasak, Basiru pada masyarakat Samawa, dan Karawi Kabuju pada masyarakat Mbojo), berfungsi sebagai mekanisme sosial dalam membentuk karakter anak secara humanis. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa sinergi antara nilai-nilai budaya dan pendekatan kesetaraan gender dalam pengasuhan merupakan strategi yang efektif untuk mencegah kekerasan terhadap anak. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan untuk mengeksplorasi model-model pengasuhan berbasis kearifan lokal yang lebih beragam di luar konteks penelitian ini guna mencegah kekerasan terhadap anak.

**Keywords:** *child violence prevention, gender-transformative parenting, local wisdom, Muslim communities, Sasak culture*

## **Introduction**

Violence against children is a global issue that has become a serious concern among practitioners, academics, and governments alike. Globally,

three-quarters of children aged 2 to 4 years experience harsh discipline from their parents and caregivers (WHO, 2020). According to a report from the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2022, 1 billion children aged 2-17 years worldwide were victims of physical, emotional, and sexual violence in their environment (WHO, 2022). This violence hurts children's mental health, social development, and well-being into adulthood (Alexandra et al., 2023; Sakroni, 2021; Gupta et al., 2023). One of the leading causes of violence against children is the inequality of power relations and gender roles within the family, where patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes often give rise unbalanced of role of parent in raising children. This ruins parenting and increases the risk of violence against children (Miranda & Rumilah, 2024; Arifin et al., 2023; Idris, 2022; Peterman et al., 2020; Putra, 2024).

In many societies, including Indonesia, rigid gender norms place women in the primary caregiving role, while men hold the role of breadwinner. This view not only creates an imbalance in the burden of caregiving but also increases the potential for violence when there are conflicts in the division of household responsibilities. Violence often arises as a result of stress, social pressure, and the inability to meet traditional gender expectations. This is also supported by research showing that unequal gender caregiving increases children's vulnerability to violence, both physical and emotional (Maulida, 2024; Rahman, 2024; Saepuloh, 2021; Pundir et al., 2020; Skar et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, particularly in the province of West Nusa Tenggara (*Nusa Tenggara Barat/NTB*), violence against children remains a significant challenge, especially in the context of the Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo ethnics. Data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection reveals that NTB ranks 11th out of 38 provinces in terms of child abuse victims, with 606 cases (Kemenpan, 2024). One of the contributing factors is that the community still adheres to traditional norms that regulate gender roles, which often burden women as the primary caregivers, and sometimes normalizes violence as a means of disciplining children. In this context, rigid traditional gender norms can exacerbate inequality and power relations within families, increase the potential for violence, and hinder children's development in a healthy environment. Families, especially mothers or caregivers who are depressed, tend to use harsh disciplinary measures (physical punishment and psychological aggression) against children (Jha et al., 2023).

However, the Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo communities also have rich local wisdom, such as the values of cooperation, deliberation (*Pepaduan* in

the Sasak tribe, *Satemung Panangar* in the Samawa tribe, *Mbolo Weki* in the Mbojo tribe), and communal responsibility to face and solve those problems (*Wirang* in the Sasak tribe, *Basiru* in the Samawa tribe, *Karawi Kabuju* in the Mbojo tribe). These values emphasize the importance of involving all family members and society alike in solving problems together. By integrating this local wisdom into parenting, there is great potential to promote gender equality in the family, which can ultimately prevent violence against children.

At the global level, researchers and practitioners have begun developing gender-transformative parenting approaches to promote a more equal division of roles between men and women within the family (Backhaus et al., 2023). Gender-transformative parenting aims to change unfair gender norms and create an inclusive, safe, and supportive environment for children's growth (UNICEF, 2024). Several studies show that more gender-equitable parenting models can reduce violence against children, improve child welfare, and improve overall family dynamics (Putra, 2024; Jovani, 2024; Afifah, 2023; Nisa & Ardianto, 2022; Mulyana, 2022).

Gender issues have been discussed intensively separately, but research on gender transformative parenting in the Indonesian context, especially in communities that still uphold traditional values, is still minimal. Most research in Indonesia focuses on gender equality issues in education and the public sector (Aini, 2024; Novianti et al., 2024; Nurhayati et al., 2024) but rarely discusses how gender norms in the family directly impact parenting and violence against children. Furthermore, although some studies have begun to highlight the role of local wisdom in social development (Alawiyah et al., 2021; Saputra et al., 2021; Mahmudah, 2022), few have linked local wisdom to gender-based parenting. Local wisdom, such as the values of deliberation, mutual assistance, and family cooperation, actually has great potential to support more gender-equitable parenting. However, to date, there has been hardly any study that specifically integrates gender-transformative parenting with local wisdom in Indonesia. Therefore, this study fills this gap.

Family life is shaped by both socially constructed roles and deeply rooted cultural values. Gender theory emphasizes that the roles of men and women are socially constructed and therefore open to change and transformation, highlighting the importance of equality and equity within family relations (Butler, 1990; Oakley, 1972) as well as parent-child ties. At the same time, local wisdom reflects culturally embedded norms such as mutual care, respect, and communal responsibility, which function as moral guidelines in many societies

(Geertz, 1973). These perspectives on gender equality in cultural contexts ensure that social transformation remains both meaningful and sustainable and do not destabilize society.

Transformative parenting emphasizes the role of parenting in reshaping social norms and fostering children's critical consciousness. Drawing on transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), transformative parenting encourages parents to move beyond traditional role transmission toward reflective and emancipatory practices. In this model, parenting is not only about nurturing and discipline but also about empowering children to question inequality, including gender bias, while remaining rooted in cultural values. When integrated with established parenting frameworks such as Baumrind's (1967) authoritative model, transformative parenting promotes shared caregiving roles, open communication, and the cultivation of empathy and social responsibility. This theoretical perspective is used in the present study.

## **Method**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a phenomenological paradigm. This approach was chosen because the study's main objective is to understand the social meanings, values, and practices of child rearing through the experiences and cultural constructs of the Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo communities. According to Creswell, phenomenological research seeks to capture the essence of human experience as experienced by individuals in a particular context (Creswell, 2014). This approach allows the researchers to examine the relationships among parenting, gender values, and local wisdom as a unified social system. This type of research is field research enriched with library research.

Data collection in this study was conducted through four primary methods: in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to explore informants' experiences and views on child rearing, gender roles, and the influence of customs. The total number of informants from three ethnic groups reached 170, including religious and *adat*/community leaders, lay people (parents), representatives of non-governmental organizations, members of Islamic organizations, and district and sub-district government officials. The focus group discussion was conducted in Mataram (twice), Sumbawa (once), and Bima-Dompu (once). The invited participants came from various backgrounds, including government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, members of Islamic

organizations, and parents. Participatory observation of social activities such as *begawe* in Lombok, *basiru* in Sumbawa, and *karawi kabuju* in Bima, which reflect social values and moral education for children. This study also collected relevant documents/archives, such as regional bylaws (*peraturan daerah*) and village regulations (*peraturan desa/awiq-awiq*), as well as community records. To strengthen the theoretical basis of the research, library data were obtained from previous research, anthropology literature, gender studies, and relevant customary law.

The collected data were then reduced, categorized, and tested through triangulation to maintain the validity and reliability of the findings. Data analysis used Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification to find patterns, conceptual relationships, and the social meaning of the phenomena studied (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study also uses a gender analysis framework (GAF) to assess the division of caregiving roles between men and women, and an analysis of local wisdom to understand the cultural norms that influence child protection. Validity is maintained through triangulation of sources and methods.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Parenting is a strategy parents use to guide and shape their children's character. According to Baumrind, parenting styles include authoritarian, democratic, and permissive, each with different implications for emotional and social development (Baumrind, 1967). In traditional communities such as the Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo in NTB, child rearing is influenced by traditional values, religion, and social structures, resulting in collective parenting that involves the extended family and traditional leaders. The gender perspective is important because social constructs regarding the roles of men and women often place mothers as the primary caregivers. At the same time, fathers are the decision makers, thereby reinforcing inequalities in domestic roles. The gender equality approach, as emphasized by Scott (1986) and Kabeer (1999), encourages fathers' involvement in the emotional and functional aspects of parenting and positions maternal values, considered powerful in cultural feminism, as a moral force in the family. In social environments rich in local wisdom, such as *besemeton* and *begawe* in Sasak society, *kangila* and *basiru* in Samawa society, and *maja labo dahu* and *karawi kabuju* in Mbojo society, these serve as non-formal education that instills morals, responsibility, and a sense of

togetherness; however, without gender analysis, these values have the potential to perpetuate harsh disciplinary practices that are not child-friendly (Khairina & Soedirham, 2022).

The three major ethnic groups in NTB, namely the Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo, despite their ethnographic differences, share common values in upholding family honor, social solidarity, and adherence to customary norms and Islam. In general, child rearing is carried out within an extended family system. The responsibility for children is borne not only by parents but also by grandparents, uncles, aunts, and even close neighbors (Dinas Pemberdayaan Perempuan, 2023).

This parenting model reinforces communal social control, but on the other hand, it can create pressure on children, especially if the values applied are still patriarchal. For example, boys are educated to become future heads of families, while girls are directed toward domestic roles and modesty. In many cases, these differences create gender gaps in children's emotional and social development.

Field research in Lombok, Sumbawa, and Bima shows that parents still apply both authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles simultaneously. The authoritative style is used in terms of education and social responsibility, while the authoritarian style is applied to discipline or moral behavior (Lalu Sahrudin, interview, February 24, 2024; Nurhidayah, interview, November 15, 2025). Although some communities have begun to accept more democratic modern parenting styles, traditional norms remain the main framework for shaping children's character.

Childcare in NTB, as documented in the interviews with several informants from the three ethnic communities, consists of three stages: pregnancy, postnatal, and childhood to adolescence. During pregnancy, child care practices in Lombok begin with a ritual of washing the pregnant mother's stomach, *bisok tian* or *bretes*, at seven months. In Mareje, West Lombok, this is done at three, six, and nine months of pregnancy. Meanwhile, in Sumbawa, it begins at three months of pregnancy with a *dzikiran* ritual and at seven months with a *biso tian* ritual, washing the pregnant mother's stomach. Among the Mbojo, childcare begins at seven months of pregnancy with the *nuju bulanan* or *do'a kiri loko* ritual. This involves praying for the baby's head to face upwards so that the *kiri weki* turns downwards for a smooth delivery.

When a child is born in the village of Lendang Nangke, East Lombok, a special ritual called *belah tangkel* (splitting coconut shells) is performed for

the birth of the first child. Prayers accompany this ritual for a good birth, smooth delivery, and a healthy baby (L. Malik Hidayat, interview, May 13, 2025). Then, the placenta is buried to the right or left of the house door. The baby is given a name on the seventh day after birth, with a *medak api* ritual to extinguish the fire, followed by a *molang malik* ritual (to ward off bad luck), and the *kyais* and close relatives are invited to pray and eat together. A few days later, the *ngurisan* ritual is performed, which involves cutting the baby's hair (*aqiqah*) and inviting more people to pray and celebrate.

In Sumbawa society, after birth, a ritual is held to bury the placenta in the yard of the house or cast it into the sea. Next, a *beang singen* ceremony is held to give the newborn baby a name. This is followed by the *gunting bulu* ritual, cutting the baby's hair, and the *beterok* ritual, piercing the ears of baby girls. The *turin tana* ritual involves placing the child's feet on the mosque floor so that the first ground the child steps on is holy ground (Aries Zulkarnain, February 28, 2025, Hasanudin, interview, April 18, 2025). At the age of 9-12 years, the *Batoba* tradition of repentance, namely circumcision, is held. For girls aged 5-7 years, the *sesak rurung* tradition is held, which is female circumcision. This tradition is intended to control the child's sexual desire and morality.

Meanwhile, in the Mbojo tribe, after a baby is born, the father recites the *adhan* in the baby's right ear and the *iqamah* in the left ear so that the first words heard and written in the child's heart and mind are words of goodness. The *aqiqah* ceremony is held when the baby is seven days old. If this is not possible, it is held on the fourteenth or twenty-first day. If this is also not possible, it is postponed until the family can do so (Abubakar, interview, May 28, 2025). The *aqiqah* ceremony begins with the *cafi sari* sweeping or cleaning the floor, the *boru* cutting hair, and the *dore* stepping on the ground. *Cafi sari* is performed in the morning as an initial effort by parents to teach their children to maintain environmental cleanliness. In the afternoon or evening, *aqiqah* prayers, *asrakal*, *marhaban*, and *barzanji* are held, followed by hair cutting and naming (Abubakar Aziz, interview, May 28, 2025).

During childhood, parents in Lombok practice two modes of parenting: *bedede*, a form of parenting focused on character building and teaching ethics and manners, and *bedengah*, physical parenting such as feeding, bathing, and teaching children to walk and run. The Samawa and Mbojo people carry out the same parenting practices. They teach children from an early age not only to behave politely and to speak softly but also to practice Islamic law, such as prayer, fasting, reciting the Quran, and so on.

The model of child care during pregnancy and birth among these three tribes does not differentiate between boys and girls. Boys and girls are treated equally according to custom. This aligns with Barlas' (2002) concepts of *tawhidic* equality and gender partnership, which reject all forms of human domination over other humans, including the differential treatment of male and female infants.

### ***Childcare from a Gender Perspective***

From a gender perspective, childcare in Sasambo society reflects the traditional division of roles between fathers and mothers. Fathers are generally seen as figures of authority and enforcers of discipline, while mothers are considered the primary caregivers and guardians of family morals. This structure reflects a strong patriarchal system, as found in agrarian and religious societies in Southeast Asia (Moser, 1993).

However, this study also found social transformations among young families in urban areas such as Mataram and Bima. Fathers are increasingly involved in domestic activities and in children's education. Fathers not only work in the fields or teach at school, but also help with chores, teach their children, and take them to school (H. Masrun Ahmad, interview, November 15, 2025). This shift indicates a new awareness of gender equality in caregiving roles.

A gender approach to parenting requires not only a balance of roles but also fairness in the division of emotional responsibilities. According to Gender and Development (GAD) theory, equality does not mean absolute sameness, but rather recognition of different contributions that are equally important to family well-being. In this context, feminine values such as affection, gentleness, and empathy, which are associated with mothers, must be complemented by the values of responsibility, assertiveness, and protection associated with fathers. This combination creates a more harmonious and violence-free parenting style (Moser, 1993).

Male involvement in parenting also has implications for social change. Boys who grow up with warm, non-repressive fathers tend to show greater empathy, while girls who see their father respect their mother tend to understand gender equality from an early age. Thus, equal parenting is not only a family strategy but also a mechanism for preventing future structural violence.

### **Local Wisdom in Child Care**

#### *The Sasak*

Child care in Sasak society is based on the values of *besemeton* (close kinship) and *begawe* (cooperation). These values emphasize the importance of collective responsibility for children in the neighborhood. The local expression “*anak bau dedare, dedare bau anak*” (children smell like their parent, parents smell like their children) illustrates that all children in the village have the right to shared attention and guidance (Dinas Pemberdayaan Perempuan, 2023).

However, there is also a strong element of patriarchy, especially in the concept of *merariq* (marriage by “eloping” with a girl). Although this tradition has now been reinterpreted legally and socially, the old values that place women as passive parties still influence the education of girls. Therefore, cultural reinterpretation is needed so that *besemeton* values remain the foundation of togetherness without sacrificing gender equality (Moser, 1993).

The strengths of the Sasak community’s parenting style lie in its collective orientation and high religiosity. Children’s education is not only carried out at home but also through religious institutions such as religious classes and Islamic boarding schools. Islamic values such as compassion (*rahmah*) and social responsibility (*ukhuwah*) are internalized from an early age, which has great potential to prevent violence against children.

#### *The Samawa*

The Samawa people are known for their concept of *kangila* (self-respect) and shame. This value forms the moral foundation for educating children to maintain their personal honor and that of their family. Samawa parents educate their children to be obedient, polite, and brave enough to take responsibility for their actions. As Aries Zulkarnain, a traditional leader in Sumbawa, stated, Samawa children must not embarrass their parents in public (Aries Zulkarnain, interview, February 28, 2025).

However, the concept of *kangila* sometimes leads to harsh discipline that can result in physical or verbal abuse, especially towards boys who are considered to have violated social norms. For this reason, the value of *kangila* needs to be reinterpreted as dignified *kangila*, which means maintaining honor without causing harm. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce the concept of positive *kangila*, in which discipline is applied through communication and emotional guidance rather than punishment.

### *The Mbojo*

The Mbojo community in Bima placed *maja labo dahu* (shame and fear) at the center of child rearing. Mbojo children are taught to be ashamed and afraid of neglecting their obligations and committing prohibitions, both in terms of religion and customs. These values foster a strong sense of social responsibility but can also create moral pressure when interpreted rigidly.

Child rearing in Mbojo society is closely tied to Islamic religious norms and local customs (Mbojo customs). Fathers act as protectors and enforcers of discipline, while mothers are the primary caregivers in moral education. This is implemented in the *rimpu* tradition, where women cover their bodies with traditional cloth, which is not only a symbol of modesty but also a cultural identity that instills respect for oneself and others.

In the context of violence prevention, the value of *maja labo dahu* can serve as a basis for building children's character to love peace, provided it is interpreted as a sense of responsibility. Customary institutions such as *Sara Dana Mbojo* can initiate the development of family counseling programs. It emphasizes the equal roles of parents in children's education (Moser, 1993; Rokhim & Sukardi, 2022).

### ***Synergy between Local Wisdom and Gender Equality***

The local wisdom of Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo has great potential to be used as a basis for preventing violence against children, as long as they are reinterpreted in accordance with the principles of gender equality. The values of *besemeton* (Sasak), *kangila* (Samawa), and *maja labo dahu* (Mbojo) share similar social functions: maintaining honor, solidarity, and responsibility. However, in reality, these values are often used to justify harsh social control over children. Therefore, efforts are needed to reformulate cultural values through family and community education. The NTB regional government, through the Child-Friendly Village program, can utilize local wisdom as an instrument for socializing non-violent values that are more acceptable to the community than a formal legal approach alone.

The synergy between the gender approach and local wisdom creates three main principles of ideal parenting: (1) Equal roles for fathers and mothers in shaping children's characters with love and open communication; (2) Education based on humanistic cultural values, where children are taught respect, empathy, and responsibility through local traditions; and (3) Discipline without violence, changing the paradigm from physical punishment to dialogue

and moral exemplary behavior. Thus, the combination of traditional values and modern approaches makes the Sasambo community an example of how local wisdom can be a social bulwark against child abuse, rather than a source of legitimization for violence.

### ***Child-rearing Patterns in Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo Communities***

The three major ethnic groups in NTB, Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo, have strong social value systems based on Islam and customs. Interviews with L. Ali Yudia, a religious and traditional leader in East Lombok, revealed that the Sasak people regard children as divine gifts who must be raised with love, patience, and exemplary behavior. A local saying states: “*Anak ndeq dekan tebeang, ndeq dekan siq tepentuq, tebeang endah malem, tepentuq endah barak.*” (Children should not be neglected, nor should they be overly pressured; they should be educated gently, but firmly in the truth) (L. Ali Yudia, interview, March 9, 2025). This expression reflects a democratic-religious parenting style that combines moral firmness with spiritual affection. This style parallels Baumrind’s concept of authoritative parenting, a balanced approach between control and affection, which has been proven to be the most effective effort to shape children with independent and empathetic personalities (Baumrind, 1967).

The people of Sumbawa have a philosophy of “*Adat barenti ko syara’, syara’ barenti ko kitabullah*”, which means that Sumbawa customs adhere strictly to Islamic law, and Islamic law follows the Holy Qur’an. This principle means that customs must not conflict with religious teachings. In addition, in raising children, the Samawa community adheres to the philosophy of *Kataket boat lenge, Kangila ko Nene* (fear of doing evil because of shame before Allah, who always sees every action of His servants). Children are taught to feel *kangila* (shame) if they commit moral violations. Aries Zulkarnain, a traditional leader in Sumbawa, explains that *kangila* is not just social shame, but a spiritual awareness that Allah watches every action. Thus, shame becomes an internal control against violence and negative behavior in the family (Aries Zulkarnain, interview, February 28, 2025).

In Mbojo society (Bima-Dompu), the central values that color child rearing, as mentioned above, are *maja labo dahu* (shame and fear). Shame and fear of leaving religious commands and shame and fear of committing religious prohibitions. If *Maja Labo Dahu* is violated, the child is not the only one to feel shame; the extended family also shares in it. This principle forms the basis for instilling morals and character in children from an early age. In Mbojo

families, supervising children is the responsibility not only of parents but also of the extended family and neighbors. An informant, Nurhidayah, a teacher in the village of Roka-Belo, Bima, explained: “If a child does something wrong, acts rudely, or uses foul language, it is not only the parents who reprimand them, but the closest neighbors also feel obliged to reprimand and advise them” (Nurhidayah, interview, 2024). This shows the existence of a communal parenting system, which, according to Geertz, is characteristic of Indonesia’s communal-oriented societies, where social responsibility is attached to kinship and village networks (Geertz, 1996).

### ***Gender Perspectives in Traditional Parenting***

In the traditions of these three tribes, gender roles tend to be complementary rather than competitive. Fathers act as protectors and breadwinners, while mothers act as moral educators and primary caregivers. However, interviews show that values are shifting with modernization and increasing gender awareness.

TGH. Munajib Kholid, religious leader of the al-Halimi Gunungsari Islamic boarding school, stated: “Many Sasak mothers now work, but the responsibility of educating children remains their main task. Fathers are also starting to help with childcare” (TGH. Munajib Kholid, interview, August 2, 2025). This is reinforced by observations in the village of Sukadane, Central Lombok, where a father carried his sleeping child while answering the researchers’ questions. This shows a transition toward gender equality in parenting, with both parents sharing roles more equally. This phenomenon is in line with the concept of gender partnership in Islam, as explained by Asma Barlas, that the relationship between men and women in the household should be based on the principle of *tawhidic* equality, spiritual equality before Allah (Barlas, 2002).

Meanwhile, in Samawa and Mbojo communities, patriarchal values remain strong, but they are not oppressive. On the contrary, their traditional patriarchal structure serves to protect children and women. For example, in the Samawa custom, there is a saying: *ya beri, nongka ya pedi*, which means that parents love their children, but do not spoil them. This means that parents are firm with their children for their children’s future. However, this firmness is not intended to oppress or hurt them, but for the children’s own good. In this case, men are obliged to protect the family, while women instill morality and raise the sense of shame (*kangila*).

### ***Violence in the Local Gender Perspective***

Although normatively all three tribes reject violence against children, social reality shows that there are forms of violence that are still culturally accepted, primarily symbolic and verbal violence. For example, scaring children or hitting them lightly to discipline them is still considered normal in some communities. According to an interview with Syukron, an activist with the NTB Child Protection Agency (LPA), many parents are unaware that scolding children in public or frightening them with supernatural beings is a form of psychological violence. They consider it an effective educational method (Syukron, interview, July 3, 2025). This condition indicates a cultural gap between traditional norms and modern children's rights. However, it is precisely from these traditional values that a violence prevention approach can be developed, namely by reviving the values of shame (*kangila*), brotherhood (*besemeton*), and shame and fear (*maja labo dahu*) in a new, more child-friendly context.

### ***Local Wisdom as a Basis for Preventing Violence against Children***

The local wisdom of the three tribes in NTB has excellent potential as a preventive strategy against violence against children. Values such as *begawe*, *basiru*, and *karawi kabuju* contain principles of compassion, cooperation, and social control.

### ***Religious and Communal Values***

Sasak families instill religious values through *ngaji leq guru* (studying the Qur'an with a teacher), where children are taught manners and morality through the Qur'an. This is a form of Islamic character education that is culturally embedded in customs. As stated by TGH. Suaeb Yusuf, religious leader of the Islamic boarding school in Teluk Kodek Malaka, North Lombok Regency: "Children who study with a teacher are not only taught to read the Qur'an but also taught manners, politeness, respect for parents, not to lie, and not to hit each other" (TGH. Suaeb Yusuf, interview, July 26, 2025). Thus, *ngaji leq guru* serves as a socio-religious system that instills non-violent values (peaceful upbringing) internally, in accordance with the principle of *rahmah* in Islam.

A similar statement was expressed by H. Abubakar Aziz, a religious leader in Bima, who said that Bima children are instilled with religious values from an early age through Quranic education by their parents at home and by

teachers at school (H. Abubakar Aziz, interview, November 17, 2025). Teachers must accompany al-Qur’an education, as they will teach children how to read it and explain its contents, which can be applied in children’s daily lives. Bima local wisdom maintains *ka ulu nempa guru sawatipu nempa ruma*, which means to prioritize respecting teachers before worshipping God, because teachers are the first people to introduce God to students through their teachings.

*Values of Mutual Cooperation and Social Solidarity*

In the Sasak culture, there are practices known as *begawe* (working together), *begibung* (eating together), and *semeton* (brotherhood) that instill solidarity and social equality. In this practice, children are encouraged from an early age to participate without distinction of gender. The value of cooperation teaches children to appreciate collective effort and avoid selfish attitudes, which, in the long run, prevents aggressive behavior.

In Samawa society, the tradition of *barapan kebo* (buffalo fighting) is not just entertainment, but a social tool for instilling the values of sportsmanship and emotional control in boys. Children are taught to be strong, but not rude—to be “firm but polite.” Meanwhile, in Bima, the traditions of *karawi kabuju* (cooperation), *maja labo dahu* (shame and fear), *rimpu* (wearing a hijab), and *ka ulu nempa guru sawatipu nempa ruma* symbolize solidarity, self-control, and respect for teachers. This moral education contributes to the formation of a non-discriminatory gender culture and the protection of children from sexual violence (Rokhim & Sukardi, 2022).

***Integrative Analysis: Gender, Customs, and Violence Prevention***

When analyzed integratively, the local values of the three tribes can be mapped into three main dimensions:

Table 1. Dimensions of local values

Value Dimensions	Local Patterns	Impact on Violence Prevention
Religiousness	<i>Ngaji leq guru, Kangila, Maja labo dahu, rimpu</i>	Instilling moral and spiritual awareness to reject violence
Socio-Cultural	<i>Begawe, Barapan kebo, Karawi Kabuju</i>	Forming community-based social control
Gender and Family	Complementary division of roles between fathers and mothers	Encouraging collaboration and emotional warmth within the family

How are these values theoretically integrated? Gender equality plays a central role in preventing violence against children by transforming unequal power relations within the family. Gender theory criticizes rigid hierarchies—where authority is concentrated in one gender—that often accept control, domination, and even violence as acceptable norms. Butler (1990) and Oakley (1972) maintain that gender roles are not static and given but socially constructed and can therefore be reshaped toward more egalitarian and non-violent relationships. In parenting contexts, gender equality encourages shared responsibilities, mutual respect, and non-authoritarian communication, which reduces the likelihood of abusive behavior. Furthermore, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) emphasizes non-discrimination and the protection of children from all forms of violence, aligning closely with gender-equitable parenting practices.

At the same time, custom (*adat*) in certain communities, such as West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, and many other countries, constitutes another important factor in social practice. Customary values (local wisdom) can function as powerful protective mechanisms when reinterpreted to support children's rights. Geertz (1973) demonstrates that cultural norms shape moral behavior and social expectations, including how children are treated within families. Many local traditions—such as communal care, respect for human dignity, and collective responsibility—can be mobilized to discourage violence and promote nurturing parenting.

As this study's data show, local wisdom from three ethnic groups can be used to strengthen an egalitarian, patterned model of parenting, where father and mother responsibilities and work can be adjusted to a changing society. When combined with transformative approaches inspired by Paulo Freire (1970), these cultural values can be critically reinterpreted to challenge harmful practices, including those justified in the name of tradition, and even religion. Thus, the integration of gender equality and culturally grounded norms and religion creates a context-sensitive framework for violence prevention, where families are encouraged to maintain cultural identity while fostering safe, respectful, and non-violent environments for children.

The findings of this present study are also relevant to the international comparative perspective. In a critical survey and comprehensive study across four countries, Meinhart et al. (2024) advocate a strong recommendation for successful gender-transformative parenting. Based on two focused programs of the parenting, namely Safe at Home and Sibling Support for Adolescent

Girls in four countries, they suggest that programmers must recognize the diversity of family background in different social and humanitarian settings, endorse a full participation of all parties concerned, set realistic parameters and objectives and “ensure pathways to scale and sustainability with the initial program design”. While such a study emphasized excellent program design at home and for siblings, this present study offers an analysis of the parenting model grounded in local wisdom and a reinterpretation of gender roles to create gender-based transformative parenting. Quoting UNICEF (2004, pp. 1-2) that “gender transformative parenting programming can empower individuals, especially caregivers, to challenge and transform the deeply ingrained norms that may perpetuate violence”, Meinhart et al. (2024) argued that healthier and safer family, with the indication of zero or minimum violence against intimate partners and children, is attainable through gender transformative parenting.

We also recognize the important role of parents and social commitment in ensuring the project’s success. As we explained, rigid gender roles and the strict division of male and female work in family and society have steadily changed in West Nusa Tenggara. Male religious and community leaders, and fathers, are now willing to accept the change and support more active father participation in childcare. This finding echoes similarities in other societies worldwide. For example, a study on the Ugandan parenting program (Wight et al., 2022) suggests that male participation in improving family respectability and father involvement in promoting gender norms are two key issues to support gender transformative parenting. The case study from Kenya (Ogotu, 2025) reveals that family-based violence, both in the form of intimate partner violence and violence against children, can be reduced through gender-transformative parenting.

## Conclusion

This study shows that child-rearing practices amongst the Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo are grounded in a combination of religious values (Islam) and local customs that emphasize social harmony, compassion, and collective responsibility. Although there are variations in terminology and practice, all three share the same goal: raising children to be moral, empathetic, and disciplined without resorting to violence. The Sasak instills gentle parenting and role modeling, as reflected in the principles of *tebeang endah malem and tepentuaq endah barak*; the Samawa emphasizes *kangila* as moral control; while the Mbojo highlights

*maja labo dahu* (shame and fear) through collective supervision by the extended family. These three values demonstrate a communal-religious parenting model that balances children's rights, parental responsibilities, and the community's role, while supporting the concept of gender partnership, in which the roles of men and women complement each other in parenting.

The local wisdom-based parenting approach prevents physical, verbal, and psychological violence against children because customary norms function as a social mechanism that controls the behavior of parents and the community. Religious values also strengthen the moral awareness that children are a divine trust whose rights must be protected. At the same time, complementary gender roles encourage emotional and collaborative involvement between fathers and mothers. Therefore, preventing violence against children cannot rely solely on legal or formal educational approaches, but also requires strengthening the cultural and religious values that exist within society as a foundation for humane and sustainable social care.

This study proposes a critical analysis of transformative parenting grounded in local wisdom, gender equality, and the religious norms of the people of West Nusa Tenggara. The next prospective study can expand the investigation beyond the study's locus to discover more diverse models of parenting based on local wisdom to prevent violence against children.

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## ISLAMIC HERITAGE BRANDING FOR CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY IN BATIK DEMAK

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### Abstract

*The sustainability of traditional cultural industries is increasingly challenged by globalisation and market competition. Previous studies have examined Islamic branding, batik innovation, and culture-based creative economies; however, limited attention has been given to how Islamic symbolic heritage functions as a mechanism for cultural sustainability within religious branding practices. This study analyses how Javanese Islamic values are reinterpreted and integrated into the heritage branding practices of Batik Demak. A qualitative ethnographic approach was employed to examine cultural practices within the batik artisan community. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with artisans, business operators, community leaders, and consumers, as well as analyses of visual documentation and promotional materials. The findings reveal that motifs of the Demak Grand Mosque and the Pintu Bledak function not only as aesthetic elements but also as media for reinterpreting Javanese Islamic values, including itqan, tawazun, and spiritual awareness. These values shape a branding narrative that positions batik production as an ethical and religiously meaningful creative practice. This study demonstrates that Islamic heritage branding can support cultural sustainability by integrating religious symbolism, production ethics, and community identity within a value-based branding system. The findings situate Batik Demak within broader discussions of ethical branding and religion-based cultural economies while showing how local Islamic heritage can strengthen cultural identity and sustain creative industries. The study also*

highlights the need for comparative and mixed-methods research to examine the broader economic impact of religious branding across batik-producing regions.

Keberlanjutan industri budaya tradisional semakin ditantang oleh globalisasi dan kompetisi pasar. Penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya telah mengkaji pelabelan merek Islam (*Islamic branding*), inovasi batik, dan ekonomi kreatif berbasis budaya; namun, perhatian yang diberikan pada bagaimana warisan simbolis Islam berfungsi sebagai mekanisme keberlanjutan budaya dalam praktik pelabelan merek berbasis agama masih terbatas. Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana nilai-nilai Islam Jawa diinterpretasikan kembali dan diintegrasikan ke dalam praktik pelabelan merek warisan budaya pada Batik Demak. Pendekatan etnografi kualitatif diterapkan untuk mengkaji praktik-praktik budaya di dalam komunitas pengrajin batik. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipan, wawancara mendalam dengan para pengrajin, pelaku usaha, tokoh masyarakat, dan konsumen, serta analisis dokumentasi visual dan materi promosi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa motif Masjid Agung Demak dan Pintu Bledek tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai elemen estetika, tetapi juga sebagai media untuk menginterpretasikan kembali nilai-nilai Islam Jawa, termasuk *itqan*, *tawazun*, dan kesadaran spiritual. Nilai-nilai ini membentuk narasi pelabelan merek yang memosisikan produksi batik sebagai sebuah praktik kreatif yang etis dan bermakna secara religius. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pelabelan merek warisan Islam dapat mendukung keberlanjutan budaya dengan mengintegrasikan simbolisme agama, etika produksi, dan identitas komunitas ke dalam sistem pelabelan merek berbasis nilai. Temuan ini menempatkan Batik Demak ke dalam diskusi yang lebih luas mengenai pelabelan merek yang etis (*ethical branding*) dan ekonomi budaya berbasis agama, sekaligus menunjukkan bagaimana warisan Islam lokal dapat memperkuat identitas budaya dan mempertahankan industri kreatif. Penelitian ini juga menyoroti perlunya penelitian komparatif dan metode campuran (*mixed-methods*) untuk mengkaji dampak ekonomi yang lebih luas dari pelabelan merek berbasis agama di berbagai wilayah penghasil batik.

**Keywords:** *cultural sustainability, Batik Demak, Islamic heritage branding, Javanese Islamic values, religious branding*

## Introduction

The traditional batik industry faces sustainability challenges amidst globalisation and market competition. The rise of printed batik and industrial textiles is increasing pressure on hand-drawn batik, which requires a longer production time. This situation is undermining the competitiveness of many local batik centres. In Indonesia, batik has been recognised as a world cultural heritage by UNESCO. However, the sustainability of batik does not depend solely on conservation efforts. The batik industry is also required to build

cultural differentiation to remain relevant in the contemporary market (Raya et al., 2021). In this context, culture-based branding strategies are becoming increasingly important. Cultural branding positions cultural narratives as a source of identity and product differentiation (Holt, 2004). Heritage branding also utilises historical symbols and cultural heritage to strengthen authenticity and consumer trust (Han et al., 2021). These challenges are also faced by Batik Demak, which must maintain its religious identity amidst competition from the modern batik industry.

As a cultural heritage, batik serves not only as an aesthetic artefact but also as a medium for the expression of an ever-evolving social identity. Tradition is not static; rather, it is continually reinterpreted in line with changing social and economic contexts (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2012). This is evident in the way batik must adapt to market dynamics and consumer preferences. From a branding perspective, the strength of products rooted in cultural heritage lies in their authenticity and the emotional resonance they evoke with consumers (Kapferer, 2012). In the context of Batik Demak, local Islamic symbols have the potential to shape an Islamic heritage branding strategy that supports the cultural and economic sustainability of batik.

In the context of Demak, batik's cultural identity is closely linked to Javanese Islamic heritage. This heritage is reflected in religious symbols such as the Great Mosque of Demak. Javanese Islam is understood not only as a theological doctrine but also as a cultural practice intertwined with the community's social values and local symbols (Woodward, 1989). Studies on Javanese religion also indicate that Javanese religious practices have evolved through a synthesis of Islamic teachings and local cultural traditions (Beatty, 1999). These values form an ethical system and a living symbolism within the community's social practices (Susilo & Syato, 2016). In this study, Javanese Islamic values are understood as religious values manifested in cultural symbols, work practices, and the community's aesthetic expressions. These values encompass an ethos of precision, balance, and spiritual orientation reflected in batik production practices in Demak. These values subsequently form the cultural foundation for the emergence of Islamic heritage branding practices that link the community's religious identity with strategies for differentiating batik products.

Islamic branding is often understood as a strategy that emphasises adherence to Islamic values in production, distribution, and marketing communications (Wilson & Liu, 2011). This approach is frequently associated

with halal certification practices and the segmentation of the Muslim market. However, recent research indicates that religion also functions as a source of consumer identity within the marketplace (Sandıkcı, 2024). This debate suggests that Islamic branding can be understood not only as a commercial instrument, but also as a cultural practice that embodies religious values and community identity. In the context of Demak, local Islamic symbols, such as the Demak Mosque and the Pintu Bledek, are part of the identity narrative of batik products. These symbols can foster emotional and spiritual connections among producers, products, and consumers.

Several studies have examined innovation and branding capabilities within the batik industry (Zainurrafiqi et al., 2025), as well as the role of green innovation and knowledge management in enhancing the competitiveness of small businesses (Achmad & Wiratmadja, 2025). Other studies also indicate that cultural values and local wisdom can support the sustainability of the creative economy (Kusuma et al., 2023). However, research integrating symbols of Islamic heritage with branding strategies to explain the mechanisms of cultural sustainability remains limited. This gap is evident in Batik Demak, which possesses a strong religious identity as a city of Islamic heritage. Therefore, this study analyses how Javanese Islamic values are reinterpreted in the practice of Islamic heritage branding and their role in supporting cultural sustainability in Batik Demak.

## **Method**

This study employs a qualitative, ethnographic approach to understand how Javanese Islamic values are represented in the practice of Islamic heritage branding in Batik Demak. Ethnography was chosen because religious branding in this context functions not only as a marketing strategy but also as a cultural practice that incorporates religious symbols, ethical values, and communal significance. This approach allows the researcher to observe directly how these symbols and values are produced, interpreted, and communicated in the batik production process as well as in the social interactions of the artisan community (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019) Thus, ethnography is an appropriate method for analysing the relationship between cultural symbols, work practices, and the construction of Islamic heritage branding in Batik Demak.

The research was conducted in several centres of Batik Demak production, specifically in the Demak, Wonosalam, and Mangunjiwan areas. These locations were chosen for their historical links to local Islamic traditions and

the development of the batik artisan community. Research informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement in batik production and development. The 15 informants consisted of 8 batik artisans, 3 business owners, 2 community leaders, and 2 consumers.. The criteria for selecting informants included at least five years' experience in batik production or marketing, as well as involvement in local batik community activities. Field data collection was carried out over six months through direct interaction with the artisan community. The interview process was halted once data saturation was reached, that is, when the information obtained began to show recurring patterns and no longer yielded new themes.

Data collection was carried out through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation focused on the batik production process, the use of Islamic symbols in motifs, and social interactions among artisans within the Batik Demak community. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach with a thematic guide covering the meaning of motifs, Javanese Islamic values in work practices, and how religious symbols are used in narratives of identity and the promotion of batik products. This research adopts an interpretive ethnography approach, which emphasises understanding the meaning of symbols and cultural practices within community life (Anderson-Levitt, 2022; Geertz, 1976). Documentation comprising archives, motif catalogues, batik photographs, and promotional materials was used to supplement and verify field data (Robben & Sluka, 2012).

Data analysis was conducted using an interpretative ethnographic approach that emphasises thick description to understand cultural symbols and meanings (Dourish, 2014; Geertz, 1976). The analysis process involved repeated coding and thematic interpretation. Initial themes emerged inductively from observational data and interviews, and were subsequently interpreted with reference to the theoretical framework of Islamic heritage branding and Javanese Islamic values. The analysis focused on three dimensions: the role of Islamic values in shaping motifs and production practices, the construction of religious branding narratives, and the integration of Islamic cultural symbols into sustainability practices. Data validity was strengthened through source triangulation (artisans, community leaders, consumers) and methodological triangulation (observation, interviews, documentation) (Meydan & Akkas, 2024). The researchers also maintained reflexive field notes throughout the study to minimise bias in data interpretation.

## **Finding and Discussion**

### ***Islamic Heritage Motifs as a Mechanism of Cultural Sustainability***

In Javanese Islamic tradition, visual symbols serve as a medium for conveying religious values and the community's cultural identity (Lee-Niinioja, 2022). Islam in Java developed through a process of interaction between Islamic teachings and local cultural practices, so that cultural symbols often serve as an important means of expressing religious values in everyday life (Beatty, 1999; Woodward, 1989). Batik motifs in Demak developed within a social environment with a strong history as a centre for the spread of Islam in Java. This historical legacy is reflected in various cultural artefacts, ranging from the architecture of the Great Mosque of Demak to the batik craft practices that have flourished within the community. In this context, batik motifs are not merely decorative elements. They serve as a symbolic medium representing the values of Javanese Islam that are alive within the community's cultural practices.

The symbolic anthropology approach helps to explain how cultural symbols function within the social life of religious communities. Geertz (2012) explains that symbols not only represent beliefs but also shape how communities understand the world and regulate social behaviour. In the practice of Batik Demak, symbols such as mosques, doors, and lightning are translated into a visual language easily recognisable to the local community. These symbols convey religious messages about the values of faith (*iman*), ihsan (*ethical beauty*), precision (*itqan*), and balance (*tawazun*). These values are not only present in the symbolic meaning of the motifs but also shape the artisans' work ethic during the batik production process. Thus, visual symbols serve not only as cultural representations but also as a medium for instilling religious values within the social and economic practices of the artisan community.

From the perspective of Islamic heritage branding, these symbols also serve as a source of product identity. Motifs derived from local Islamic heritage help to build the image of Batik Demak as a product with strong cultural roots and religious values. The integration of cultural heritage symbols into branding can strengthen a product's authenticity and credibility, as consumers perceive these symbols as representations of history and community identity (Kapferer, 2012). These symbols simultaneously distinguish Batik Demak from other coastal batik traditions. Thus, batik motifs serve not only as a cultural expression but also as a branding mechanism that connects religious identity, historical narratives, and community values. The integration of Islamic heritage

symbols with production practices forms the basis for Islamic heritage branding, which supports the cultural sustainability of Batik Demak.

### ***The Great Mosque of Demak Motif as a Medium for Transmitting Local Islamic Values***

The motif of the Demak Grand Mosque is one of the most significant visual representations in Batik Demak. This mosque is understood not only as a religious building but also as a historical symbol of Islam's spread in Java. In the collective memory of the people of Demak, the Grand Mosque serves as a marker of religious legitimacy and cultural identity. When this symbol is translated into a batik motif, its religious and historical significance is carried over into the product's identity. In the context of heritage branding, the use of historical symbols such as the Demak Grand Mosque reinforces the image of Batik Demak as a product with deep historical roots and distinctive spiritual values (Li et al., 2025; Pfannes et al., 2021). These heritage symbols help to shape a narrative of identity that sets Batik Demak apart from other commercial batik products.

Visually, the motifs of Demak Mosque typically feature tiered roofs, a hallmark of its architecture. The local community interprets these three tiers of the roof as representing iman, Islam, and ihsan. This interpretation demonstrates that architectural symbols are not merely aesthetic forms but also reminders of religious values in the community's daily lives. From a symbolic-anthropological perspective, cultural symbols function as a system of meaning that links religious beliefs to the community's social practices. In the context of Batik Demak, these symbols become a visual language that expresses religious values in the community's cultural and economic life. A Batik Demak artisan explained: "When we draw the roof of the Great Mosque, it is not merely a building shape. There is a prayer that the wearer may always remember three things: syari'ah, faith, and ihsan." (Interview, January 2025). This statement indicates that the Demak Mosque motif was not created solely as a visual design. The motif is understood as a religious symbol that conveys a spiritual message to the wearer. In branding practice, symbolic meanings such as this serve as a product identity narrative that strengthens the emotional bond between the product and the consumer. Consumers do not merely view the motif as an ornament but also as a representation of the religious values inherent in Batik Demak's identity.

From a branding perspective, heritage symbols such as the Demak Mosque also serve as a source of brand authenticity. Consumers tend to view products linked to history and tradition as more authentic and possessing high cultural value. The religious narrative inherent in the mosque motif helps to strengthen consumer trust in Batik Demak products. In this context, heritage symbols function as symbolic capital that enhances the product's cultural value whilst reinforcing Batik Demak's position in the competitive batik market.



**Figure 1.** The Great Mosque of Demak Motif in Batik

The relationship between religious symbols and production practices is also evident in the way artisans interpret their working processes. One artisan explained the importance of precision when drawing mosque motifs: “*We must be meticulous, because if the stroke is wrong, it is not only a flaw in the batik, but it can also be seen as disrespecting the mosque.*” (Interview, January 2025). This statement indicates that batik production is not guided solely by aesthetic considerations. The working process is also influenced by religious awareness and a moral responsibility towards the symbols used. The principles of *itqan* (meticulousness) and *tawazun* (balance) are reflected in the detail of the motifs and the composition of the designs. These values shape the artisans' work ethic whilst reinforcing the image of Batik Demak as a product created with religious awareness and moral responsibility (Yasin et al., 2025).

Thus, the Demak Grand Mosque motif functions on two levels simultaneously. On a symbolic level, this motif conveys the values of Javanese Islam that are alive within the artisan community. On a branding level, the symbol reinforces Batik Demak's identity as a product with strong religious legitimacy and local history. The integration of heritage symbols, value-based production practices, and this narrative of identity demonstrates how Islamic

heritage branding establishes product differentiation whilst supporting the cultural sustainability of Batik Demak (Kaswandi et al., 2025).

#### The Pintu Bledek Motif in Batik Demak

The 'Pintu Bledek' (lightning door) motif in Batik Demak originates from one of the key architectural elements of the Demak Grand Mosque, which, in local tradition, is associated with Ki Ageng Selo, a spiritual figure believed to possess the ability to capture lightning. In the collective memory of the community, this door is understood not only as part of the mosque's architecture but also as a symbol of spiritual power and the legitimacy of the saints. When this symbol is translated into a batik motif, a transformation occurs, shifting it from a sacred artefact to a visual symbol that can circulate within everyday cultural practices.

Based on a symbolic-anthropological perspective, religious symbols not only represent beliefs but also shape how communities understand and conduct their social lives (Geertz, 2012). The Pintu Bledek not only reflects belief in the *wali's* miraculous powers but also embodies moral values such as courage, steadfastness of faith, and spiritual protection. Turner (1967) explains that ritual symbols serve as a link between religious experience and social action. In the context of batik, these symbols are reinterpreted as a visual language that allows religious values to be present in both production and consumption.

A batik artisan in Kadilangu explains how this meaning is understood in the production process: "*When we paint the Pintu Bledek motif, it is not just the door that appears, but also a prayer that the batik brings protection to its wearer.*" (Interview, January 2025). This statement suggests that the Pintu Bledek motif is not merely an aesthetic element but also a spiritual symbol that embodies prayers and hopes. In this context, the practice of batik-making is not separate from its religious dimension but rather forms part of the expression of values alive within the artisan community.

From a branding perspective, the Pintu Bledek symbol functions as a mechanism for brand differentiation. Unlike the Demak Mosque motif, which emphasises historical legitimacy and authenticity, this motif presents a more personal and symbolic spiritual narrative. The integration of heritage symbols into branding enables batik products to possess a distinctive and easily recognisable identity. Napoli et al. (2014) explain that the consistent use of cultural heritage can enhance a brand's credibility and uniqueness. In this context, the Pintu Bledek symbol serves as a source of symbolic capital,

strengthening Batik Demak's position in the competitive batik market.



**Figure 2.** The Pintu Bledek Motif in Batik Demak

These symbols also shape consumers' perceptions of a product's value. Motifs that convey a narrative of protection and spiritual strength tend to appeal to consumers seeking products with cultural and religious significance. Thus, the Pintu Bledek symbol serves not only as a visual element but also as a strategy to build an emotional connection and consumer trust in batik products.

The ethical dimension of the work is also evident in the production process of this motif. The complexity of the Pintu Bledek's ornamentation demands great precision and patience. One craftsman remarked: *"If the lines are careless, it feels like we do not respect the history behind the door."* (Interview, January 2025). This statement indicates that the production process is guided not only by aesthetic standards but also by religious awareness and moral responsibility. The principles of *itqan* (meticulousness) and *tawazun* (balance) are reflected in the artisans' working practices and form part of the values inherent in the products.

From a sustainability perspective, the use of the Pintu Bledek symbol contributes to product differentiation and enhances the cultural value of batik. Motifs with religious and historical narratives tend to have greater market appeal, thereby helping ensure the viability of artisans' businesses. This aligns with findings that local wisdom and cultural values can serve as vital resources

in maintaining the sustainability of the creative industries (Kaswandi et al., 2025). Thus, heritage symbols not only preserve cultural identity but also support economic sustainability within the local batik industry.

The transformation of the Pintu Bledek from an architectural artefact into a batik motif demonstrates the Demak community's ability to navigate the relationship between tradition and modernity. A symbol originating from a sacred space now appears in the more dynamic medium of textiles without losing its spiritual significance. This process shows that Islamic heritage branding serves not only as a representation of culture, but also as an adaptive strategy in responding to market changes.

The use of religious symbols in branding also presents the potential for tension between sacred values and commercial interests. The transformation of symbols into market products risks reducing religious meaning to mere economic value. This demonstrates that religion-based branding practices are not always neutral, but must also be viewed critically within the context of the relationship between religion and the market (Sandıkcı, 2024). Therefore, Islamic heritage branding practices require ethical awareness to maintain a balance between preserving spiritual meaning and meeting market demands.

Thus, the Pintu Bledek motif serves both as a visual ornament and as a strategic mechanism within Islamic heritage branding. This motif links heritage symbols, value-based production practices, and market identity. This integration creates product differentiation and reinforces the cultural and economic sustainability of Batik Demak.

### ***Branding as a Form of Contemporary Islamic Cultural Practice***

Within coastal Muslim communities, creative economic practices are closely intertwined with the religious values that shape social life. Activities such as production, promotion, and consumption are not viewed merely as economic activities, but also as part of *amal ibadah*—acts of worship—that reflect Islamic identity (Wilson & Liu, 2011). In the context of Demak, this is evident in the way batik artisans build product identity based on spiritual values whilst responding to market demands. However, the use of Islamic symbols in branding practices also creates tension between sacred meaning and commercial interests, as religious values risk being reduced to mere market attributes. In daily practice, artisans operationalise values such as *niyyah*, *itqan*, and *tawazun* in the production process and work-related decision-making. This demonstrates that religious branding in Batik Demak serves both as a

cultural practice and as a space for negotiation between religious meaning and market logic.

The concept of Islamic branding in marketing studies positions a brand as a representation of values, rather than merely a commodity (Wilson, 2012; Wilson & Liu, 2011). In the practice of Batik Demak, this principle is evident in the use of symbols such as the Grand Mosque, the Pintu Bledek, and the 'Religious Batik' label as markers of product identity that link local Islamic history with the community's spiritual values. These religious symbols serve as a differentiation mechanism, distinguishing Batik Demak from other coastal batiks and reinforcing perceptions of authenticity and consumer trust. Consumers consider the product's religious and ethical significance, thereby forming an emotional connection that drives preference and loyalty. However, the effectiveness of this strategy depends on consistency between the symbols, production practices, and the narrative conveyed. Inconsistencies can reduce religious meaning to a mere decorative attribute. This demonstrates that Islamic branding in Batik Demak functions as a strategic mechanism that shapes product differentiation, consumer trust, and market positioning.

In their daily work, artisans recognise that building a brand is inseparable from the concepts of *barakah* and intention (*niyyah*). An artisan in the Kadilangu Batik Village stated:

*"When we write 'Batik Religi Demak,' it is not just a trade name. We want people to know that this batik is made with the intention of worship. From the moment we start drawing until washing the cloth, we always recite basmalah. We believe that if the intention is good, the result will bring blessings to both the maker and the buyer."* (Interview, March 2025)

This statement indicates that *niyyah* serves as the ontological foundation of batik production. Religious intent shapes the way artisans interpret their work, determines quality standards, and maintains consistency throughout the production process. In this context, batik production is understood as an ethical practice that integrates spiritual goals and material outcomes. This practice also shapes social relations within the artisan community, as shared religious values form the basis of trust, cooperation, and legitimacy amongst practitioners. Thus, religious branding does not merely manifest at the level of symbols or narratives, but is rooted in a values-based production ethic that directly influences product quality and the social cohesion of the Batik Demak community.

The religious values internalised within the production process also have strategic implications for competition in the batik market. Practices

based on *niyyah*, *itqan*, and *tawazun* result in quality standards and product consistency that distinguish Batik Demak from non-religious batik products. This differentiation is crucial in an increasingly competitive batik market, where design innovation and mass production dominate. Batik Demak does not compete solely on visual aspects, but on the integration of religious values, production processes, and product narratives. This approach establishes a more specific positioning, namely as a cultural product imbued with spiritual meaning and ethical production principles. In this context, religious branding serves as a differentiation strategy that is difficult for competitors to replicate. This is because it is based on values that are practised within the artisan community. Consequently, the strength of Batik Demak lies in the consistency between values, processes, and products, which reinforces its competitiveness in the batik market.

This practice demonstrates how the concepts of heritage and cultural branding adapt within the context of local Islam (Napoli et al., 2014). Artisans draw upon Demak's identity as the City of the Saints to imbue their products with religious heritage-based significance. Batik is not positioned as a purely aesthetic product; rather, it is understood as part of the ongoing mission of the saints, expressed in visual and material form. A batik entrepreneur stated:

*"We realize that many batik products from various regions now compete through design. But we want people to see Batik Demak not only for its beautiful motifs but for the Islamic values behind it. We promote the idea that every motif carries a prayer and a story of the wali, so the wearer also carries a message of goodness."* (Interview, March 2025)

This statement indicates that spiritual values are transformed into a product identity strategy. Religious symbols, historical narratives, and production practices form a unified whole within the branding process. This integration can be understood as a mechanism of Islamic heritage branding. This mechanism operates through three main components. Heritage symbols serve as a source of meaning and differentiation. Value-based production practices shape the quality and legitimacy of the product. Identity narratives connect the product with consumers. The combination of these three components forms a brand identity rooted in cultural and spiritual foundations. This process strengthens Batik Demak's position in the market whilst safeguarding cultural sustainability by reproducing values in production and consumption practices.

Religious branding can be understood as an Islamic cultural practice that incorporates spiritual values into production ethics. The integration of the values of *niyyah*, *itqan*, and *tawazun* into the batik production process

demonstrates that religious values not only shape symbolic meaning but also influence working standards and product quality. In line with the views of Ali & Al-Owaihian (2008), the concept of beauty in Islamic work relates to spiritual awareness in daily practice. In this context, the brand serves as a medium connecting faith with professional activities, in which the production process reflects both economic objectives and religious responsibility.

These practices demonstrate that values are embodied in economic and aesthetic activities. Religious branding in Batik Demak shows that the local Muslim community translates religious values into practical strategies for product differentiation and market positioning. This process links cultural identity, production practices, and market interactions within a single mechanism that supports cultural sustainability. Thus, the creative economy becomes a space where Islamic values are preserved through processes of production, distribution, and reinterpretation within a contemporary context.

### ***Implications for Cultural Sustainability and the Islamic Creative Economy***

The presence of Batik Demak as a coastal Javanese artistic heritage demonstrates that sustainability in Islam concerns not only the preservation of cultural products but also the continuity of spiritual, moral, and social values. In Islamic thought, sustainability (*istidamah*) is grounded in the principle of *tawhid*—the unity between creation, the Creator, and humans as God’s stewards on earth (Nasr, 1987). Thus, every creative act performed by humans must be oriented toward ethical beauty (*ihsan*) and balance (*tawazun*). This aligns with the views of (Alotaibi, 2021) who assert that integrating Islamic values into cultural practices such as batik serves as an effective means of strengthening communal character and spirituality, since art in Islam is not merely an aesthetic expression but also a form of worship that shapes moral conduct.

Batik Demak illustrates that cultural sustainability can be achieved through creative work grounded in Islamic ethics. Indriya et al. (2023) show that innovation within the batik industry, when rooted in religious values, can enhance economic competitiveness while safeguarding local traditions. This phenomenon is clearly visible in Demak, where artisans regard batik-making as a form of *amal saleh* (righteous deed) that embodies the principles of *itqan* (precision) and *barakah* (blessing). In this context, the sustainability of the creative economy is not determined solely by production efficiency but also by the spiritual capital embedded in the community’s work system.

As highlighted by Shahimi & Zahari (2025), an Islamic economy grounded in ethical principles and social balance has great potential to foster sustainable innovation without compromising humanity and morality.

Furthermore, the cultural and economic sustainability of Islamic creative industries in Demak has a strong social dimension. Nurcholis et al. (2021) note that religious practices such as da'wah and Islamic arts function as interactive rituals that reinforce social cohesion and collective identity. In the context of batik, activities such as the Batik Wali Festival, women's artisan training programs, and religious branding initiatives demonstrate how the community strengthens Islamic values through social mechanisms rooted in tradition. As stated by Ngatono et al. (2024), integrating religious values into the creative economy becomes an effective means of maintaining identity and community solidarity.

### ***Islamic Socio-Cultural Implications: Batik Demak as Da'wah and Transmission of Values***

The preservation of Islamic values through batik in Demak reflects social and spiritual practices within community life. Demak's identity as the "Kota Wali" shapes how artisans interpret batik-making as a form of religious expression within the cultural sphere. Motifs such as the Grand Mosque, the Pintu Bledak, the Wali Songo, and symbols of the crescent moon and star serve as visual markers linking Islamic values with local aesthetic practices. In this context, batik is not produced merely as a visual object, but as a medium that carries ethical values, religious meaning, and the collective memory of the community. This practice demonstrates that batik production can be understood as a form of cultural work that integrates artistic expression with spiritual values in everyday life.

This phenomenon aligns with the findings of Indriya et al., (2023), which show that integrating Islamic values into IRD Batik Walisongo motifs functions as a means of education and strengthening Islamic entrepreneurial character. Values such as *itqan* (precision), *tawazun* (balance), and *amanah* (trustworthiness) guide the creative process. A senior artisan expressed: "We make batik while remembering God. Each time we apply wax, we recite, *basmalah* so that the result brings blessings. If something goes wrong, we take it as a test of patience, not merely a work mistake." (Interview, Kadilangu, 2025). This statement indicates that the batik-making process is carried out as a working practice grounded in religious consciousness. The production activity is not separated from spiritual

values, but is carried out as “*embodied religious labour*” that integrates intention, action, and the work’s outcome. In this context, the quality of the product is determined not only by technical aspects but also by the ethical orientation that shapes the artisan’s work. The concept of beauty in Islamic art, as put forward by Nasr (1987), can be understood as a reflection of spiritual order in the production process, in which the visual outcome reflects discipline, patience, and religious consciousness in the working process.

In addition to its spiritual dimension, Batik Demak also serves as a medium for communicating collective values and identity. The batik-making process not only produces a product but also conveys religious significance to consumers. One artisan stated: social practices that instill values of togetherness, perseverance, and sincerity. A young artisan noted: “*When we explain the batik motifs to customers, we also tell the stories behind them—the Great Mosque, the wali, the meaning of patience and gratitude. So this batik is not just cloth; it is a reminder to do good.*” (Interview, March 2025). This statement indicates that branding practices involve the communication of values through direct interaction between artisans and consumers. In this context, branding can be understood as a form of aesthetic da’wah, namely the dissemination of Islamic values through visual media and product narratives (Shahimi & Zahari, 2025). This process takes place through three mechanisms. Visual symbols convey religious meaning in a readily recognisable form. Product narratives explain the values behind these symbols. Social interaction reinforces consumers’ understanding and acceptance. This process aligns with the view that values can be communicated through cultural practices via symbols, narratives, and social participation (Babushkina & Kalugina, 2024). Thus, batik functions as a medium for communicating values that connect production, consumption, and religious identity within a single cultural practice.

From a social perspective, the practice of batik in Demak serves as a mechanism for reproducing community values and identity. Activities such as batik training, the Wali Batik Festival, and Islamic batik exhibitions provide a space for the intergenerational transfer of knowledge whilst expanding social networks and markets. These activities indirectly instill religious values and work ethics in young artisans. In this context, batik functions as a medium that maintains continuity between tradition and economic practice. Mickiewicz (2022) explains that religious symbols play a role in preserving collective memory and community consciousness. This process is evident in Demak’s batik practices, which link historical identity to contemporary production.

Exhibitions and cross-regional interactions also increase product visibility and expand market access. In line with Cisneros (2011), the sustainability of cultural identity in a global context depends on a community's ability to communicate values through social practices. Thus, batik practices establish social mechanisms that support the regeneration of artisans, market expansion, and the sustainability of the Batik Demak industry.

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic heritage branding functions as a mechanism that integrates heritage symbols, value-based production practices, and social interaction within a single system. Religious symbols shape product differentiation and meaning. Value-based production practices ensure quality and legitimacy. Social interactions reinforce the transmission of values and the expansion of markets. The integration of these three elements forms a model of cultural sustainability that maintains continuity between cultural identity, economic activity, and religious life in Batik Demak.

### ***Implications for the Islamic Creative Economy: Value-Based Mechanisms of Sustainability***

In this study, the Islamic creative economy is understood as a creative economic practice that integrates cultural symbols, Islamic ethical values, and a focus on sustainability within a single production system. In the case of Batik Demak, the transformation from traditional craftsmanship to products based on religious branding demonstrates that economic activity is not solely profit-oriented but also focused on fostering trust and social sustainability. The concept of *barakah* in this practice is reflected in efforts to maintain product quality, ensure honesty in transactions, and uphold consistent values throughout the production process. Meanwhile, *masalah* is realised through social impacts such as community engagement, the sustainability of small businesses, and the broader distribution of economic benefits. Thus, the practice of Batik Demak demonstrates that integrating religious values can strengthen product legitimacy, build consumer trust, and support economic sustainability within the culture-based creative industry.

Batik Demak demonstrates that Islamic ethical values are put into practice in production and influence economic mechanisms. The use of religious motifs, such as the Grand Mosque and the Pintu Bledek, is combined with targeted design and promotional strategies. These practices not only ensure compliance with halal principles but also establish product quality and consistency standards. A business owner in Kadilangu stated:

*“We always ensure that the materials and processes remain clean, that we do not deceive buyers, and that we do not rush just to sell quickly. The principle is not just to be profitable but to be halal and blessed. Because if batik is made with good intentions, insyaAllah the result will bring goodness to everyone.” (Interview, February 2025)*

This statement suggests that values such as honesty, diligence, and good faith extend beyond the realm of ethics. These values serve as mechanisms that build consumer trust and reduce transactional uncertainty. In a market context, these practices foster consumer loyalty and position the product as having cultural and spiritual value. Consequently, production ethics are not merely a standard but also a source of differentiation and legitimacy that enhances Batik Demak’s competitiveness within the batik industry.

The economic practices of Batik Demak also demonstrate links to Islamic social financing mechanisms, particularly through the utilisation of zakat funds and productive waqf-based schemes at the community level. Several batik groups have utilised training and capital support to strengthen production capacity and empower female artisans and micro-enterprises. In this context, waqf serves as an economic mechanism that promotes business sustainability by improving skills, expanding access to production, and stabilizing income (Mukhlisin et al., 2025). This pattern indicates that the economic practices of Batik Demak do not rely solely on market logic, but are also supported by a community-based system that reinforces local economic resilience.

The integration of social financing and production activities demonstrates that sustainability is determined by both market demand and the community’s ability to build an inclusive economic system. The value of *maslahah* extends beyond a merely normative concept. It is realised in the broader distribution of economic benefits, including the enhancement of artisans’ capacities and the expansion of business opportunities. This practice broadens our understanding of the Islamic creative economy as a system that links religious values, institutional mechanisms, and community-based economic sustainability.

The digitalisation of Batik Demak demonstrates how religious values are integrated into technology-based market communication strategies. The use of social media serves not only as a promotional channel but also as a space to convey the product’s religious narratives. In this context, the practice known as economic e-da’wah can be understood as a digital marketing activity that combines commercial objectives with the communication of Islamic values through visual and narrative content. Unlike conventional digital marketing, which focuses on product persuasion, this approach emphasises symbolic meaning, spiritual stories, and ethical messages in every product

communication.

This practice is evident in the way artisans present batik through posts that feature stories of saints, the philosophy behind the motifs, and the prayers that accompany the production process. This strategy fosters an emotional connection and reinforces consumers' perception of authenticity. From a market perspective, this religious narrative functions as a differentiation mechanism that enhances product visibility whilst expanding market reach through digital networks (Halim et al., 2025). Thus, digitalisation increases market access whilst reinforcing Batik Demak's position as a product with cultural and spiritual value that is consistently communicated.

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic heritage branding in Batik Demak operates as a value-based mechanism that integrates symbolic resources, ethical production practices, and socio-economic networks within a single system. Religious symbols function as sources of differentiation and meaning. Value-based production practices ensure quality, trust, and legitimacy. Social and digital interactions facilitate the transmission of value and market expansion. The integration of these elements forms a sustainability mechanism that connects cultural identity, economic activity, and religious values in the Islamic creative economy. This model demonstrates that sustainability in culture-based industries can be achieved by aligning symbolic, ethical, and economic dimensions.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study indicate that Batik Demak functions as a value-based mechanism that integrates Islamic symbols, ethically grounded production practices, and socio-economic interactions into a cohesive system. Motifs such as the Great Mosque and the Pintu Bledek serve as symbolic sources that shape the product's meaning and differentiation. Production practices grounded in values such as *itqan* and honesty help establish trust and legitimacy of the products. Social and digital interactions support the transmission of values while expanding market reach. This integration demonstrates that Islamic heritage branding maintains continuity between cultural identity, economic activity, and religious values. In this regard, the study contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) through the strengthening of community-based creative industries, SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) through the preservation of local cultural heritage,

and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) through ethically grounded production practices.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of research on the Islamic creative economy by demonstrating that the sustainability of culture-based industries can be built through the interconnection between symbolic, ethical and economic dimensions. These findings expand the discourse on Islamic entrepreneurship by affirming that religious values are not merely normative but also operational mechanisms that shape brand differentiation, consumer trust, and community-based economic resilience. In this context, Batik Demak represents a values-based sustainability model rooted in local Islamic heritage.

Nevertheless, this study is limited by its focus on a specific geographical area and a relatively small number of informants concentrated within Batik Demak production centres. These conditions may limit the generalisability of the findings. Future research is recommended to expand the scope of analysis and employ mixed methods to examine the economic impact of religious branding more systematically. Comparative studies across different batik-producing regions may also provide further insights into how Islamic values are operationalised within diverse creative economy contexts.

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# SYNTHESIS OF WASATHIYAH AND DEEP ECOLOGY TO BUILD A POST-ANTHROPOCENTRIC ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

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## Abstract

*The looming global ecological crisis shows that environmental damage is not only material, but rooted in a paradigm crisis that places humans at the center of life. The dominance of the anthropocentric perspective has been proven to give birth to massive resource exploitation and ecosystem degradation. Various technocratic approaches and scientific policies have not been able to answer the root of this problem, so a more comprehensive paradigm of environmental ethics is needed that involves spiritual and moral dimensions. This research offers an Ecospiritual Moderation model, which is a conceptual synthesis between Wasathiyah values in Islamic ethics and the principles of Deep Ecology as a radical critique of anthropocentrism. Through the conceptual inquiry method based on textual analysis and literature comparison, this study examines the relevance of Wasathiyah such as tawazun, adl, amanah, and the prohibition of israf in strengthening the ethics of cosmic balance, as well as connecting it with the idea of Deep Ecology about the intrinsic value of nature, biosphere equality, and ecological self. The results of the study show that the integration of the two perspectives results in a post-apocentric environmental ethical framework that is not only rational philosophical, but also spiritual-transformative. The Ecospiritual Moderation Model has practical implications for the development of environmental education, public policy, and social movements based on moderate spirituality. Thus, this research makes a theoretical contribution in expanding*

*the global environmental ethics discourse and presenting a new paradigm that is more just, sustainable, and rooted in human values and Islamic spirituality.*

Krisis ekologis global yang kian mengancam menunjukkan bahwa kerusakan lingkungan tidak hanya bersifat material, tetapi berakar pada krisis paradigma yang menempatkan manusia sebagai pusat kehidupan. Dominasi cara pandang antroposentris terbukti melahirkan eksploitasi sumber daya dan degradasi ekosistem yang masif. Berbagai pendekatan teknokratis dan kebijakan ilmiah belum mampu menjawab akar persoalan ini, sehingga diperlukan paradigma etika lingkungan yang lebih komprehensif dan melibatkan dimensi spiritual serta moral. Penelitian ini menawarkan model Moderasi Ekospiritual, yaitu sintesis konseptual antara nilai-nilai Wasathiyah dalam etika Islam dan prinsip Deep Ecology sebagai kritik radikal terhadap antroposentrisme. Melalui metode *conceptual inquiry* berbasis analisis tekstual dan perbandingan literatur, penelitian ini menelaah relevansi Wasathiyah seperti *tawazun*, *adl*, *amanah*, dan larangan *israf* dalam memperkuat etika keseimbangan kosmik, sekaligus menghubungkannya dengan gagasan Deep Ecology tentang nilai intrinsik alam, kesetaraan biosferis, dan *ecological self*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi kedua perspektif menghasilkan kerangka etika lingkungan pascantroposentris yang tidak hanya rasional filosofis, tetapi juga spiritual-transformatif. Model Moderasi Ekospiritual memiliki implikasi praktis bagi pengembangan pendidikan lingkungan, kebijakan publik, dan gerakan sosial berbasis spiritualitas moderat. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi teoretis dalam memperluas wacana etika lingkungan global dan menghadirkan paradigma baru yang lebih berkeadilan, berkelanjutan, dan berakar pada nilai-nilai kemanusiaan serta spiritualitas Islam.

**Keywords:** *deep ecology, ecospiritual moderation, Islamic spirituality, post-anthropocentric ethics, Wasathiyah values*

## Introduction

The global ecological crisis is entering an increasingly complex and multidimensional phase, posing unprecedented moral, spiritual, and ecological challenges. Climate change, biodiversity loss, forest destruction, pollution, and soil and water degradation not only reflect failures in environmental management but also reveal profound disruptions in humanity's relationship with nature. Recent studies emphasize that ecological damage is rooted in a paradigm crisis dominated by an anthropocentric perspective, which places humans at the center of moral values and treats nature as an instrumental object serving economic and technological interests (Tucker & Grim, 1998). Several studies further suggest that technocratic solutions and science-based policy approaches have been insufficient to address the root causes of ecological

problems, highlighting the need for more comprehensive ethical framework that incorporates spiritual, moral, and cultural dimensions (Fios, 2019). In this context, the search for a new paradigm of environmental ethics is particularly urgent, especially one capable of integrally bridging ecological and spiritual dimensions.

Along with the development of ecotheology and environmental humanities, numerous studies have shown that religious values can serve as a powerful ethical force in shaping ecological awareness and behavior (Nasr, 1996b). Within Muslim communities, the concept of *Wasathiyah* holds particular relevance as an ethical framework emphasizing balance, moderation, justice, and the common good. However, recent research suggests that public interpretations of *Wasathiyah* remain largely confined to social tolerance and anti-extremism, leaving its ecological dimension insufficiently explored (Siswoyo et al., 2025). At the same time, modern ecological thought has advanced Deep Ecology, introduced by Naess (1973), which critiques anthropocentrism and advocates recognition of the intrinsic value of all living beings through deep ecological consciousness. The convergence of these two intellectual traditions creates an opportunity to develop an environmental ethics model that is not only rational but also spiritual, reflective, and transformative.

In the contemporary academic landscape, there is a growing need to identify the root causes of ecological crises and develop more comprehensive responses. A key challenge is the absence of an environmental ethical framework that effectively integrates Islamic spiritual values, particularly *Wasathiyah*, with modern ecological philosophy. Existing environmental policies largely emphasize regulation and mitigation, while the transformation of ecological consciousness as a foundation for sustainable behavior remains relatively neglected. This gap highlights the need for an ethical model that addresses the spiritual and moral dimensions of human relations with nature. As Capra (1996) argues, ecological relationships involve not only material realities but also self-awareness, moral responsibility, and spiritual depth. Therefore, an integrative approach is essential for responding to the complexity of contemporary environmental challenges.

Various solutions have been proposed in the scholarly literature to bridge the gap between environmental ethics and spirituality. Naess (1973), through Deep Ecology, offers an ecocentric approach that positions humans as only one part of the broader biospheric order, arguing that ecological ethics should be grounded in respect for the intrinsic value of all living beings. This approach

seeks to challenge the exploitative structures of modern consciousness while emphasizing simple living, biospherical equality, and transformative ecological awareness. On the other hand, contemporary Islamic scholarship has expanded the concept of Wasathiyah as an ethic of cosmic balance encompassing spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions (Amalia & Muhtar, 2024). Principles such as *tawazun* (balance), *‘adl* (justice), *amanah* (responsibility), and prohibition of *israf* (excess) demonstrate significant compatibility with ecological principles that emphasize moderation and respect for the earth as a divine trust. The intersection of these two perspectives opens theoretical space for developing a more comprehensive model of environmental ethics.

Several previous studies have attempted to connect religion and ecology through ecotheological, ecospiritual, and religious ethical approaches. Nasr (1996a) argued that the ecological crisis is fundamentally a spiritual crisis resulting from humanity's loss of awareness of the sacredness of nature (Nasr, 1996b). Jonas (1984) proposed the concept of responsibility ethics for future generations as a moral foundation for ecological action. Tucker & Grim (1998), through the Religion and Ecology project, emphasized that religion can play a significant role in transforming ecological behavior at the global level. Meanwhile, more recent studies suggest that the integration between spirituality and environmental ethics can foster deeper ecological transformation, particularly within religious communities (Hitzhusen & Tucker, 2013). However, despite these important contributions, no theoretical formulation has yet explicitly and comprehensively Wasathiyah and Deep Ecology within a single framework of environmental ethics.

The research gap becomes increasingly evident when examining the tendency of existing literature to discuss Wasathiyah primarily within socio-political contexts, without adequately exploring its potential contribution to a post-anthropocentric paradigm of environmental ethics. Similarly, studies of Deep Ecology are often philosophical and secular in orientation, leaving theological dimensions that may be particularly relevant to Muslim communities largely unaddressed. To date, limited attention has been given to developing an explicit synthesis of Wasathiyah and Deep Ecology as an integrated ethical framework for addressing ecological crises through a spiritual grounded approach. This gap highlights the importance of developing an integrative model that brings theology and ecology into meaningful dialogue within contemporary academic discourse.

Based on these gaps, this research responds critically to the global ecological crisis rooted in an anthropocentric paradigm that places humans at the center of natural exploitation. In an effort to overcome the limitations of materialistic and technocratic solutions, this study aims to formulate an Ecospiritual Moderation paradigm. This paradigm is developed through a conceptual synthesis of Wasathiyah values in Islamic ethics and the principles of Deep Ecology. The goal is to create a post-anthropocentric framework of environmental ethics that prioritizes not only rationality, but also spiritual depth and transcendental morality.

This study contributes by proposing the development of a theoretical model that integrates Islamic theological values with modern ecological principles. This model is operationalized through three interconnected dimensions: (1) an ethical-normative dimension that serves as a philosophical foundation for environmental policymaking; (2) a participatory governance dimension that emphasizes ecological justice; and (3) a social action dimension that guides community empowerment programs grounded in spiritual values. By combining the principles of *tawazun* (balance), *‘adl* (justice), and *amanah* (responsibility) with the concept of the intrinsic value of nature derived from Deep Ecology, this research offers a comprehensive framework.

Theoretically, this research contributes to expanding the horizons of environmental philosophy through an integrative perspective. To date, a gap has persisted in which Deep Ecology is often approached from a secular standpoint, while the discourse of Wasathiyah tends to remain confined to socio-political issues without substantial ecological engagement. This research seeks to bridge the gap by presenting a dialogue across intellectual traditions that brings together revelation, reason, and ecological morality. In doing so, the Ecospiritual Moderation paradigm addresses an important gap in environmental ethics by offering a framework capable of engaging the spiritual and moral roots of human behavior towards nature.

On a practical level, this model serves as a strategic framework for various environmental actors in dealing with the current crisis. For policymakers, this model serves as a reference in formulating equitable regulations, while for natural resource governance practitioners, it provides a strong ethical basis. In addition, the operational design offered can be integrated into a holistic environmental education curricula as well as moderate spirituality-based social movements. Through these contributions, this research seeks to advance a more just, sustainable, and ethically grounded environmental paradigm.

rooted in Islamic humanitarian values and spirituality.

### **Method**

This research employs a qualitative approach with a philosophical hermeneutic paradigm. The selection of this paradigm is based on the need to deconstruct and reconstruct theological perspectives in response to contemporary ecological crises. As emphasized by Najitama and Chotimah (2016), there is an urgent need to reconstruct Islamic paradigms toward more environmentally responsible perspectives in order to address current ecological challenges. Epistemologically, this study adopts an objective-textual hermeneutic to explore the deeper meanings underlying the principles of Wasathiyah in Islamic ethics and the values of Deep Ecology (Najitama & Chotimah, 2016a). The research data are derived from primary texts, including classical and contemporary Qur'anic exegeses, as well as major works in Islamic ecotheological thought concerning the relationship between religion and the natural order (Nasr, 1996b).

The literature was selected through purposive sampling to ensure thematic relevance and contemporaneity. This approach is particularly important given the growing attention to religious within discussions of ecological degradation and environmental sustainability (Siswoyo et al., 2025b). The source examined include publications indexed in reputable databases such as Scopus, JSTOR, and the Web of Science. The analysis focuses on exploring the relationship between religious values and the global environmental crisis by engaging with foundational works on Deep Ecology and Islamic perspectives on humanity's place within the cosmic order (Nasr, 1996b).

Data analysis was conducted through qualitative content analysis integrated with a hermeneutic framework in three systematic stages. First, textual analysis was undertaken to examine the meanings of *mizan*, *'adl*, *amanah*, and the prohibition of *israf* in primary Islamic texts. Second, a comparative analysis was carried out to examine the relationship between the core values of Wasathiyah and the fundamental principles of Deep Ecology, including the intrinsic value of nature and critiques of anthropocentrism. This stage draws upon methodologies developed within the interdisciplinary field of religion and ecology (Tucker & Grim, 1998b). Third, a critical interpretive synthesis was employed to construct the conceptual model of Ecospiritual Moderation as a post-anthropocentric ethical framework that integrates Islamic ethics of balance with contemporary ecological consciousness.

The validity of the study was maintained through theoretical triangulation and conceptual coherence. Theoretical triangulation was achieved by engaging literature from environmental philosophy, ecotheology, and environmental humanities to strengthen interpretive rigor. Conceptual coherence was assessed through the alignment of Wasathiyah principles, Deep Ecological values, and the proposed post-anthropocentric framework to avoid epistemological inconsistencies. This validation strategy ensures that the proposed Ecospiritual Moderation model possesses not only logical consistency but also sufficient explanatory power to address the need for an environmental ethical framework grounded in spiritual and humanitarian values.

## Finding and Discussion

### *Theological and Epistemological Dimensions of Wasathiyah*

The discussion of environmental ethics in Islam cannot be separated from the fundamental concept of Wasathiyah, as enshrined in the Qur'an (2:143):

“And so We have made you (Muslims) a just and chosen people so that you may be witnesses of human beings and that the Messenger (Muhammad) may be a witness of you. And We have not appointed the Qibla which is your Qibla (now) but so that We may know who follows the Messenger and who defects. And indeed, it is very heavy, except for those who have been guided by Allah. and Allah will not waste your faith. Indeed, Allah is Most Merciful and Most Merciful to mankind” (Tafsirweb, n.d.).

This verse refers to Muslims as *ummatan wasathan*, a moderate, just, and balanced community, a moral identity that embodies a balance among spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions. Etymologically, the word *wasath* derives from the root word *w-s-th* which conveys a spectrum of meanings, including middle, balance, excellence, and justice (Mughtar, 2013). Classical scholars such as Al-Tabari interpret the term *ummatan wasathan* as *al-ummah al'adilah* (the just community), while Ibn Kathir argues that the notion of moderation in this verse refers to a moral balance that prevents people from falling into excess or neglecting God's commands (Tafsirweb, n.d.). Contemporary interpretations, such as Quraish Shihab's Tafsir Al-Mishbah, further expand the meaning of Wasathiyah as a principle of comprehensive moderation that encompasses human relationships with God, fellow human beings, and nature. According to Shihab, moderation is not just a middle position but a moral quality that integrates reason, spirituality, and ethical responsibility toward all creation (Huda et al., 2020).

In the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, the concept of Wasathiyah is reinforced through the prohibition *israf* (wastefulness), excessive behavior, and actions that disrupt the natural order. In a narration reported by Muslim, the Prophet stated: “Eat and drink, give charity, and dress without excesses and without arrogance” (Tajang, 2018). This hadith reflects two important ecological principles: the prohibition of wastefulness and the encouragement of a simple lifestyle. Another hadith narrated by Ahmad emphasizes that even when a person is near a flowing river, wasting water remains prohibited (Elias, 2013). These teachings demonstrate that ecological values are not a modern discourse but have been embedded in Islamic teachings from their very earliest foundations. Ethical responsibility toward the environment is further emphasized in the Qur’an (7:56): “And do not cause any damage on the earth after Allah has repaired it.”

Ecologically, this verse serves as a theological foundation for the view that maintaining cosmic balance is part of religious devotion. This dimension was later expanded by Islamic ecotheological thinkers such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who argues that the environmental crisis reflects a deeper spiritual crisis characterized by the loss of awareness that nature itself constitutes divine signs (*ayat*). Nasr further suggests that Wasathiyah can be understood as a cosmic principle because moderation reflects the concept of *mizan* (balance), or the scales that Allah has established to sustain the order of the universe (Nasr, 1996a).

In the context of environmental epistemology, Wasathiyah functions not only as a normative principle but also as an intellectual framework that integrates revelation, reason, and ecological morality. The principle of *tawazun* (balance) in Wasathiyah encourages humans to recognize their place within the ecosystem, not as absolute rulers but as part of a larger interconnected whole. The principle of *i’tidal* (justice) emphasizes that destructive environmental exploitation violates the rights of nature as part of God’s creation. Likewise, the principle of *amanah* (trusteeship) positions humans as custodians rather than owners of the Earth. Together, these principles demonstrate that Wasathiyah provides a theological foundation for an Islamic environmental ethics that is holistic, transcendent, and oriented toward sustainability.

### ***Post-anthropocentric Environmental Ethics: A Critique of Modernity and***

*the Rise of New Ecological Consciousness*

The worsening global ecological crisis demands a reconsideration of environmental ethics that have long been shaped by anthropocentric perspectives, which place human interests at the center of moral concern. Environmental thinkers such as Holmes Rolston III, Hans Jonas, Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, and Fritjof Capra have argued that modernity systematically positions humans as the sole center of ethical interests, while the universe is treated only as an instrumental object or merely a reserve of resources to fulfill economic ambitions (Jonas, 1984).

This paradigm has often been identified as an epistemological driver of excessive resource exploitation, ecosystem degradation, and ecological imbalance. In response, Jonas emphasized an ethical framework that extends moral responsibility beyond present human interests to future generations and the integrity of the biosphere as a whole. He rejected anthropocentric moral paradigms and argued for an ontological expansion of ethics to support long-term ecological sustainability (Jonas, 1984). This perspective is reinforced by posthumanist thought, which views the strict separation between “culture” and “nature” as a dangerous illusion in the Anthropocene era (Descola, 2014). Similarly, Holmes Rolston III maintained that nature possesses intrinsic value and cannot be reduced to utility or market commodities (Holmes III, 1989). His argument shifts the moral foundation of environmental ethics from human-centered subjectivity toward recognition of all living beings as components of an interdependent ecological system.

In the context of broader systemic philosophy, Capra (1996) introduces a holistic view sees life as an extraordinarily complex network characterized by non-linear relationships among humans, animals, plants, microorganisms, and ecological processes. This systemic view challenges the reductionist assumption of modernity that life can be understood mechanically, as though ecological systems function like machines. On the contrary, Capra emphasizes that the health and resilience of an ecological system depend on the integrity of the relationships among its components, so that damage to one component can affect the resilience of the broader ecological system.

From this perspective, the ecological crisis cannot be understood solely in terms of policy failures, economic inefficiencies, or technological limitations, but also as a consequence of deeper assumptions regarding humanity’s relationship with nature. Ivakhiv (2018) shows that meaningful ecological change is unlikely to occur without fundamental shifts in the moral, spiritual,

and ontological paradigms through which humans understand ecological relations. He further argues for the need to rethink the relationship between human perception and the material realities of the earth. Furthermore, this post-anthropocentric approach invites humans to see themselves not as rulers or centers of creation, but as part of an ecological network interconnected with other entities.

This new paradigm is supported by recent empirical studies showing that environmental policies based solely on anthropocentric assumptions—namely, protecting nature primarily for human benefit—often face limitations in addressing species extinction and habitat degradation because of their short-term and instrumental orientation (Azza & Zainuri, 2024). Therefore, contemporary approaches in environmental ethics propose a paradigm shift toward ecocentric or biocentric models that recognize the moral significance of all living beings. One of the most influential expressions of this approach is Deep Ecology, developed by Naess (1973). Deep Ecology moves beyond what Naess termed “shallow ecology”, which focuses primarily on pollution control and resource conservation for human welfare. Instead, it calls for a deeper examination of lifestyles, social structures, and belief systems that contribute to ecological degradation (Naess, 1973). In its development, this perspective has also intersected with ecofeminism and ecotheology, which view human domination over nature as intertwined with broader structures of domination. The addition of Plumwood’s (1993) critique of human-nature dualism is relevant here, as she argues that viewing nature as an inferior “other” reflects a failure of rationality that ultimately leads to ecological destruction. This ethical transformation also requires engagement with local and indigenous wisdom traditions, many of which have long practiced ecocentric ways of life prior to the rise of modern rationality (Khumairoh et al., 2025).

In the end, this paradigm reconstruction is not merely an intellectual exercise in environmental philosophy but an important step toward addressing contemporary ecological challenges. Without recognition of the intrinsic value of nature and the interconnectedness of ecological systems, environmental degradation is likely to intensify. Post-anthropocentric environmental ethics encourages a redefinition of “progress”, not as unlimited material accumulation, but as the capacity to live within ecological limits while maintaining harmonious relationships with other forms of life.

The post-anthropocentric approach also has a philosophical correspondence that is acceptable to religious communities, especially when ecological equality

is combined with a spirituality that values cosmic order. In the context of Islam, this view does not contradict the principles of Wasathiyah, as both emphasize balance and the harmonious relationship between humans and nature. This convergence opens the door to an epistemological and ethical synthesis between Islamic values and modern ecological philosophy. Thus, this discussion provides the philosophical foundations for the synthesis of Wasathiyah and Deep Ecology presented in the following section.

### ***Synthesis of Ecospiritual Moderation: Conceptual Integration between Deep Ecology and Wasathiyah***

Wasathiyah offers a spiritual basis for understanding environmental ethics, while Deep Ecology provides a philosophical basis for critiquing exploitative modern models of life. In the framework of synthesis, Wasathiyah provides a moral foundation in the form of the principles of *mizan*, *tawazun*, *adl*, and *amanah*, while Deep Ecology expands ecological understanding through the concept of intrinsic value and existential connectedness. If Wasathiyah places humans as caliphs responsible for maintaining the balance of the earth, then Deep Ecology places humans as part of an ecological network that has a moral obligation to all living entities. Both challenge anthropocentric assumptions that reduce nature to a merely instrumental or utilitarian object.

The synthesis Wasathiyah Islam and Deep Ecology gave birth to the paradigm of “Ecospiritual Moderation,” an environmental ethical framework that positions the values of spiritual balance and deep ecological awareness as the main axis of human action. In this paradigm, spirituality is not just seen as a moral accessory, but as a source of transformative energy that is able to change the human ontology of nature. Deep Ecology has occasionally been criticized for providing limited spiritual resources for motivating large-scale behavioral change. However, when combined with Wasathiyah, this limitation may be addressed because Islamic spirituality provides strong theological legitimacy for ecological action. Principle *anti-israf* (excessive prohibition) in Islam, for example, is not just an ethical norm, but an ecological strategy to mitigate resource exploitation (Wijaya et al., 2025). Quoting from Foltz in (Saluran et al., 2025), this integration strengthens the argument that Islam possesses significant potential to foster environmental awareness, which, when juxtaposed with modern ecological awareness, creates a simple lifestyle grounded in transcendental awareness. Thus, this synthesis produces an ethical foundation that is not only philosophical-speculative, but also has a

strong theological depth and practical urgency to respond to the contemporary ecological crisis that is now increasingly escalating.

Ecospiritual moderation also proposes a new reading of the relationship between humans and nature. In this perspective, human beings are not seen as dominant subjects who have the right to exploit the environment, but rather as *khalifah* (guardians) who are responsible for maintaining cosmic unity. This relationship is expressed through engagement with the *ayat kawniyyah* (cosmic signs), which reflect divine wisdom in creation (Najitama & Chotimah, 2016). The ontological unity taught by Deep Ecology can be understood more deeply through the concept of monotheism, because both teach the absolute interconnectedness of reality. Tawhid teaches that the entire universe consists of divine signs (*ayat*) that point to God's wisdom and unity. Haq (2013) in his work asserts that in Islam, humans and nature are seen as part of interdependent entities in an orderly scheme of creation. When ecological awareness Deep Ecology united with the principle of the oneness of God, environmental protection becomes not only a moral responsibility or legal obligation but also a form of spiritual commitment. This view shifts man's position from a "ruler" to a cosmic "servant", who is existentially connected to every element of God's creation, both biological and non-biological.

To address the need for concrete model operationalization as suggested in the critical discussion, Ecospiritual Moderation may be operationalized through an "Ecospiritual Ethical Indicator" that includes three functional dimensions: spirituality-based ecological footprint audits, community participation-based governance policies, and environmental behavior assessment systems. In concrete terms, this model can be operationalized through the implementation of "balance audit" on public policy, where every development project could be evaluated not only on the basis of economic profitability, but also through the ethical-spiritual impact on the local ecosystem. As explained by Koehrsen (2017) regarding the role of religion in the sustainability transition, the involvement of religious institutions can facilitate an "ecological self-assessment" for citizens. This involves the development of an activity-based curriculum in which individuals calculate their "moral carbon footprint," i.e. the extent to which their personal consumption violates the principle *trust* to nature. By integrating these indicators, the normative model transforms into a measuring tool that can be applied in daily decision-making, both at the level of households, social organizations, and corporate management that want to apply value-based sustainability principles.

At the educational level, the Ecospiritual Moderation paradigm offers a holistic curriculum foundation, going beyond reductionist environmental science learning. An education that integrates religious and ecological values allows students to understand that scientific data on environmental degradation, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, are not merely statistical indicators, but a narrative of moral crisis. According to Saeed (2013), the method of reading religious texts in the 21st century must include an understanding of challenging global contexts, including environmental crises, as part of a living interpretation of texts. Therefore, the curriculum based on Ecospiritual Moderation must contain *praxis* environment, such as field observations accompanied by theological reflections, as well as community-based environmental empowerment projects. Students are encouraged to interpret environmental data through the lens of Islamic ethics, transforming “knowledge” into “transformative awareness.” With this approach, graduates of education not only have technical competence in environmental management, but also moral integrity that motivates them to become ethical agents of change, given that the task of protecting the earth is an integral part of an individual’s intellectual responsibility.

In the context of public policy and environmental governance, this paradigm encourages the development of policies that use inclusive moral language to reach a wider group of people. In some contexts, public policies based solely on regulatory approaches may encounter limitations in communities where religious values play a significant role in shaping public attitudes. By adopting the principle of Ecospiritual Moderation, policymakers can package a sustainability agenda using terminology such as *maslahah* (public benefit) and *hifz al-bi’ah* (environmental protection) as part of religious purposes. This creates a more organic public acceptance as the sustainability narrative is aligned with their cultural identity and religiosity. This approach is in line with the findings of Siswoyo et al. (2025) regarding the importance of religious moderation in dealing with ecosystem crises, where religious values become a bridge of dialogue for the success of conservation programs. Thus, governments or environmental organizations can integrate an “Environmental Ethics Council” made up of religious leaders and environmental activists to review policies to align with the values of ecological justice and long-term sustainability, while avoiding exploitation that harms vulnerable communities.

In conclusion, the synthesis of Deep Ecology and Wasathiyah It forms a comprehensive new ethical foundation, capable of transcending the dichotomy

between secular science and religious dogma. The Ecospiritual Moderation Model provides a framework for global societies to move towards a post-anthropocentric phase, in which humans understand their human position as an integral part of a vast network of life. As Nasr (1996a) emphasizes, the environmental crisis is essentially a crisis of knowledge about the universe, therefore, healing this crisis requires the reintegration between “knowledge” and “sacredness”. This model answers the increasingly complex global ecological challenges by combining the sharpness of modern environmental philosophy analysis with the richness of Islamic spirituality. This paradigm may serve as both a conceptual framework and a practical reference for addressing contemporary ecological challenges in order to ensure the sustainability of the earth for future generations. By combining ecological rationality and universal spirituality, Ecospiritual Moderation also has the potential to facilitate intercultural and interreligious dialogue on environmental responsibility, fostering broader cooperation in addressing shared ecological challenges.

### **Conclusion**

The synthesis between Wasathiyah and Deep Ecology offers an integrative ontological and epistemological perspective on environmental ethics, changing the way humans perceive their position in the universe. By integrating Deep Ecology’s critique of anthropocentrism into the rich spiritual framework of Wasathiyah, this model provides an alternative to predominantly secular approaches that often emphasize technical and policy-oriented solutions. Theological pillars such as *tawazun* (balance), *adl* (justice), and *amanah* (trust) reframe the human role from an exploitative ruler to a *khalifah* (guardian) who carries a sacred mandate to protect the cosmic order as a form of real worship. This paradigm responds to interpretations of the ecological crisis identified by Seyyed Hossein Nasr as a spiritual crisis and the loss of sacred knowledge of nature. By placing nature as a manifestation of God’s verses, this model provides a theological foundation for ecological action, framing environmental conservation not only as a technical policy concern but also as a moral and spiritual responsibility.

The integration of the concept of *tawhid* (the oneness of God) with the awareness of the existential interconnectedness of all beings in Deep Ecology creates a post-anthropocentric ethical foundation in which man no longer sees himself as the center of the universe, but rather as an inseparable part of an interdependent network of life. Thus, this synthesis offers a philosophical

foundation for mitigating crises through the cultivation of respect (*anti-israf*) and humility rooted in spiritual awareness, encouraging a relationship between humans and the biosphere is based on a sense of collective responsibility for the integrity of God's creation.

This study also contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 13 (Climate Action) through the promotion of ethical and community-based climate awareness, SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) through *anti-israf* ecological ethics, SDG 15 (Life on Land) through the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity, and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) through participatory and value-based environmental governance. The Ecospiritual Moderation model suggests that religious moderation and ecological consciousness can function synergistically to support sustainable development and environmental justice at local and global levels.

Beyond its philosophical contribution, the Ecospiritual Moderation model offers a potential operational framework to meet the challenges of today's global climate crisis. To transition the theory into real-world reality, this paradigm may be operationalized through three functional dimensions: a spirituality-based ecological footprint audit, participatory governance, and an environmental behavior assessment system. Through the implementation of the "balance audit," policymakers and the corporate sector could evaluate development projects not only based on economic profitability metrics, but also through ethical-spiritual impacts on local ecosystems, thereby promoting greater accountability in nature conservation. In the realm of education, this paradigm encourages the development of educational curricula that is able to transform scientific data into moral narratives, where students can be equipped with technical competence, but also moral integrity to become agents of change.

In addition, the use of religious moral language such as *maslahah* (public good) in public policy may serve as an inclusive strategy that bridges secular regulations with the religious values of the community, so that sustainability programs may gain broader public acceptance. This is in line with the need for cross-cultural dialogue that links religious moderation with the success of ecosystem conservation. Ultimately, this model should be understood not merely as a theoretical construct but as a framework that may inform both scholarly discussions and practical environmental initiatives. With the reintegration between "knowledge" and "sacredness," Ecospiritual Moderation

may serve as a strategic bridge that equips global communities with the cognitive and moral tools to navigate the complexities of the ecological crisis, suggesting that modern ecological rationality and spiritual values can function as complementary resources in supporting environmental sustainability and intergenerational responsibility.

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# MAPPING THE ISLAM NUSANTARA DISCOURSE: BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF CONCEPTUAL STRUCTURE AND KEY DEBATES

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## Abstract

*This study was motivated by the rapid development of the discourse on Islam Nusantara in academic literature, contrasted with limited efforts to systematically map its intellectual structure and conceptual debate patterns. The purpose of this study is to map the intellectual structure of Islam Nusantara studies, identify its theoretical foundations, and reveal the primary directions of conceptual debates that have developed in scientific literature. Using a bibliometric analysis method, this study examines 1,653 articles indexed by Scopus between 2017 and 2024, analyzed via the Bibliometrix tool through Biblioshiny. The results show that publications on Islam Nusantara have experienced significant annual growth. The thematic map reveals that the main discourse of Islam Nusantara centers on the relationship between Islam, human values, and religion as a social practice, while themes of Islamism, Islamic law, and nationality occupy an emerging or declining position. Furthermore, keyword network analysis demonstrates a strong connection between the religious, social, and political dimensions within the study of Islam Nusantara. This study concludes that Islam Nusantara in contemporary scientific literature is constructed primarily as a humanistic, moderate, and contextual discourse on Islam, rather than solely as an ideological-political project, and remains open to the development of more specific micro and thematic studies. Future research should explore digital Islam Nusantara, gender, youth, and pesantren globalization. Applying longitudinal bibliometrics*

*and regional comparisons will enhance the field's theoretical depth, empirical richness, and global relevance.*

*Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh pesatnya perkembangan wacana Islam Nusantara dalam literatur akademik, yang kontras dengan masih terbatasnya upaya untuk memetakan struktur intelektual dan pola perdebatan konseptualnya secara sistematis. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk memetakan struktur intelektual studi Islam Nusantara, mengidentifikasi landasan teoretisnya, serta mengungkap arah utama perdebatan konseptual yang berkembang dalam literatur ilmiah. Dengan menggunakan metode analisis bibliometrik, penelitian ini memeriksa 1.653 artikel terindeks Scopus antara tahun 2017 dan 2024, yang dianalisis menggunakan alat Bibliometrix melalui Biblioshiny. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa publikasi tentang Islam Nusantara mengalami pertumbuhan tahunan yang signifikan. Peta tematik mengungkapkan bahwa wacana utama Islam Nusantara berpusat pada hubungan antara Islam, nilai-nilai kemanusiaan, dan agama sebagai praktik sosial, sementara tema Islamisme, hukum Islam, dan kebangsaan berada pada posisi yang baru muncul (emerging) atau menurun (declining). Lebih lanjut, analisis jaringan kata kunci menunjukkan hubungan yang kuat antara dimensi keagamaan, sosial, dan politik dalam studi Islam Nusantara. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Islam Nusantara dalam literatur ilmiah kontemporer dikonstruksikan secara utama sebagai wacana Islam yang humanis, moderat, dan kontekstual, bukan semata-mata sebagai proyek ideologis-politik, serta tetap terbuka bagi pengembangan studi mikro dan tematik yang lebih spesifik. Penelitian masa depan harus mengeksplorasi Islam Nusantara digital, gender, pemuda, dan globalisasi pesantren. Penerapan bibliometrik longitudinal dan perbandingan regional akan meningkatkan kedalaman teoretis, kekayaan empiris, dan relevansi global dari bidang ini.*

**Keywords:** *bibliometric analysis; contemporary Islamic discourse; intellectual structure; Islam Nusantara; thematic mapping*

## **Introduction**

In recent decades, the term Islam Nusantara has emerged as one of the most dynamic discourses within the landscape of Indonesian Islamic thought. This concept emphasizes the importance of indigenizing and contextualizing Islamic teachings within the socio-cultural realities of the Malay Archipelago, reflecting the historical encounter between universal Islamic values and local wisdom (van Bruinessen, 2018). However, despite growing attention toward Islam Nusantara in academic discourse, studies that systematically map its theoretical foundations and intellectual genealogy using data-driven methodologies remain critically limited (Mamat, 2026). Most existing research

focuses on historical, theological, or sociological analysis, but few explore how the structures of scholarly communication and conceptual networks within this discourse have been formed and evolved over time (Dwijayanto & Choirin, 2025).

This gap is particularly significant given the rapid growth of digital publication platforms and open-access journals in the last two decades, which has significantly accelerated the production of scientific literature on Islam Nusantara (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Academic discussions on this topic are no longer confined to printed books or limited scholarly forums but are widely disseminated through national and international journals. This massive growth of publication poses both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, it enriches the diversity of perspectives and expands global access to Indonesian Islamic thought. On the other hand, it also creates information overload, making it increasingly difficult for researchers to systematically identify dominant theories, influential figures, and major research trends within this field (Donthu et al., 2021). Without a systematic, bibliometric mapping approach, the development of Islam Nusantara studies risks becoming scattered and repetitive, with weak integration between past and contemporary scholarship.

The intellectual tradition of Islam in the Malay world developed through interactions among Arab, Persian, Indian, and European civilizations, forming a plural and dynamic epistemic space. Since the 7th century CE, Islam entered the Nusantara region through Arab Muslim merchants who peacefully spread the religion along trade routes (Azra, 2013; Imaduddin, 2021). This accommodative process of Islamization toward local cultures gave birth to a distinctive intellectual tradition in which knowledge and spirituality interacted with the diverse traditions of local societies (van Bruinessen, 2018). In Indonesia, this intellectual heritage was embodied in educational institutions such as pesantren, which since the era of the Walisongo have played a vital role in embedding Islamic values grounded in knowledge and local culture (Fadhly, 2018).

In contemporary Indonesian discourse, Islam Nusantara has become a significant point of debate not only in academic circles but also in public, socio-political, and religious arenas (Burhani, 2017; Woodward et al., 2013). The term is frequently positioned as an alternative understanding of Islam that emphasizes moderation, tolerance, and cultural accommodation in contrast to transnational and puritanical interpretations (Mietzner & Muhtadi,

2018). This debate intensified especially after Islam Nusantara was officially promoted in national religious forums, such as Nahdlatul Ulama congresses, and subsequently gained broader public attention (Feillard & Madinier, 2011). As a result, Islam Nusantara is no longer solely an academic concept but also a living discourse that intersects with identity politics, nationalism, and religious authority in Indonesia.

From the perspective of knowledge development, Islam Nusantara is constructed through various academic disciplines, including history, anthropology, theology, sociology, cultural studies, and Islamic studies (Fauzia, 2017). Each discipline contributes its own analytical lens in interpreting the relationship between Islam and local traditions. This multidisciplinary character shows that Islam Nusantara is not a single unified theory, but rather an umbrella concept that accommodates diverse scientific approaches and interpretations. However, this diversity also contributes to the complexity and fragmentation of the discourse.

Furthermore, the position of Islam Nusantara within the global discourse of Islam also deserves special attention. In the last decade, Indonesia has frequently been presented as a model of moderate Islam in the international arena (Assyaukanie, 2009; Menchik, 2016). Islam Nusantara is often associated with peaceful coexistence, religious tolerance, and cultural diversity, which are highly relevant to contemporary global challenges such as religious extremism, radicalism, and identity conflicts (Feener et al., 2016; Hilmy, 2013). This global relevance indicates that Islam Nusantara is not merely a local phenomenon, but also a conceptual contribution of Indonesia to the broader Islamic civilization. Nevertheless, to strengthen its academic legitimacy at the global level, Islam Nusantara requires a solid theoretical foundation and a clearly mapped intellectual genealogy (Akhiyat, 2017).

The novelty of this study lies in its application of bibliometric co-citation analysis and science mapping techniques to systematically reconstruct the intellectual architecture of Islam Nusantara scholarship—an approach that has not been previously employed in this field (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Unlike narrative or historical reviews, this method enables a data-driven, objective visualization of how ideas, authors, and debates are interconnected within the scientific literature (Cobo et al., 2011). Through co-citation patterns, it is possible to identify which authors, works, and theories are most frequently referenced together, indicating their central role in shaping the discourse (Small, 1973). This approach does not only reveal the dominant schools of

thought but also exposes the marginal or emerging perspectives that may not yet be fully recognized (Chen, 2017).

Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by conducting a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of publications related to Islam Nusantara. The main objectives of this research are to (1) map the intellectual structure of Islam Nusantara studies, (2) identify their theoretical foundations and key contributing authors, and (3) uncover the conceptual debates that define their epistemological boundaries. Through this approach, the study seeks to provide a systematic understanding of the scholarly landscape surrounding Islam Nusantara and to strengthen its position within the broader context of contemporary global Islamic thought.

### **Method**

This study uses a descriptive-bibliometric approach combined with science mapping techniques to explore the discourse of Islam Nusantara in scientific literature. Descriptive bibliometrics focuses on quantifying publication patterns, productivity, and citation trends, while science mapping visualizes the intellectual and conceptual structure of a research field through network analysis, thematic clustering, and co-occurrence patterns (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015). This dual approach was chosen for its ability to systematically map the distribution patterns of scientific publications, identify research trends, describe relationships between researchers, institutions, and key concepts, and reveal the underlying structure of knowledge production in Islam Nusantara studies (Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020).

The research data was obtained through several stages. First, the Scopus database was selected as the main source, given its broad global coverage, rigorous indexing standards, and reputation as a trusted academic journal index in various fields of science (Baas et al., 2020). While other databases such as Web of Science, Dimensions, and Google Scholar offer valuable coverage, Scopus was prioritized due to its structured metadata, comprehensive citation tracking, and compatibility with Bibliometrix software (Pranckutė, 2021). Web of Science has more selective coverage but overlaps significantly with Scopus; Dimensions includes grey literature that may reduce data quality; and Google Scholar lacks standardized metadata necessary for rigorous bibliometric analysis (Martín-Martín et al., 2018). Therefore, Scopus provides the most reliable and methodologically consistent dataset for this study.

Second, articles were searched using the keywords "Islam Nusantara"

or "Islam in Indonesia" or "Indonesian Islam," in the time span of 2017-2024, covering publications in the last eight years. The search focused on the document type "Article," and there were no language restrictions in this process. Third, the articles were exported in BibTeX format, which included complete citation information, bibliographical information, and keywords. These steps resulted in a total of 1,653 articles that met the criteria.

Table 1. Data Source Collection

Category	Information
Research Database	Scopus
Time Range	2017-2024
Language	No language restrictions
Keyword Search	"Islam Nusantara" OR "Islam in Indonesia" OR "Indonesian Islam"
Document Type	"Article"
Data Extraction	Exported in BibTeX format with citation information, bibliographic information, and keywords.
Number of Samples	1653

Prior to analysis, the raw bibliographic data underwent a rigorous cleaning and standardization process to ensure data validity and reliability (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). This process included: (1) author name disambiguation: variations in author names (e.g., "Zuly, Q.," "Qodir, Z.," "Qodir Zuly") were manually unified to ensure accurate attribution of publications (Caron & van Eck, 2014); (2) keyword unification: keywords with similar meanings but different spellings or forms (e.g., "Islamic law" vs. "Sharia law," "Indonesia" vs. "Indonesian context") were standardized to avoid fragmentation in network analysis (Zhang et al., 2016); (3) removal of incomplete records: articles with missing essential metadata (e.g., no abstract, no keywords, or incomplete citation data) were excluded from the final dataset to maintain analytical integrity (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016); and (4) duplicate detection: duplicate entries resulting from database export errors were identified and removed (Franceschini et al., 2016).

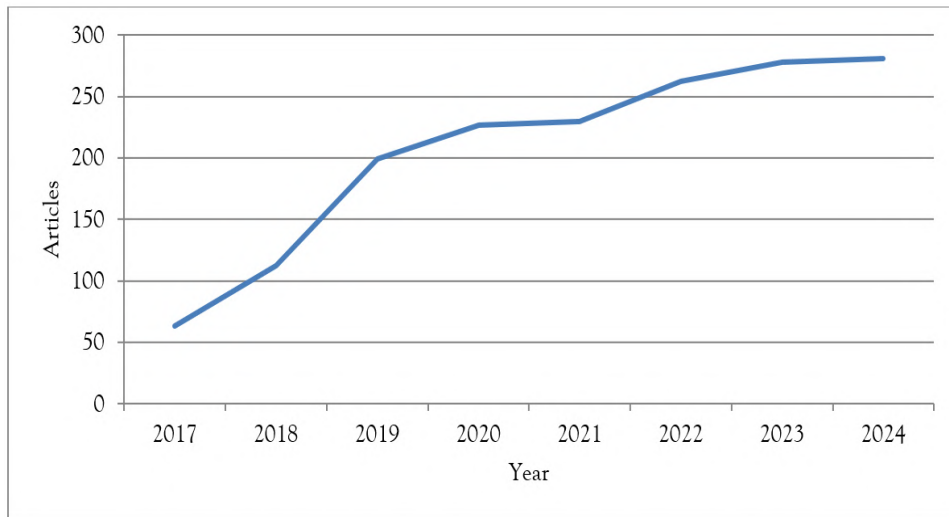
These data cleaning procedures are crucial in bibliometric research to minimize bias, enhance the accuracy of co-occurrence and co-citation networks, and ensure that the findings reflect genuine patterns of scholarly communication rather than data artifacts (Zhu & Liu, 2020). After the data was successfully cleaned and standardized, it was analyzed using Biblioshiny. It is part of the Bibliometrix R package (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

The analysis covered several aspects: (1) performance analysis: citation analysis to assess the impact of existing publications, identification of the most productive authors, and evaluation of the most relevant sources (Hirsch, 2005); (2) science mapping: network analysis to describe the relationships between authors (co-authorship network) and the relationships between keywords (keyword co-occurrence network), which aimed to reveal the main themes and conceptual structure in this field of research (van Eck & Waltman, 2014); (3) thematic mapping: visualization of research themes based on centrality and density to identify motor themes, niche themes, emerging/declining themes, and basic themes (Cobo et al., 2012); and (4) descriptive analysis: identification of publication patterns based on year, researchers with the most significant contributions, and the important roles of institutions and countries in this research (Bornmann & Mutz, 2015). The results of all these analyses were then visualized in the form of network maps, thematic maps, and trend graphs, which facilitated the interpretation of the research findings and enabled a comprehensive understanding of the intellectual structure of Islam Nusantara studies (Chen, 2017).

## **Finding and Discussion**

### ***Growth in Scientific Article Production***

The Annual Scientific Production graph illustrates the growth of publications on Islam Nusantara from 2017 to 2024, showing how academic interest in this topic has expanded and entered broader scientific discussions (Bornmann & Mutz, 2015). Figure 1 demonstrates a consistent upward trend throughout the research period, indicating that Islam Nusantara has increasingly gained scholarly attention and become more established as a field of study (Dwijayanto & Choirin, 2025). The steady rise in publications reflects the progressive development of scientific discussions on this theme across various academic disciplines.



**Figure 1.** Growth in scientific article production

In the early stage, publication numbers were relatively low. In 2017, only 63 articles discussed Islam Nusantara, showing that the discourse was still in its introductory phase and had not yet become a major academic focus (Imaduddin, 2021). Research networks were still limited, resulting in minimal representation in scientific literature. In 2018, publications increased significantly to 112 articles, marking the beginning of stronger scholarly interest. The growth became more substantial in 2019, when the number of publications reached 199. This increase indicates that Islam Nusantara began occupying a strategic position in studies of Islam, culture, and identity, attracting wider academic attention (Burhani, 2017).

The upward trend continued in subsequent years, with 228 publications in 2020 and 231 in 2021. This pattern reflects sustained academic engagement and suggests that Islam Nusantara research had entered a more mature phase of development (Fauzia, 2017). Growth remained stable from 2022 to 2024, with 261 publications in 2022, 278 in 2023, and a peak of 281 publications in 2024.

This continuous increase reflects the institutionalization of Islam Nusantara as a recognized academic field (Woodward et al., 2020). The expansion also suggests the emergence of new research networks, interdisciplinary collaborations, and methodological diversification (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). However, this quantitative growth raises questions regarding the theoretical depth and

conceptual maturity of the discourse. It remains important to assess whether the increase in publications represents genuine conceptual advancement or merely thematic repetition and descriptive saturation, an issue further explored in citation analysis (Bornmann & Haunschild, 2017).

### *Analysis of Average Citations per Year*

Figure 2 illustrates changes in the average number of citations received by publications on Islam Nusantara from 2017 to 2024, showing periods of strong academic attention and periods of weaker influence (Hirsch, 2005). In 2017, the average citation per article was around 1.37, reflecting the early stage of Islam Nusantara discourse in scientific literature. Although publication numbers were still limited, an initial reference network had already formed, indicating growing scholarly interest. A significant increase occurred in 2018, when the average citation rose to 1.83, suggesting that Islam Nusantara gained broader academic recognition during this period (Isacson & Rubenstein, 2002). Articles published at that time became important references in discussions on identity, religious practices, and Islamic culture in Indonesia, positioning Islam Nusantara within wider academic debates (van Bruinessen, 2013).

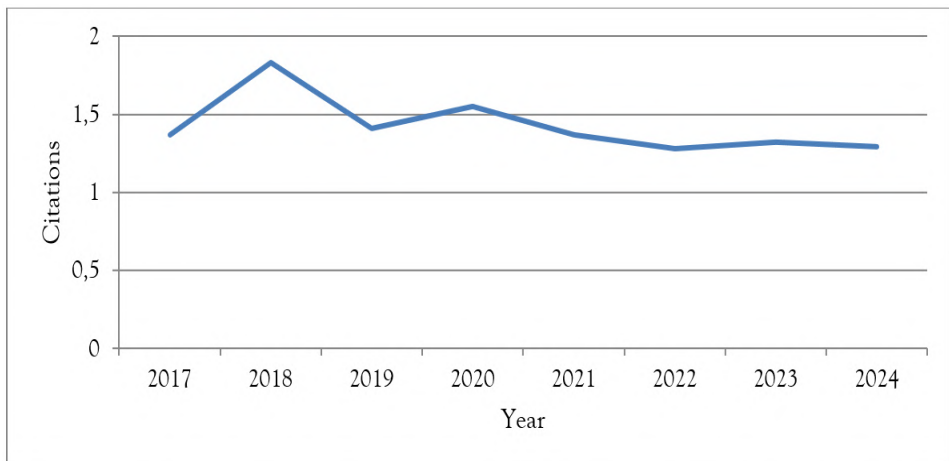


Figure 2. Average citations per year

After reaching its peak in 2018, citation averages declined in 2019 and continued to weaken in subsequent years. Although there was a slight increase in 2020, citation rates remained relatively low and stable from 2021 to 2024, ranging between 1.28 and 1.37 citations per article. By 2023 and 2024,

citation influence approached its lowest level. This decline, despite increasing publication numbers, raises concerns about thematic repetition and limited theoretical innovation in the field (Bornmann & Haunschild, 2017). Many recent studies appear descriptive or normative, focusing on historical narratives or institutional practices without introducing strong analytical frameworks, thereby limiting citation impact (Tahamtan & Bornmann, 2019; Nicolaisen, 2007; MacRoberts & MacRoberts, 2018).

However, recent publications from 2023–2024 have had limited time to accumulate citations, creating a natural time lag effect (Wang, 2013). The expansion of the field may also have produced thematic specialization and fragmentation, reducing cross-citation among subfields (Leydesdorff & Rafols, 2009). Overall, this pattern suggests that Islam Nusantara studies require stronger theoretical, methodological, and integrative approaches to produce more influential and foundational scholarship (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

### ***Analysis of Most Relevant Sources***

Table 2 presents the publication channels that contribute the most articles on Islam Nusantara, highlighting journals that function as key centers for knowledge production and discourse development in the field (Venable et al., 2016). The Journal of Indonesian Islam occupies the dominant position with 61 documents, confirming its major role in shaping discussions on Islam Nusantara. Its high publication count indicates that the journal has become a primary platform for conceptual and empirical studies on the topic (Fauzia, 2017). The Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies follows with 45 documents, reflecting strong scholarly interest in contemporary Islamic issues related to Islam Nusantara. Other important contributors include Al-Jami'ah with 36 documents and HTS Theologische Studies or Theological Studies with 33 documents, both of which provide theological and religious perspectives on the discourse (Woodward et al., 2013).

**Table 2.** Most relevant sources

No.	Document	Year	Journal	Citations
1	Power TP	2018	<i>Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies</i>	161
2	Che Mat NF	2020	<i>Journal of Travel Medicine</i>	127
3	Bourchier D	2019	<i>Journal of Contemporary Asia</i>	118

No.	Document	Year	Journal	Citations
4	MD Mukitul Islam K	2019	<i>PLOS ONE</i>	105
5	Hadiz VR	2018	<i>Journal of Contemporary Asia</i>	86
6	Tran TD	2019	<i>Journal of Affective Disorders</i>	78
7	Fossati D	2019	<i>Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs</i>	74
8	Ascarya A	2022	<i>International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management</i>	72
9	Adawiyah WR	2017	<i>Journal of Management Development</i>	67
10	Eskin Mehmet	2019	<i>Psychiatry Quarterly</i>	66

Several additional journals contribute through historical and cultural approaches. *Studia Islamika* and *Indonesia and the Malay World* each published 22 documents, indicating that Islam Nusantara is also discussed within broader Southeast Asian studies (van Bruinessen, 2018). This diversity shows that Islam Nusantara extends beyond Islamic studies into history, culture, and regional studies. However, the publication pattern also reveals that the discourse remains largely Indonesia-centric. The dominance of Indonesian journals such as *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, *Al-Jami'ah*, and *Studia Islamika* suggests that the discourse is mainly produced within Indonesian academic networks and has limited visibility in mainstream international Islamic studies journals (Akhiyat, 2017). Although journals such as *HTS Theologische Studies* and *Indonesia and the Malay World* provide some international exposure, Islam Nusantara has not yet achieved strong recognition in global Islamic scholarship (Assyaukanie, 2009).

The dominance of the *Journal of Indonesian Islam* has important implications for the internationalization of the discourse (Feillard & Madinier, 2011). While the journal provides a crucial platform for consolidating Islam Nusantara scholarship, this concentration may also create an echo chamber effect that limits broader international engagement (Menchik, 2016). To strengthen international recognition, scholars should publish more in high-impact international journals, adopt comparative frameworks, expand English-language publications, and build collaborative global research networks (Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2018; Hilmy, 2013; Feener et al., 2016). Without these efforts, Islam Nusantara risks remaining regionally confined despite

its potential contributions to global debates on moderation, pluralism, and cultural accommodation in Islam (Burhani, 2017).

### **Author Analysis**

Table 3 presents the distribution of the most productive authors who contributed to the discourse on “Islam Nusantara” from 2017 to 2024. Overall, the data show that scholarly interest in this topic is supported by a group of authors who consistently publish across years, creating a stable foundation for the development of this research field. The author with the highest number of publications is Qodir Zuly, with a total of 11 documents, making him the most dominant figure in shaping academic discussions surrounding Islam Nusantara. His productivity reflects a sustained engagement with the topic and indicates his significant influence in framing key arguments and debates within this field (Fauzia, 2017). He is followed by Rosidi Imron, who produced 9 documents. Although slightly fewer, this number still demonstrates strong research activity and suggests that he is one of the central contributors whose works help broaden the scholarly understanding of Islam Nusantara. Meanwhile, Abdullah Irwan and Jubba Hasse each have 8 publications, showing that they also play important roles in expanding theoretical and empirical perspectives related to Islamic practices, identity, and socio-religious dynamics in the Indonesian context (Woodward et al., 2013).

**Table 3.** Author Analysis

Rank	Author	Number of Documents
1	Qodir Zuly	11
2	Rosidi Imron	9
3	Abdullah Irwan	8
4	Jubba Hasse	8
5	Millie Julian	7
6	French Doran C	6
7	Hefner Robert W	6
8	Hidayah Nur	6
9	Purwono Urip	6
10	Slama Martin	6

In addition to these leading authors, several other scholars contributed consistently, including Millie Julian, French Doran C, Hefner Robert W,

Hidayah Nur, Purwono Urip, and Slama Martin, each with publications. Although their publication numbers are slightly lower, their collective work still provides substantial enrichment to the field. Their contributions often introduce interdisciplinary angles—ranging from anthropology and cultural studies to religious sociology—which helps diversify the academic conversation around Islam Nusantara (van Bruinessen, 2018). The presence of international scholars such as Julian Millie, Doran C French, Robert W Hefner, and Martin Slama is particularly noteworthy, as it indicates that Islam Nusantara is attracting attention beyond Indonesian academic circles. These scholars bring comparative perspectives, theoretical frameworks from global Islamic studies, and methodological rigor that enrich the discourse (Menchik, 2016). However, the relatively small number of publications by international scholars compared to Indonesian researchers suggests that the field is still primarily driven by local academic networks.

Taken together, the distribution of author productivity shows that research on Islam Nusantara is supported by a combination of highly productive scholars and a broader group of authors with steady contributions. This pattern suggests that the topic has both established experts and a growing network of researchers who continue to engage with the discourse. The relatively balanced spread of publications also indicates that interest in Islam Nusantara is not dominated by a single scholar alone, but is instead shaped collaboratively, making the field dynamic and continuously evolving (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). This collaborative nature of the field reflects a healthy intellectual ecosystem where multiple voices contribute to the ongoing development and refinement of Islam Nusantara scholarship, ensuring that the discourse remains vibrant and responsive to emerging questions and challenges.

### ***Analysis Most Global Cited Documents***

The finding shows the most cited articles in Islam Nusantara studies, highlighting the works that have had the strongest influence on subsequent research (Table 2). Highly cited articles generally play an important role in shaping scholarly discourse, introducing key concepts, and stimulating debate within the literature (Garfield, 1972). The most cited article is Power TP (2018), which discusses Islam Nusantara in relation to the Indonesian economy and has received 161 citations. This work is frequently referenced in discussions concerning identity, history, and conceptual debates surrounding Islam Nusantara (Burhani, 2017). The second most cited article is Che Mat NF (2020)

with 127 citations, focusing on Islam Nusantara in the context of religious journeys in Asia. This article is widely cited because it broadens discussions of Islam Nusantara, especially regarding the interaction between local and international Islam (Feillard & Madinier, 2011). In third place is Bourchier D (2019) with 118 citations, which examines socio-political perspectives on Islam Nusantara. Other notable works include Hadiz VR (2018) with 105 citations, Tran TD (2019) with 80 citations, and Eskin Mehmet (2019) with 66 citations.

The dominance of these highly cited studies reveals several important patterns in the intellectual structure of Islam Nusantara scholarship. First, the most influential works generally approach Islam Nusantara from socio-political, economic, and cultural perspectives rather than purely theological or normative viewpoints, reflecting the field's interdisciplinary appeal (Fauzia, 2017). This suggests that Islam Nusantara gains broader scholarly attention when discussed within wider social science frameworks, positioning it as a multifaceted phenomenon with important social, political, and economic implications. Second, articles that introduce new analytical frameworks, challenge existing assumptions, or synthesize diverse perspectives tend to receive higher citations because they function as conceptual foundations and intellectual references for later studies (Small, 1973). These works help establish the theoretical language and methodological approaches that shape the direction of future scholarship.

Third, several highly cited works are written by internationally affiliated scholars or published in internationally recognized journals, demonstrating the importance of global engagement and international publication networks in increasing citation impact (Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2018). This pattern indicates that Islam Nusantara scholarship benefits from comparative and cross-cultural perspectives that connect Indonesian Islamic thought with broader global discussions. Fourth, articles published in 2018–2019 have naturally accumulated more citations because they have existed longer than more recent publications, reflecting the temporal advantage common in citation patterns (Wang, 2013).

However, the relatively modest citation counts, with the highest reaching only 161 citations, suggest that Islam Nusantara scholarship has not yet produced major theoretical breakthroughs that fundamentally reshape the broader field of Islamic studies (Tahamtan & Bornmann, 2019). This indicates that the discourse may still be in a consolidation phase where foundational concepts

are being refined and debated, while paradigmatic works that define the field's intellectual identity have yet to emerge (Kuhn, 2002).

### ***Analysis Words' Frequency over Time***

The changing frequency of keywords in Islam Nusantara research over time, showing both consistently used terms and keywords that increased in certain periods. This pattern reflects the development of research focus within the discourse of Islam Nusantara (Callon et al., 1983). Among all keywords, Islam appears most frequently and shows a significant increase from 2017 to 2024. This trend indicates that Islam remains the central theme in academic discussions on Islam Nusantara (Imaduddin, 2021), particularly in relation to Islamic identity, religious practices, and cultural discourse in Indonesia. The keyword Islamic Law also demonstrates a notable increase in recent years, reflecting growing scholarly interest in Islamic legal studies within the Nusantara context (Hilmy, 2013). Meanwhile, the keyword Indonesia shows a steady but gradual increase, indicating continuing interest in the relationship between Islam and Indonesian national identity (Burhani, 2017).

The frequency of the keyword *\*Islamism\** has increased in recent years, reflecting growing scholarly interest in Islamic political ideology and its role in socio-political contexts (Assyaukanie, 2009; Feener et al., 2016). Other keywords, such as *\*Religion\**, *\*Human\**, and *\*Article\**, exhibit slower growth but remain consistently present, indicating sustained attention to religious, humanistic, and scholarly dimensions within Islam Nusantara studies (Woodward et al., 2013). These temporal patterns reveal broader intellectual and social transformations in the field. The rising prominence of *\*Islamic Law\** suggests a shift from predominantly cultural and anthropological perspectives toward more normative and jurisprudential discussions (Hafidz, 2021). This trend reflects increasing scholarly concern with how Islamic law is interpreted and negotiated within Indonesian Muslim communities in response to contemporary social realities.

The growing frequency of the keyword *Article* reflects the increasing volume of empirical studies and case-based research, suggesting that Islam Nusantara scholarship is moving beyond purely theoretical or historical discussions toward more evidence-based approaches through methodological diversification (Dwijayanto & Choirin, 2025). This development indicates the maturation of the field, as scholars increasingly support their arguments with systematic empirical investigations rather than relying exclusively on normative

or textual analysis. Overall, the graph provides a clear picture of how research on Islam Nusantara has evolved in response to changing intellectual, political, and social contexts (Leydesdorff & Rafols, 2009). The temporal shifts shown in the keyword frequencies confirm that Islam Nusantara is not a static concept but a dynamic discourse that continuously adapts to new challenges, debates, and opportunities.

### Co-occurrence Network

Co-occurrence network analysis is used to examine how keywords in Islam Nusantara research appear together and form relational patterns (Figure 3). Through this mapping, the thematic structure within the literature becomes visible because keywords that frequently co-occur indicate conceptual proximity and parallel discussions within the same research focus (Callon et al., 1983). The resulting network reveals highly connected keyword nodes that represent the core concepts of Islam Nusantara discourse (van Eck & Waltman, 2014). Larger nodes indicate higher frequencies of keyword occurrence, while thicker lines between nodes show stronger relationships. The finding shows two major clusters organized around broad thematic concerns. The first cluster, centered on the keyword Islam, includes religion, Islamic law, Islamism, and religious moderation. This cluster indicates that much of the scholarship focuses on normative, ideological, and religious aspects of Islam, particularly concerning how Islamic teachings are interpreted and implemented within legal and social contexts (Hilmy, 2013). The appearance of these keywords suggests that Islam Nusantara studies frequently discuss Islamic law, religious moderation, and ideological developments in Muslim society (Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2018).

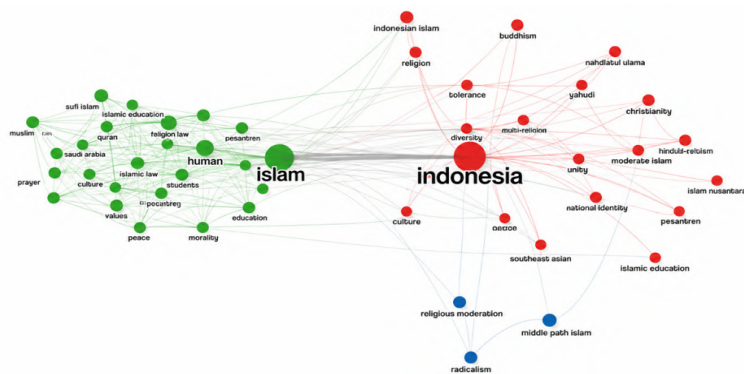


Figure 3. Co-occurrence Network

The second cluster, closely linked to the keyword Indonesia, includes democracy, political Islam, nationalism, Indonesian Islam, and Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). This cluster shows that Islam Nusantara scholarship is also strongly shaped by socio-political and national discourses within the Indonesian context (Burhani, 2017). Scholars show significant interest in the interaction between Islam, politics, nationalism, and the role of *pesantren* in constructing Indonesian identity (Hafidz, 2021). The relationships among these keywords demonstrate the complexity of integrating Islam with Indonesian socio-political life and national culture (Woodward et al., 2013).

The interaction between the two clusters is particularly important for understanding the intellectual structure of Islam Nusantara studies. Although the clusters appear distinct, they are not isolated from one another. This raises the question of whether Islam Nusantara scholarship is divided between normative-theological and socio-political approaches or whether both perspectives complement each other within a broader framework (Leydesdorff & Rafols, 2009). The network analysis supports the second interpretation because bridging keywords and cross-cluster relationships indicate active scholarly efforts to connect religious and political dimensions (Cobo et al., 2011). Rather than creating fragmentation, this relationship demonstrates a productive interaction between different analytical perspectives that enrich the field.

The bridging role in Figure 3 distinguishes Islam Nusantara from transnational Islamist movements that prioritize universal Islamic norms over local contexts, as well as from secular nationalist perspectives that marginalize religion (Menchik, 2016). By maintaining strong connections to both religious and national themes, Islam Nusantara provides an intellectual framework that values both Islamic authenticity and Indonesian cultural specificity without subordinating one to the other. The presence of “Islamic boarding schools” (*pesantren*) within the socio-political cluster, while remaining connected to religious themes, highlights the important role of *pesantren* as institutions that integrate Islamic education, local culture, and national identity (Hafidz, 2021). *Pesantren* function not only as educational institutions but also as spaces where Islam Nusantara discourse is practiced, transmitted, and continuously negotiated (van Bruinessen, 2018). These institutions connect theological and political discussions with everyday social realities, ensuring that Islam Nusantara remains grounded in the lived experiences of Indonesian Muslim communities.

The keyword “religious moderation” (*moderasi beragama*) appears within the normative-theological cluster but is also connected to the socio-political cluster, showing that moderation operates as a conceptual bridge between theology and practical socio-political engagement (Hilmy, 2013). This reflects the argument of Islam Nusantara proponents that moderation is not merely a political strategy but is deeply rooted in Islamic theological and jurisprudential traditions (Feener et al., 2016). As a bridging concept, moderation allows scholars to connect normative religious analysis with empirical socio-political discussions, demonstrating that these dimensions are interconnected rather than separate fields of inquiry.

Overall, the co-occurrence network demonstrates that Islam Nusantara scholarship is characterized not by sharp discursive polarization but by a dynamic integration of religious, cultural, and political dimensions (Fauzia, 2017). Islam Nusantara functions as a bridging framework that encourages dialogue among different scholarly traditions and perspectives rather than reinforcing division (Feillard & Madinier, 2011). This integrative character represents both a strength and a challenge. It enables multidimensional analysis capable of capturing the complexity of Indonesian Islamic life, while also requiring scholars to balance normative commitments with contextual realities. The ability of Islam Nusantara scholarship to maintain this balance without fragmentation represents one of its most distinctive intellectual contributions.

### ***Thematic Map***

The conceptual structure of studies on Islam Nusantara demonstrates a clear distinction between core and peripheral themes. The motor themes quadrant (Figure 4) is characterized by high centrality and density, the dominant cluster consists of the keywords Islam, human, and religion, indicating that the discourse of Islam Nusantara is primarily framed around the relationship between Islamic values, human dimensions, and religion as a socio-cultural system (Cobo et al., 2011). The prominence of these themes suggests that Islam Nusantara scholarship does not focus solely on theological concerns but instead positions Islam as a lived social practice closely connected to humanity, moderation, and religious life within society. This orientation reinforces the idea that Islam Nusantara functions as a socio-religious discourse integrating Islamic teachings with human dignity, ethical values, and everyday religious experiences (van Bruinessen, 2018). Such a perspective reflects the long-standing

influence of traditional Islamic scholarship in the Nusantara region, especially the pesantren tradition, which emphasizes spirituality, morality, and ethical conduct rather than rigid legalism or political ideology (Hafidz, 2021).

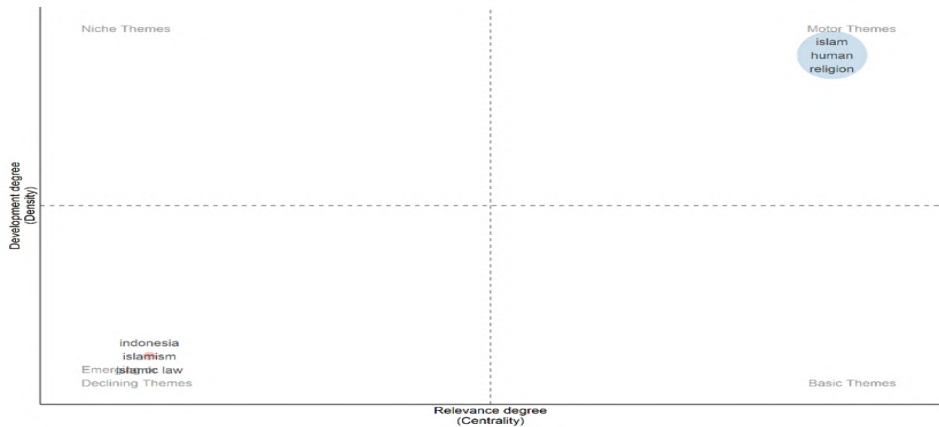


Figure 4. Thematic map

In contrast, the emerging or declining themes quadrant, characterized by low centrality and density, contains the cluster of \*Indonesia\*, \*Islamism\*, and \*Islamic law\*. This positioning suggests that themes related to political Islam, legal formalism, and national ideological debates are no longer central to the development of Islam Nusantara discourse or are currently undergoing a transitional phase (Assyaukanie, 2009). The placement of \*Islamic law\* and \*Islamism\* indicates that contemporary scholarship is increasingly moving away from legalistic and ideological-political approaches in favor of contextual and humanistic perspectives. This shift may reflect an academic response to the rigidity of transnational Islamist movements that prioritize formal legalism over cultural accommodation (Menchik, 2016), as well as a growing interest in lived religion and everyday social practices (Fauzia, 2017). At the same time, it distinguishes Islam Nusantara from both Islamist activism and secular nationalism. Furthermore, the absence of major clusters in the niche and basic themes quadrants suggests that the field remains concentrated on broad macro-level discussions and has yet to develop highly specialized areas of inquiry (Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020).

The thematic structure identified in this mapping reflects the cultural ethos of Islam Nusantara, which is grounded in four key principles: *tawassut* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidal* (justice). *Tawassut*

emphasizes avoiding extremism in religious understanding and practice, *tasamuh* encourages acceptance of religious and cultural diversity, *tawazun* highlights the balance between religious principles and social realities, and *i'tidal* prioritizes justice and human welfare. The strong centrality of the themes “human” and “religion” demonstrates that academic discourse on Islam Nusantara is closely aligned with these normative principles (Feillard & Madinier, 2011). These values are deeply embedded in Indonesian Islamic traditions, particularly within pesantren institutions and local Muslim communities. The relationship between “human,” “religion,” and “Islam” in the motor themes quadrant can be observed in three important dimensions. In pesantren education, Islamic learning focuses on moral character, Islamic learning focuses on moral character (*akhlaq*), spirituality (*tasawuf*), and social responsibility rather than merely emphasizing legal doctrines or textual knowledge (Hafidz, 2021). In religious practices, rituals such as *tahlilan* and *maulid* integrate Islamic and local traditions, rituals such as *tahlilan*, *maulid*, and *ziarah kubur* integrate Islamic liturgical traditions with local cultural expressions, creating a communal and emotionally connected religious experience (van Bruinessen, 2013). In social ethics, Islamic teachings are interpreted through local wisdom, Islamic teachings are interpreted through local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*), emphasizing social harmony, mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), and deliberative conflict resolution (*musyawarah*) (Woodward et al., 2013). These practices contribute to the formation of a religious culture that is simultaneously Islamic and uniquely Indonesian.

The absence of significant clusters within the niche and basic themes quadrants highlights important opportunities for future research. Because the field has not yet developed highly specialized subfields or robust theoretical foundations, scholars have substantial room to expand the study of Islam Nusantara in more focused and technical directions (Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020). Future studies could examine specific communities, institutions, and practices to provide deeper insight into how Islam Nusantara operates across diverse local contexts. There is also a need for stronger theoretical development that moves beyond descriptive accounts toward more systematic conceptual frameworks (Dwijayanto & Choirin, 2025). In addition, underexplored topics such as Islamic finance, halal certification, Islamic education, and digital Islam within the Nusantara context deserve greater attention due to their growing relevance in contemporary Indonesian Muslim society. Expanding research in these areas would enhance both the theoretical depth and practical relevance

of Islam Nusantara studies.

Overall, the thematic mapping confirms that Islam Nusantara is positioned in the scientific literature as a moderate, humanistic, and contextual Islamic discourse that departs from rigid ideological, political, and legalistic paradigms. This positioning reflects both the historical development of Islam in the Nusantara region, characterized by ethical practice and cultural accommodation, and contemporary efforts to formulate an Islamic discourse capable of addressing challenges such as pluralism, globalization, and modernity (Feener et al., 2016). By emphasizing human dignity, social harmony, and contextual interpretation, Islam Nusantara offers a distinctive model of Islamic thought that avoids both rigid fundamentalism and secular liberalism, preserving religious authenticity while embracing cultural diversity.

### ***Trend Analysis***

The keyword analysis reveals that the academic discourse on Islam Nusantara is dominated by the words “Islam” and “Indonesia” (Figure 3). This prominence underscores that the core research focus remains the concept of Islam and its application within the Indonesian context (Imaduddin, 2021). The central appearance of these terms indicates that discussions are heavily shaped by studies on Islamic identity in Indonesia and how the religion is interpreted within local social and political frameworks (Burhani, 2017). This persistent emphasis confirms that the discourse is fundamentally preoccupied with Islamic identity in relation to the Indonesian nation, mirroring continuous debates regarding authenticity, modernity, and cultural adaptation (Feillard & Madinier, 2011). Ultimately, the enduring dominance of these keywords indicates that Islam Nusantara is primarily understood as an interaction between universal Islamic principles and particular Indonesian realities.

Furthermore, medium-frequency words such as “article,” “human,” “female,” and “male” highlight persistent subtopics within the field, even if they are less intense than the primary themes (Fauzia, 2017). Specifically, the moderate presence of “female” and “male” signals an expanding scholarly interest in gender issues within Islam Nusantara (Rinaldo, 2013). Researchers are increasingly examining how Islam Nusantara addresses gender equality, women’s rights, and the specific roles of women within religious institutions and practices (Robinson, 2009). This focus represents a crucial development, elevating a dimension of Islamic discourse that was historically marginalized but is now recognized as vital for understanding contemporary Muslim societies.

Meanwhile, the prominence of “article” underscores that journal publications serve as the primary mode of scholarly communication in this domain, verifying findings from broader source analyses (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). This methodological trend impacts the velocity of knowledge circulation, the dynamics of academic debate, and the reach of research findings.

Ultimately, this thematic diversification across social, gender, and methodological dimensions proves that the discourse on Islam Nusantara is dynamic, continuously evolving alongside shifting social issues, theoretical frameworks, and research interests (Woodward et al., 2013). This expanding scope reflects a maturing discipline that actively responds to modern realities. As the field develops, it increasingly tackles contemporary challenges—such as gender relations, digital media, environmental ethics, and global Islamic movements—while preserving its core inquiry into the synthesis of Islamic values and Indonesian cultural identity. This ongoing evolution ensures that Islam Nusantara remains a vibrant and adaptive framework for understanding Indonesian Islam.

## **Conclusion**

This study aims to map the intellectual structure, identify the theoretical foundations, and uncover the main conceptual debates surrounding the discourse of Islam Nusantara through a bibliometric co-citation approach. The findings demonstrate that the scholarly landscape of Islam Nusantara is dominated by a rapidly growing body of publications, indicating that this field has evolved into a significant and increasingly established domain of academic inquiry. However, the growth in publication volume is not followed by a proportional increase in citation impact, suggesting that while interest is expanding, the consolidation of highly influential theoretical works remains limited.

The thematic structure reveals that the core discourse of Islam Nusantara is strongly centered on the interrelation between Islam, human, and religion, positioning Islam Nusantara primarily as a humanistic, socio-religious, and contextual interpretation of Islam. This confirms that the central epistemological orientation of Islam Nusantara emphasizes moderation, cultural accommodation, and the integration of religious values with social realities. In contrast, themes related to Islamism, Islamic law, and Indonesia appear in the emerging or declining quadrant, indicating a relative reduction in their central role or their presence in a transitional phase within contemporary debates. This finding answers the main research question by confirming that Islam Nusantara is

currently constructed less as an ideological-political project and more as a socio-cultural and humanitarian religious discourse.

Through co-occurrence and source analysis, this study also reveals that the discourse of Islam Nusantara is shaped by a combination of Islamic studies, socio-political studies, legal perspectives, and cultural approaches, with key journals and a relatively stable group of productive scholars functioning as the main hubs of knowledge production. Nevertheless, the absence of strong niche themes indicates that micro-level, specialized, and technical studies remain underdeveloped. This reflects a conceptual concentration at the macro-theoretical level, leaving substantial opportunities for future empirical and methodological diversification.

As a contribution to knowledge, this research offers the first comprehensive bibliometric mapping that systematically visualizes the intellectual structure, communication patterns, and conceptual evolution of Islam Nusantara studies over the last eight years. Unlike previous historical or normative studies, this research provides an objective structural overview of how ideas, authors, and debates are interconnected within the scientific literature.

For future research, it is recommended that scholars expand investigations into underexplored niche areas such as digital Islam Nusantara, gender perspectives, youth religiosity, and the transformation of pesantren in the era of globalization. Further studies may also apply longitudinal bibliometric techniques and comparative regional analyses to examine how Islam Nusantara interacts with broader Southeast Asian and global Islamic discourses. Such directions are essential to strengthen the theoretical depth, empirical richness, and international relevance of Islam Nusantara as a dynamic field of Islamic thought.

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## QUR'ANIC ANALYSIS OF GAMELAN SINGO MENGKOK AND TEMBANG PANGKUR AS SUNAN DRAJAT'S CULTURAL DAKWAH

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### Abstract

*This study examines the role of Gamelan Singo Mengkok and Tembang Pangkur as cultural da'wah media used by Raden Qasim (Sunan Drajat) to spread Islam along Java's northern coast during the 15th–16th centuries. While research on the Walisongo is widespread, few studies integratively analyze the symbolic meaning of Singo Mengkok and the textual message of Pangkur through a Qur'anic perspective, leaving a critical gap in understanding how art, scripture, and da'wah values interconnect. This study explores how these traditional art forms functioned as persuasive media for conveying moral, spiritual, and social teachings, and identifies the specific Qur'anic values embedded within them. Employing a descriptive qualitative method with a historical-analytical and interpretive approach, the research draws on primary sources—including Tembang Pangkur lyrics, field observations at the Sunan Drajat Museum, and custodian interviews—alongside secondary literature on Javanese culture and Qur'anic studies. The findings reveal that Gamelan Singo Mengkok symbolizes humility and self-control, serving as an effective tool for da'wah bil-hikmah*

(wise propagation). Meanwhile, *Tembang Pangkur* conveys core values of monotheism, repentance, obedience, knowledge-seeking, social responsibility, and national unity. These elements align with Qur'anic principles of wisdom and cultural accommodation, allowing Islamic teachings to integrate harmoniously with local traditions. In conclusion, the synthesis of *Gamelan Singo Mengkok* and *Tembang Pangkur* represents a transformative da'wah model relevant for addressing contemporary moral, spiritual, and social challenges. Future research should leverage digital humanities to preserve and adapt these traditional arts through modern technology.

Penelitian ini mengkaji peran *Gamelan Singo Mengkok* dan *Tembang Pangkur* sebagai media dakwah kultural yang digunakan oleh Raden Qasim (Sunan Drajat) untuk menyebarkan Islam di sepanjang pantai utara Jawa pada abad ke-15 hingga ke-16. Meskipun penelitian tentang *Walisono* sudah meluas, belum banyak studi yang menganalisis secara integratif makna simbolis *Singo Mengkok* dan pesan tekstual *Pangkur* melalui perspektif *Al-Qur'an*. Hal ini menyisakan celah kritis dalam memahami bagaimana seni, kitab suci, dan nilai-nilai dakwah saling keterkaitan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana bentuk-bentuk kesenian tradisional tersebut berfungsi sebagai media persuasif untuk menyampaikan ajaran moral, spiritual, dan sosial, serta mengidentifikasi nilai-nilai *Al-Qur'an* yang terkandung di dalamnya. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif melalui pendekatan historis-analitis dan interpretatif, penelitian ini bertumpu pada sumber-sumber primer—termasuk lirik *Tembang Pangkur*, pengamatan lapangan di Museum Sunan Drajat, dan wawancara dengan juru kunci—serta literatur sekunder tentang kebudayaan Jawa dan studi *Al-Qur'an*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Gamelan Singo Mengkok* melambangkan kerendahan hati dan pengendalian diri, yang berfungsi sebagai sarana efektif untuk dakwah bil-hikmah (penyeruan yang bijaksana). Sementara itu, *Tembang Pangkur* menyampaikan nilai-nilai inti berupa tauhid, pertobatan, ketaatan, pencarian ilmu, tanggung jawab sosial, dan persatuan nasional. Elemen-elemen ini selaras dengan prinsip-prinsip *Al-Qur'an* tentang hikmah dan akomodasi kultural, yang memungkinkan ajaran Islam berintegrasi secara harmonis dengan tradisi lokal. Kesimpulannya, sintesis antara *Gamelan Singo Mengkok* dan *Tembang Pangkur* merepresentasikan sebuah model dakwah transformatif yang relevan untuk menjawab tantangan moral, spiritual, dan sosial kontemporer. Penelitian di masa depan perlu memanfaatkan pemanfaatan humaniora digital untuk melestarikan dan mengadaptasikan kesenian tradisional berbasis dakwah ini melalui teknologi modern.

**Keywords:** cultural da'wah, *Gamelan Singo Mengkok*, Sunan Drajat, *Tembang Pangkur*, Qur'anic perspective

## Introduction

The spread of Islam in the Indonesian Archipelago took place through a

complex historical process in which the interaction between Islamic teachings and local culture played an important role in shaping the religious character of Indonesian society. Historical studies show that Islam was widely accepted in various regions of the Archipelago through persuasive, educational, and cultural approaches (Sunyoto, 2017). This approach illustrates how Muslim scholars and early Islamic missionaries utilized cultural media—including artistic traditions, local languages, and social practices—as channels of religious communication. This model later became known as cultural da‘wah, namely a da‘wah approach that integrates Islamic values with the cultural context of society so that religious messages can be understood more contextually. In the Javanese context, traditional arts play a significant role in building ethical and spiritual understanding.

*Gamelan*, as a traditional musical system, functions not only as entertainment but also carries strong symbolic and social dimensions, as explained in both classical and contemporary ethnomusicological studies (Becker, 1980; Sutton, 1991). Alongside this, the *macapat* (Javanese poetic verse) tradition—including *Tembang Pangkur*—serves as an important medium for conveying moral values, character education, and self-reflection within Javanese culture. The values contained in these traditional poetic songs are often used in cultural and social education, both in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and in the broader community.

A number of contemporary studies emphasize that traditional arts remain relevant as instruments of religious communication and education. Research shows that performing arts such as *wayang* and *gamelan* continue to serve as effective media for Islamic preaching because they adapt to changing social contexts while preserving their philosophical and cultural values (Setiawan, 2022). Studies on non-Arabic Islamic arts further demonstrate that local cultural expressions contain symbolic meanings reflecting the integration of Islamic teachings with indigenous traditions (Lutfianto & Junaidi, 2022). Likewise, recent systematic reviews confirm the significant role of Indonesian traditional arts in transmitting educational, moral, and religious values, particularly in strengthening character formation and cultural identity (Asrori et al., 2025). However, research on the integration of Islamic da‘wah values within traditional arts—especially the relationship between the symbolism of *Gamelan Singo Mengkok* and the teachings of *Tembang Pangkur*—remains limited. Existing studies generally examine music, literary texts, and religious values separately, leaving a lack of comprehensive understanding of how these

art forms function as integrated media of da'wah.

Based on this research gap, the present study aims to analyze the Gamelan Singo Mengkok and Tembang Pangkur as cultural da'wah media employed by Sunan Drajat through the perspective of Qur'anic values. This focus is particularly significant because Singo Mengkok is not merely a musical instrument, but a unique cultural artifact that embodies layered symbolic meanings rooted in Javanese-Islamic synthesis. The term "Singo" (lion) represents strength, courage, and authority, while "Mengkok" (bowing or bending) symbolizes humility and submission. This paradoxical combination reflects a profound moral teaching: true strength must be guided by humility before God. Such symbolism aligns closely with Qur'anic values that emphasize the balance between power and piety, as well as the integration of inner spirituality and outward conduct.

Moreover, the use of gamelan as a medium of da'wah demonstrates Sunan Drajat's adaptive and contextual approach in conveying Islamic teachings. Rather than rejecting local culture, he transformed it into a vehicle for spiritual education, making religious messages more accessible and emotionally resonant for the community. This makes Singo Mengkok culturally distinctive compared to other forms of Islamic preaching, as it bridges aesthetic expression with theological depth. Its performative and communal nature also strengthens its function as a tool for collective reflection and moral formation.

The focus on Tembang Pangkur is equally important because it serves as a textual and lyrical articulation of ethical teachings, complementing the symbolic dimension of the *gamelan*. While Singo Mengkok communicates through sound and symbolism, Pangkur conveys explicit moral guidance through language, creating a holistic da'wah model that engages both emotional and intellectual dimensions. By combining these two elements, this study is able to capture a more comprehensive picture of how Qur'anic values are internalized within cultural practices.

Therefore, this research integrates historical approaches, symbolic analysis, and thematic interpretation of the Qur'an to explain how the principles of monotheism, social ethics, spirituality, and humanitarian values are constructed within these artistic forms. The main objectives of this study are to identify the Qur'anic values contained in Sunan Drajat's Tembang Pangkur, interpret the symbolism of the Gamelan Singo Mengkok, and assess their relevance for the development of cultural da'wah and character education in the modern era.

## **Method**

This study employs a qualitative approach within an interpretive paradigm to explore the symbolic meanings, da'wah values, and historical context of the Gamelan Singo Mengkok and Tembang Pangkur in the da'wah tradition of Sunan Drajat (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). A historical-analytical approach is applied to examine the origins, development, and transformation of these art forms within the socio-cultural and religious context of Javanese society. This approach facilitates an understanding of how Sunan Drajat integrated Islamic teachings with local cultural traditions through artistic expression, while also revealing the dynamic relationship between history, culture, and religion. Consequently, Gamelan Singo Mengkok and Tembang Pangkur are understood not only as cultural heritage but also as effective media for transmitting moral and spiritual values across generations (Kuntowijoyo, 2003). The research subjects include cultural artifacts, namely the Gamelan Singo Mengkok and the text of Tembang Pangkur, as well as informants knowledgeable about Sunan Drajat's traditions and da'wah history, including custodians and managers of the Sunan Drajat Museum.

The research procedure was carried out in three stages: (1) historical exploration through the study of documents, archives, and literature; (2) direct observation of the Gamelan Singo Mengkok collection and exhibition spaces at the Sunan Drajat Museum; and (3) in-depth interviews with key informants to obtain explanations regarding symbolic functions, contextual usage, and da'wah messages in the tembang. The materials and tools used in the study include interview guidelines, documentation devices (camera and note-taking tools), and the manuscript of Tembang Pangkur, which serves as the primary object of analysis.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and subsequently verified through source and methodological triangulation. Data analysis was conducted through stages of data reduction, thematic categorization, interpretation of symbolic meanings, and drawing conclusions to answer the research questions regarding how the Gamelan Singo Mengkok and Tembang Pangkur function as cultural da'wah media of Sunan Drajat and their relevance to modern socio-religious contexts.

## Finding and Discussion

### *The Singo Mengkok Gamelan as an Artistic Medium of Da'wah*

*Gamelan* art is one of the oldest cultural heritages in the Indonesian archipelago. In ancient Javanese tradition, gamelan was not merely a musical instrument but also part of a spiritual and social system that reflected harmony between human beings, nature, and God (Sutton, 1991). When Islam began to enter Java in the 15th century through the Walisongo, gamelan was not rejected; instead, it became a medium for da'wah. The saints—including Raden Qosim (Sunan Drajat)—recognized the emotional closeness of Javanese society to their artistic traditions. Therefore, they Islamized existing art forms by giving them new meanings infused with da'wah values. Raden Qasim (Sunan Drajat) is known as a saint who spread Islam in the region of Paciran, Lamongan, East Java, using social and cultural approaches. Through these methods, Islam was peacefully accepted by coastal communities without cultural conflict.

One of the da'wah methods applied by Raden Qasim (Sunan Drajat) to attract the attention of the people of Drajat and its surroundings was through traditional musical arts, using a set of gamelan known as Gamelan Singo Mengkok. The name derives from a carved wooden statue of a lion in a bowing posture (*dodok mengkok*), symbolizing a transformation from ferocity to gentleness. According to oral tradition, Singo Mengkok comes from *singo* (lion, symbol of strength) and *mengkok* (bowing, symbol of humility). In Javanese-Islamic symbolism, the lion represents strength and courage, while the bowing posture signifies humility before God (Qibtiyah, 2020).

The art of Gamelan Singo Mengkok represents a form of cultural acculturation between Hindu-Buddhist traditions and Islamic teachings, as the surrounding community at that time largely adhered to Hinduism. To enable da'wah to be more easily accepted, the gamelan was named Singo Mengkok, symbolizing wisdom, gentleness of heart, and the control of desire blessed by God. Physically, the Gamelan Singo Mengkok has an instrumental composition similar to that of Javanese *gamelan* in general, such as *bonang*, *kendang*, *kenong*, *saron*, and *gong*. However, its distinctive feature lies in the carved motif of a bowing lion, embodying the philosophy of humility within strength.

Thus, the symbol of *singo mengkok* represents the teaching that the truly strong person is one who can subdue his desires and show humility before God. Symbolically, it conveys the idea that true strength does not lie in physical power but in one's ability to restrain the ego, as reflected in the saying: "*Jalma kang kuat kuwi dudu kang kuat otot lan balunge, nanging kang kuat*

*ngempet hawa nafsune*,” meaning “A strong person is not someone with strong muscles and bones, but someone who can restrain his desires.”

This meaning aligns with the da‘wah principles of Raden Qasim (Sunan Drajat), which emphasize ethics, humanity, and balance in life. In his various poetic teachings, he consistently instilled values such as sincerity, simplicity, and compassion for others. Gamelan Singo Mengkok was used by Raden Qasim (Sunan Drajat) as a tool of da‘wah *bil-hikmah*—inviting people to goodness through gentle, beautiful, and culturally appropriate means. In each performance, the gamelan was accompanied by *Tembang Pangkur* as a medium for conveying da‘wah messages.

The custodian of the Sunan Drajat Museum explained that while gamelan performances during that period were historically restricted to the nobility, Sunan Drajat transformed the art form into an egalitarian medium of da‘wah accessible to all social strata. By doing so, he successfully drew large audiences and fostered a wider acceptance of Islamic teachings across various social levels. Consequently, this artistic approach served as a critical conduit between Islam and local culture, ensuring that moral and spiritual messages were communicated in an engaging and accessible manner to the broader community. Figure 1 displays the Gamelan Singo Mengkok photographed during fieldwork at the Sunan Drajat Museum in Lamongan. Detail (a) isolates the *gender* (gamelan instrument), highlighting the Singo Mengkok carving that serves as the ensemble’s defining iconographic feature. Detail (b) shows the remaining instruments in the set, including the *kenong*, *gambang*, *peking*, and related components.



(a)



(b)

**Figure 1.** The Gamelan Singo Mengkok: (a) Singo Mengkok carving (b) Singo Mengkok instruments

Discussion about this *gamelan* is also found in a manuscript copied by Raden Fatah Kusumo, a descendant of Sunan Drajat, in a work titled 'Ilmu Roso', quoted as follows:

"*Sanadyan siro gamelan  
Ojo lali syariat lan tarekat  
Hakekat lawan ma'rifat  
Gamelan ya sun jarwani  
Pemasunih galih*" (Dasy, 1998)

[Even if you love *gamelan*, Do not forget the *shari'ah* and the *tariqah*, Along with *haqiqa* and *ma'rifa*. I explain *gamelan*. As a purifier of the heart.]

To this day, Gamelan Singo Mengkok is stored and displayed at the Sunan Drajat Museum located within the Sunan Drajat Cemetery Complex in Drajat Village, Paciran Subdistrict, Lamongan Regency. This collection forms an important part of the Islamic cultural heritage of East Java.

### ***Tembang Pangkur as a Medium for Islamic Da'wah***

Raden Qasim (Sunan Drajat) is known as one of the Walisongo who spread Islamic teachings through popular and culturally acceptable methods, particularly by using the *Tembang Pangkur* accompanied by *gamelan* melodies. In Javanese society of the 15th–16th centuries, *tembang* served as a highly effective medium for delivering moral messages and religious teachings because they could be sung beautifully and were easy for the community to remember. This tradition of *da'wah* through artistic media began in Kampung Gendhingan. According to oral tradition, before Raden Qasim (Sunan Drajat) recited *Tembang Pangkur* or other songs, a set of *gamelan* would first be played in the courtyard of the mosque. The melodious sound of the *gending* at night drew people's attention, prompting them to come and witness the activity. Beyond serving as entertainment, the *gending* accompanied verses of *tembang* that contained messages of *da'wah*. The selected melodies were usually those that evoked joy and curiosity, encouraging people to listen attentively and understand the Islamic values embedded in the lyrics (Qibtiyah, 2020).

Raden Qasim (Sunan Drajat) made use of *Tembang Pangkur*, one of the *macapat* poetic forms traditionally used to advise people to restrain their desires and increase good deeds. Therefore, he infused the *Pangkur* with Islamic messages and teachings of monotheism (*tawhid*). Iksan (2014) explained that Sunan Drajat's *Tembang Pangkur*, composed around the 16th century, is as follows:

“..... Mitraningsun duratmoko pirengno swara Singo Mengkok edi angakua,  
Mumpung durung siniksa Gusti Allah, mula balia mring mukmin kang mituhu,  
Angudi isine Al-Qur’an supaya kinasih Gusti.  
He para jin lan manungsa, pada taato mring Rosul lan Nabi,  
Ibadah kanti mituhu, mengkono dawuh Allah,  
Remena piweweh mring jalma kang butuh,  
Manfaati nusa lan bangsa, miwah jejereng agami. ....”

[O my brothers who have erred, listen to the sound of the Singo Mengkok, Echoing its beautiful melody. Acknowledge your mistakes before receiving punishment from Allah. Return to the right path as faithful Muslims. Seek the knowledge contained in the Qur’an, that you may become beloved servants of God. O jinn and humankind, obey the teachings of the Messenger and the Prophets. Worship with sincerity, for such is Allah’s command. Be a helper to those in need. Be beneficial to the nation and homeland, and uphold the laws of religion.]

### ***The Da’wah Meaning in Tembang Pangkur***

#### *Personal Advice and Monotheistic Teaching*

The verse says, “*Mitra ningsun duratmoko, pirengno swara Singo Mengkok edi...*” [O my sinful brother, listen to the sound of Singo Mengkok, echoing a beautiful melody]. It conveys that humans (*mitra ningsun*) are called to listen to the voice of truth—Islamic teachings symbolized through the sound of the Singo Mengkok Gamelan. The phrase “*Pirengno swara Singo Mengkok edi*” is not merely an invitation to enjoy music, but a symbolic call to a beautiful form of da’wah. The sound of the *gamelan* is described as *edi* (beautiful), yet *mengkok* (bowing), illustrating harmony between beauty and submission to God. Thus, Sunan Drajat uses the gamelan as a spiritual bridge—the sound becomes a medium for self-awareness so that humans do not become heedless and return to faith.

#### *A Call to Repentance and Self-Awareness*

The line stated, “*Mumpung durung siniksa Gusti Allah, mula balia mring mukmin kang mituhu*” [Admit your mistakes before receiving the punishment of Allah; return to the right path as an obedient believer]. It carries a da’wah message urging people to repent before facing the punishment of Allah. Sunan Drajat emphasizes the importance of returning to true faith before divine retribution comes. This message aligns with the Islamic principle of *amar ma’ruf nahi munkar*—calling people to goodness through gentle and heart-

softening artistic expression.

*An Invitation to Study and Practice the Qur'an*

The verse mentioned, “*Angudi isine Al-Qur'an supaya kinasih Gusti*” [Seek the knowledge contained in the Qur'an so that you may be loved by God]. It emphasizes Islam's commitment to knowledge and spirituality, teaching that Allah's love is granted to those who learn and practice the Qur'an. In the context of da'wah, Sunan Drajat shows that Islam is not only ritualistic but also rooted in deep understanding and reflection on divine revelation—representing *da'wah bil 'ilm* (da'wah through knowledge).

*A Call to Obey the Teachings of the Prophet*

The verse says, “*He para jin lan manungsa pada taato mring Rosul lan Nabi*” [O jinn and humankind, obey the teachings of the Prophet and the Messengers]. It refers to the Qur'an (51:56): “I did not create jinn and humankind except to worship Me.” It highlights that obedience to the Prophet and proper worship are the essence of servitude to Allah.

*A Call to Worship with Sincerity and Obedience*

The line stated, “*Ibadah kanti mituhu, mengkono dawuh Allah*” [Worship with full obedience—such is the command of Allah]. It urges Muslims to perform worship with sincerity and wholehearted obedience. The word *mituhu* in Javanese means being truly devoted and submissive. Worship is not merely outward rituals but must be accompanied by inner awareness and heartfelt devotion. Sunan Drajat stresses that the essence of worship is to draw closer to Allah and to cultivate noble character—encouraging deep spiritual practice rather than mere formalism.

*Social and Humanitarian Teachings*

The verse says, “*Remena piweweh mring jalma kang butuh, manfaati nusa lan bangsa, miwah jejering agami*” [Be a helper to those in need; benefit the nation and society; and uphold the teachings of religion]. It reflects the Islamic values of sincerity, compassion, and social responsibility. Sunan Drajat promotes generosity, societal welfare, and communal solidarity. This message aligns with his well-known *Catur Piwulang* (Four Teaching): “*wenhono teken marang wong kang wuto* [give a stick to the blind], *wenhono mangan marang wong kang luwe* [give food to the hungry], *wenhono payung marang wong kang kaudanan*

[give shelter to one caught in the rain], *wenehono sandang marang wong kang kawudan* [give clothing to the unclothed]”. Basically, these teachings were part of *Pepali Pitu* (Seven Teaching) showing that Sunan Drajat’s da’wah is practical and action-oriented, emphasizing real contributions to social welfare and moral upliftment.

### ***The Da’wah Values in Tembang Pangkur Contained in the Qur’an and Their Relevance in the Modern Context***

#### *The Value of Moral and Spiritual Responsibility*

The verse stated, “*Pirengno swara Singo Mengkok edi angakua, mumpung durung siniksa Gusti Allah.*” [Heed the beautiful sound of the Singo Mengkok and humble yourself in repentance, before the punishment of God Almighty befalls you]. It contains a call to become aware of oneself before it is too late, encouraging self-improvement before the punishment of Allah comes. This value reflects an effort to instill spiritual responsibility and a sense of self-introspection. Through this awareness, a person is expected to be able to evaluate their actions, correct their mistakes, and improve the quality of their faith and piety. Furthermore, this teaching also reminds that the time humans have is very limited, so every opportunity should be used to do good deeds and draw closer to Allah. Thus, this message is not only a warning, but also a motivation to continuously improve oneself, maintain good character, and live life in accordance with the values of Islamic teachings.

The value of moral and spiritual responsibility in Tembang Pangkur by Sunan Drajat is clearly reflected in the verse, “*Pirengno swara Singo Mengkok edi angakua, mumpung durung siniksa Gusti Allah,*” which urges humans to realize their mistakes before the punishment of Allah befalls them. This principle aligns with the Qur’anic teaching in Surah Al-Hashr verse 18, which commands believers to engage in *muhasabah* (self-reflection) and to pay attention to their deeds as preparation for the afterlife: “O believers! Be mindful of Allah and let every soul look to what ‘deeds’ it has sent forth for tomorrow.<sup>1</sup> And fear Allah, ‘for’ certainly Allah is All-Aware of what you do.”

Zainuddin et al., (2024) emphasizes that *muhasabah* is the core of spiritual education in Islam and functions as a mechanism of self-awareness for every Muslim. In the context of cultural da’wah, Sukarman and Saifullah (2023) explain that Sunan Drajat used Tembang Pangkur and the Gamelan Singo Mengkok as a form of humanistic da’wah that cultivates introspection, piety, and moral refinement through gentle and aesthetic methods rather than

threats. This is supported by Masyhadi (2019), who notes that Sunan Drajat's teachings are deeply rooted in Sufi values—particularly spiritual purification, moral awareness, and closeness to Allah.

Thus, the introspective message of *Tembang Pangkur* not only has a strong theological foundation but also serves as a manifestation of cultural *da'wah* that remains highly relevant in the modern era. In contemporary life—filled with distractions and fast-paced routines—these values of *muhasabah*, spiritual responsibility, and moral self-control become crucial in shaping the moral awareness of modern society so that people remain disciplined, ethical, and connected to divine values. Sunan Drajat emphasized that moral awareness should not be built through fear, but through a gentle awakening that arises from a heart filled with faith and knowledge.

#### *The Value of Tawhid: Faith in Allah*

The line says, “*Mumpung durung siniksa Gusti Allah, mula balia mring mukmin kang mituhu.*” [Before the punishment of God Almighty befalls you, return to the path of the devout and faithful believers]. Sunan Drajat reminds the community to immediately return to Allah by strengthening their faith and piety before death and punishment arrive. This message emphasizes the importance of maintaining strong belief and devotion to Allah. In addition, this teaching also encourages every individual to continuously improve themselves through righteous deeds, avoid sinful actions, and strengthen relationships with others within the framework of noble character. Furthermore, this message implies that life in this world is only temporary, so humans need to prepare the best provisions for the hereafter. By increasing good deeds and maintaining consistency in worship, a person can attain inner peace as well as safety in this world and the hereafter. Therefore, this teaching is not only a warning but also a guide for life so that humans remain on the path that is blessed by Allah.

The value of *tawhid* and faith in Allah in *Tembang Pangkur* by Sunan Drajat is reflected in the verse “*Mumpung durung siniksa Gusti Allah, mula balia mring mukmin kang mituhu,*” which is a call for humans to repent and return to Allah before death and divine retribution for their deeds come upon them. This message aligns with the fundamental principles of Islamic *da'wah*, which prioritize calling people back to Allah with hope and without despair from His mercy, as stated in Surah Az-Zumar, verse 53: “Say, ‘O Prophet, that Allah says,’ ‘O My servants who have exceeded the limits against their souls! Do not lose

hope in Allah's mercy, for Allah certainly forgives all sins.<sup>1</sup> He is indeed the All-Forgiving, Most Merciful." This verse teaches that Allah opens the door of repentance to anyone willing to return to Him. The message reflects the same moral guidance in Sunan Drajat's *tembang*, urging Muslims to awaken before punishment befalls them. The values of *tawhid* and repentance form the core of Islamic da'wah, reminding people of Allah's mercy and compassion rather than focusing solely on the threat of punishment.

Zainuddin et al., (2024) explains that the awareness to return to Allah through the mechanism of repentance is an integral part of spiritual education in Islam. In the context of cultural da'wah, Sukarman and Saifullah (2023) show that Sunan Drajat's approach emphasizes humanistic values, particularly the call to self-improvement and strengthening one's relationship with Allah through gentle, culturally grounded methods. Findings from Masyhadi (2019) also illustrate that Sunan Drajat's teachings are rich in values of *tawhid* and Sufism, such as the awareness of Allah's presence, purification of the soul, and humility as the foundation of faith.

Thus, the call to return to Allah in the verse reflects a cultural da'wah strategy that places *tawhid* at the center of character formation. In contemporary society, where material progress and consumerist lifestyles often distract individuals from spiritual values, this message remains highly relevant. The *tawhid* values emphasized by Sunan Drajat foster spiritual awareness, inner tranquility, and moral guidance, enabling individuals to maintain their relationship with Allah and navigate the complexities of modern life with ethical discipline and balance.

#### *The Value of Religious Education and Knowledge*

The verse stated, "*Angudi isine Al-Qur'an supaya kinasih Gusti.*" [Strive to comprehend the depth of the Al-Qur'an, so that you may earn the love of God Almighty.] Sunan Drajat emphasizes the importance of learning and understanding the Qur'an so that humans may attain the mercy and love of Allah. This understanding should not stop at merely reading, but must be accompanied by deep reflection on its meanings and their application in daily life. Thus, the Qur'an is not only a text to be recited, but also a guide for life that directs human attitudes, decisions, and the course of life. Furthermore, this teaching encourages people to continually draw closer to Allah through knowledge and good deeds, so as to form individuals of noble character, wisdom, and responsibility. Through an intensive engagement with

the Qur'an, a person is expected to gain inner peace, clarity of thought, and spiritual strength in facing various challenges of life.

The value of religious education and knowledge in Tembang Pangkur by Sunan Drajat is reflected in the verse "*Angudi isine Al-Qur'an supaya kinasih Gusti,*" which instructs believers to study and comprehend the Qur'an in order to obtain Allah's mercy. This message corresponds to the divine command in Surah Al-'Alaq, verses 1-5: "Read, 'O Prophet,' in the name of your Lord who created— created humans from a clinging clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous, who taught by the pen— taught humanity what they knew not." These verses serve as the first divine call for humanity to read, seek knowledge, and establish intellectual and spiritual foundations. They also emphasize the importance of learning as a means of drawing closer to Allah. This aligns with Sunan Drajat's teaching that encourages people to study the Qur'an as the ultimate source of knowledge and guidance.

Idris and Ridho (2024) stated that Islamic education based on the Qur'an and Hadith is not merely a transfer of knowledge, but a process of forming moral character and deep religious awareness. In the modern context, Sunan Drajat's message remains relevant for strengthening learning systems that integrate Qur'anic knowledge with faith, thereby shaping Muslim generations who are not only intellectually capable but also possess strong religious integrity.

#### *The Value of Obedience to the Messenger and the Prophets*

The line says, "*He para Jin lan manungsa, pada taato mring Rosul lan Nabi,*" [O assembly of *jinn* and humanity, submit yourselves in obedience to the Messenger and the Prophet]. Sunan Drajat reminds that both *jinn* and humans must obey the commands of Allah and His Messenger with sincere faith. This obedience is not only expressed through ritual worship, but is also reflected in attitudes, behavior, and social interactions in daily life. With sincere faith, every individual will develop moral awareness to distinguish between right and wrong, as well as a strong motivation to always do good. Furthermore, This teaching highlights that obedience grounded in sincerity will bring inner peace and order to life. On the other hand, without strong faith, obedience can become meaningless and easily shaken. Therefore, this teaching encourages people not only to be outwardly obedient, but also to build a deep spiritual awareness so that every action carries the value of worship and brings benefit to oneself and others.

The value of obedience to the Messenger conveyed in Tembang Pangkur by Sunan Drajat aligns with the Islamic concept of *tha'ah* (obedience), particularly as described in Surah An-Nisa', verse 59, which commands the believers to obey Allah and His Messenger: "O believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. Should you disagree on anything, then refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you 'truly' believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is the best and fairest resolution."

This verse affirms that obedience to the Messenger is an extension of obedience to Allah. Sunan Drajat embeds this value gently through the artistic medium of Gamelan Singo Mengkok and Tembang Pangkur, encouraging the community to emulate the noble character of Prophet Muhammad. This value forms the foundation of Islamic da'wah, guiding believers to live in accordance with the Prophet's teachings in matters of worship, morality, and social relations. This emphasis aligns with Ramadhani et al., (2024), who assert that the Prophet is the ultimate role model for shaping exemplary character through obedience, spiritual discipline, and moral consistency. Thus, the message of obedience in Tembang Pangkur is not only spiritual but also educational, as it encourages the community to follow the Prophet's teachings as a practical guide for daily life.

#### *The Value of Obedience and Sincerity*

The verse stated, "*Ibadah kanti mituhu, mengkono dawuh Allah.*" [Perform your worship with steadfast sincerity, for such is the decree of Almighty God]. Sunan Drajat emphasizes that true worship is not merely a routine or a formal obligation, but an act of complete submission to Allah. Worship performed without awareness, sincerity, and obedience holds no value in the sight of Allah. Therefore, the da'wah in this verse calls the community to improve the quality of their worship—whether prayer, fasting, almsgiving, or social good deeds—so that outward actions align with inner intention, and behavior aligns with spiritual consciousness.

The value of obedience and sincerity in Sunan Drajat's Tembang Pangkur appears in the line "*Ibadah kanti mituhu, mengkono dawuh Allah,*" which affirms that worship carries true meaning only when performed with wholehearted obedience and sincerity toward Allah. This message aligns with the Qur'anic principle in Surah Al-Bayyinah, verse 5, which stresses that the essence of worship is to purify obedience and dedicate one's heart solely to Allah: "Even though they were only commanded to worship Allah 'alone' with sincere

devotion to Him in all uprightness, establish prayer, and pay alms-tax. That is the upright Way.”

This verse affirms that the core of worship lies in sincerity and obedience to Allah. In modern life, many people practice worship as a routine devoid of deep spiritual meaning. This *tembang* serves as a reminder that proper worship must arise from awareness and love for Allah, not just social obligation or religious symbolism. Sunan Drajat’s da’wah teaches the importance of spiritual awareness in every act of worship so that worship does not stop at physical movements, but instead cultivates noble character and transformative behavior.

Daud et al., (2017) explains that sincerity (*ikhlas*) is the foundation of all acts of devotion, free from ostentation or motives other than seeking Allah’s pleasure. Rahmanudin (2022) also emphasizes that worship lacking spiritual consciousness and pure intention loses its essential meaning, for it does not represent complete submission to God. In the context of Islamic education, Hasanah (2022) notes that sincerity has a transformative role in shaping character, as sincere worship fosters moral integrity, discipline, and consistent behavior.

Thus, Sunan Drajat’s *Tembang Pangkur* does not merely teach rituals; it cultivates inner spiritual consciousness, reminding believers that worship must harmonize intention, obedience, and deep spiritual reflection. In modern life, this message is highly relevant to restoring the true meaning of worship—not as empty routines, but as a process of soul purification that brings peace, moral discipline, and heightened religious quality.

#### *The Value of Social Responsibility and Humanity*

The verse says, “*Remena piweweh mring jalma kang butuh*” [Cultivate a love for benevolence and charity toward those who are in need] Sunan Drajat teaches Muslims to cultivate social sensitivity and a willingness to help others. This teaching is also expressed in the seventh verse of the *Pepali Pitu*. The value of social concern and humanity in this line shows that Sunan Drajat places social compassion at the heart of his da’wah. This teaching emphasizes the obligation to help those in need, which is also reflected in the *Pepali Pitu*, known for its emphasis on compassion and social actions. This spirit aligns with the moral message found in Surah al-Ma’un (107):1–3, which describes that a person is considered to deny the religion if they neglect orphans and fail to encourage feeding the poor: “Have you seen the one who denies the

‘final’ Judgment? That is the one who repulses the orphan, and does not encourage the feeding of the poor.” This verse shows that a person is deemed to deny their faith if they lack social concern. The da‘wah values in Sunan Drajat’s *Tembang Pangkur* correspond directly to this message, because Sunan Drajat emphasizes the importance of sharing sustenance, helping the weak, and contributing to society. His teachings affirm that true faith must be manifested through real actions that spread goodness and bring benefit. This is consistent with the final teaching of the *Pepali Pitu*.

Gunawan (2018) argues that Surah al-Ma‘un is not merely a critique of individual behavior but a social theology that requires Muslims to actualize faith through concrete actions, including protecting vulnerable groups and empowering communities. This interpretation closely aligns with Sunan Drajat’s da‘wah approach, which prioritizes social engagement over ritual observance alone. Similarly, Idrus et al. (2025) contend that Surah al-Ma‘un contains socio-economic principles such as wealth distribution, social solidarity, and the reduction of inequality, forming a foundation for an Islamic economic system oriented toward collective welfare. In this context, *Tembang Pangkur* may be understood as a historical effort to internalize the values of Surah al-Ma‘un within Javanese culture, positioning art as both a medium of da‘wah and a vehicle for social education.

Thus, the social values in *Tembang Pangkur* are not merely moral appeals but represent a concrete implementation of the theology of Surah al-Ma‘un: that true faith must be expressed through care for the poor, community empowerment, and humanitarian action. In the midst of modern issues such as poverty and social inequality, this message remains highly relevant, emphasizing the importance of humane da‘wah that sides with the marginalized. Sunan Drajat also instills the spirit of *hablun minannas* (maintaining good relations among people) by stressing the importance of sharing and helping others. This value is crucial in the modern context, where poverty and inequality remain major challenges, making social da‘wah an inseparable part of Islam as *rahmatan lil‘alamin*.

#### *Values of Nationalism and Unity*

The value of nationalism and unity in the verse “*Manfaati nusa lan bangsa, miwah jejereng agami*” reflects Sunan Drajat’s teaching that service to the nation and service to religion must go hand in hand. This message is closely aligned with the Qur’anic teaching in Surah Ali ‘Imran (3:103), which commands

the ummah to hold firmly to the rope of Allah together, avoid division, and be mindful of the blessing of unity that Allah has bestowed: “And hold firmly together to the rope of Allah<sup>1</sup> and do not be divided. Remember Allah’s favour upon you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts, so you—by His grace—became brothers. And you were at the brink of a fiery pit and He saved you from it. This is how Allah makes His revelations clear to you, so that you may be ‘rightly’ guided.” (Khattab, n.d.)

This verse emphasizes the importance of unity and togetherness in Islam. Sunan Drajat reinforces this value by instilling the spirit of patriotism, mutual cooperation, and interfaith harmony. This value is highly relevant in the context of modern Indonesia, a diverse nation, as it teaches that devotion to the country is part of practicing faith and fulfilling the mandate of Islamic da’wah. It aligns with the concept of *hubbul wathan minal iman* (love for the homeland is part of faith). From the Qur’anic perspective, the value of unity emphasized in Surah Ali ‘Imran (3:103) commands the community to hold firmly to Allah’s rope (religion) and avoid division.

Hadari et al. (2023) states that *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood) in the Qur’an is not merely brotherhood among Muslims but a universal, Islamic brotherhood that becomes the moral foundation for social unity. Furthermore, Asfar (2020) adds that the concept of *ukhuwah* in the Qur’an remains relevant in modern dynamics, especially as a basis for social solidarity and harmony in national life, particularly when unity is tested in times of crisis such as the pandemic. In addition, Ma’ruf (2020) highlights that the value of *ukhuwah* must be internalized through education so that unity does not remain a slogan, but is manifested in daily social behavior—an appeal parallel to Sunan Drajat’s da’wah, urging Muslims to contribute positively to the nation without neglecting their religious ties.

The values of nationalism and unity in the Pangkur song of Sunan Drajat are not merely symbolic or cultural expressions, but are deeply rooted in ethical and spiritual principles that align with Qur’anic teachings. The Qur’an consistently emphasizes the importance of unity (*ukhuwwah*), cooperation in goodness (*ta’awun*), and the recognition of diversity as part of divine wisdom, as reflected in the idea that humanity was created in different nations and tribes to know and support one another. In this context, Sunan Drajat’s message can be understood as a contextualization of these universal teachings into the socio-cultural reality of Javanese society.

Moreover, the integration of religious devotion with social responsibility demonstrates that Islam does not advocate a dichotomy between faith and civic duty. Instead, it promotes a holistic worldview in which serving the community and contributing to national well-being are integral parts of religious practice. The Pangkur song, therefore, functions not only as moral guidance but also as a medium of social transformation, encouraging individuals to embody Islamic values in ways that strengthen collective harmony and national cohesion. Thus, the values of nationalism and unity in the Pangkur song of Sunan Drajat are not merely local rhetoric, but a real expression of Qur'anic teachings that call the ummah to unite in faith, serve the nation, and maintain harmony within diversity.

### Conclusion

This study aims to identify the Qur'anic values contained in Tembang Pangkur of Sunan Drajat, interpret the symbolism of the Gamelan Singo Mengkok, and assess its relevance for the development of cultural da'wah and character education in the modern era. Based on historical, interpretative, and thematic Qur'anic analysis, this study concludes that Gamelan Singo Mengkok serves as an instrument of *da'wah bil-hikmah*, integrating symbols of humility, self-control, and artistic aesthetics as a medium for fostering the community's moral awareness. Tembang Pangkur itself is proven to contain strong da'wah values, including: monotheism (*tawhid*), repentance and self-evaluation (*taubat* and *mahasabah*), Qur'anic education, obedience to the Messenger, sincerity in worship, social responsibility, and national ethics that align with Qur'anic principles. Crucially, these moral and ethical dimensions directly contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) by promoting cultural diversity and a sustainable global citizenship mindset through transformative character education, as well as SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by fostering inclusive, peaceful, and socially cohesive societies built upon a foundation of shared civic responsibility.

These findings demonstrate that the da'wah of Sunan Drajat embodies a cultural-transformative character, utilizing local arts as a medium for the persuasive and contextual internalization of Islamic values. This approach was not only effective in the 15th century but continues to be important for modern society, which continues to face moral, spiritual, and social challenges. Thus, this research provides new contributions in the form of: (1) an

integrative model linking *gamelan* symbolism, song texts, and Qur'anic values; (2) a reinterpretation of traditional *tembang* as da'wah texts rather than mere aesthetic heritage; and (3) the strengthening of cultural da'wah paradigms as strategic alternatives in Islamic education and religious moderation.

This study also reflects that traditional arts, when understood within a Qur'anic value framework, can serve as effective instruments for shaping character, social ethics, and national cohesion. Therefore, the results of this research are expected to enrich the literature on cultural da'wah and reinforce humanistic approaches in Islamic education. Based on these findings, further research is recommended to: (1) examine comparative da'wah arts among other Walisongo figures; (2) conduct in-depth ethnomusicological analysis of the musical structure of Gamelan Singo Mengkok; (3) investigate the implementation of these *tembang* values within contemporary Islamic education curricula; and (4) develop digital humanities studies for the preservation of da'wah-based traditional arts through technology. Ongoing studies related to cultural da'wah, religious moderation, and the revitalization of traditional arts indicate that this theme remains relevant and strategic for the development of Islamic scholarship and the preservation of Nusantara cultural heritage.

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## BOTTINGGE AS A CULTURAL MEDIATOR IN BUGIS BRIDE PRICE NEGOTIATIONS TO PREVENT ELOPEMENT

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### Abstract

*This study investigates the role of Bottingge as a cultural mediator in the Mappanessa Dui Menre tradition and its effectiveness in mitigating the Silariang (elopement) phenomenon within the Bugis community of South Sulawesi. Previous studies on Bugis marriage have primarily examined Dui Menre as a cultural tradition, with limited attention to the changing communication and negotiation processes within Mappanessa, particularly amid the tension between Islamic values of simplicity and increasingly burdensome customary demands. This study offers novelty by exploring how cultural mediation and negotiation strategies are practiced in contemporary Bugis society, especially among younger generations seeking to balance tradition, family expectations, and social well-being. Using a qualitative descriptive method with a communication ethnography approach, data were collected through participant observation and in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, Bottingge practitioners, and families involved in marriage negotiations across South Sulawesi. The findings reveal that the meaning of Dui Menre (bride price) has shifted toward material prestige, often leading to negotiation deadlocks between family honor (Siri') and economic capability. In this context, Bottingge functions as a vital "safety valve" by employing persuasive communication and cultural mediation to rationalize financial demands without compromising dignity. A competent mediator can transform potential conflict into consensus through the principles of Sipakatau (mutual respect) and Pesse (empathy). Therefore, strengthening mediation practices that emphasize Sipakatau, Pesse, and Mabbulo Sipeppa is essential to reduce Silariang, minimize excessive*

*dowry demands, and preserve harmonious Bugis marriage traditions.*

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran Bottingge sebagai mediator budaya dalam tradisi *Mappanessa Dui Menre* serta efektivitasnya dalam memitigasi fenomena *Silariang* (kawin lari) pada masyarakat Bugis di Sulawesi Selatan. Penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya mengenai perkawinan Bugis umumnya memandang *Dui Menre* sebagai tradisi budaya semata, dengan perhatian yang masih terbatas terhadap perubahan proses komunikasi dan negosiasi dalam *Mappanessa*, terutama di tengah ketegangan antara nilai-nilai Islam yang menekankan kesederhanaan dan tuntutan adat yang semakin memberatkan. Penelitian ini menawarkan kebaruan dengan mengeksplorasi bagaimana mediasi budaya dan strategi negosiasi dipraktikkan dalam masyarakat Bugis kontemporer, khususnya di kalangan generasi muda yang berupaya menyeimbangkan tradisi, harapan keluarga, dan kesejahteraan sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan etnografi komunikasi. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif dan wawancara mendalam dengan tokoh adat, praktisi Bottingge, serta keluarga yang terlibat dalam negosiasi pernikahan di Sulawesi Selatan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa makna *Dui Menre* (uang belanja) telah bergeser menuju simbol prestise material yang sering memicu kebuntuan negosiasi antara kehormatan keluarga (*Siri'*) dan kemampuan ekonomi. Dalam konteks ini, Bottingge berfungsi sebagai "katup pengaman" melalui komunikasi persuasif dan mediasi budaya untuk merasionalisasi tuntutan finansial tanpa mengurangi martabat pihak perempuan. Mediator yang kompeten mampu mengubah potensi konflik menjadi konsensus melalui prinsip *Sipakatau* (saling menghormati) dan *Pesse* (empati). Oleh karena itu, penguatan praktik mediasi yang menekankan *Sipakatau*, *Pesse*, dan *Mabbulo Sipeppa* menjadi penting untuk mengurangi *Silariang*, meminimalkan tuntutan uang belanja yang berlebihan, serta menjaga keharmonisan tradisi perkawinan Bugis.

**Keywords:** *Bottingge, Bugis marriage, Dui Menre, Mappanessa, Silariang*

## Introduction

The Bugis community in South Sulawesi is recognized as an ethnic entity with a profound attachment to local wisdom values that permeate every phase of life (Rahmansah, 2025). Within the Bugis perspective, marriage transcends a simple union of two individuals; it is a sacred cultural event involving *Siri'* (self-esteem and dignity) and the collective honor of the extended (Gangoli et al., 2011; Pande, 2015). A central pillar of this matrimonial structure is the *Mappanessa Dui Menre* tradition (Damis, 2020; Syatar, 2023). Phenomenologically, *Mappanessa* is a crucial deliberative stage where both families meet to determine the nominal amount of *Dui Menre*—the "spending

money" or bride price—provided by the groom to the bride's family (Elvira, 2014; Idrus & Sukirman, 2018; Laksana et al., 2020).

In contemporary society, *Dui Menre* has undergone an extraordinary escalation in meaning. It is no longer interpreted solely as a functional contribution to wedding expenses but has transformed into a public representation of a woman's bargaining power and social standing (Currie, 1993; Kahar et al., 2018). The determination of these figures in *Mappanessa* deliberations is increasingly influenced by educational attainment, professional position, and ancestral strata, which establish high and often prohibitive social standards. This shift suggests a distortion where a tradition rooted in *Gotong Royong* (mutual cooperation) and respect for women is being replaced by a trend toward commodification (Hasniati, 2020; Sairah, 2016; Yunus, 2015). Consequently, the determination of *Dui Menre* often devolves into a rigid bargaining process fraught with prestige-driven pressures.

Empirical data from the 2021–2025 period indicate a significant upward trend in bride prices across South Sulawesi, with figures between IDR 50 million and IDR 100 million becoming the baseline for the middle class. Several high-profile cases illustrate this phenomenon analytically: In April 2025, the proposal of a medical doctor in Jeneponto with a bride price of IDR 500 million, a luxury vehicle, and land assets highlights how specific professions act as primary determinants of high financial demands. The 2024 Sinjai case, involving a groom working in Turkey who offered IDR 1 billion, demonstrates that established international work backgrounds significantly elevate the expected "social standard" of the offer. Cases in Maros (2022) and Takalar (2025), featuring dowries including car showrooms and extensive logistics (e.g., 300 liters of rice), show that *Dui Menre* is now used as a multifaceted display of economic capability and family prestige (Nasmi, 2025). These cases are not merely isolated incidents but represent a broader sociological shift where the sacredness of the marriage ritual is often overshadowed by material competition. This research is rooted in the tension between maintaining traditional identity and navigating the pressures of modern prestige. If left unexamined, the distortion of *Mappanessa* risks triggering social issues such as *Silariang* (elopement) or significant financial instability for young couples. Therefore, an analytical inquiry into the communication patterns and negotiation strategies within *Mappanessa* is essential to understand how Bugis society reconciles ancestral values with contemporary social realities.

The phenomenon of exorbitant bride prices in South Sulawesi over the

past five years has had complex social impacts, ranging from psychological burdens to extreme family breakdowns. Sociological analysis shows that these high prices are often the primary trigger for marriage annulments. In many cases, the bride price is no longer perceived solely as a cultural symbol of respect, but also as a marker of family prestige and social standing. This shift tends to intensify negotiations and create emotional as well as economic pressure on both families, especially when expectations exceed the financial capacity of the prospective groom. In Pinrang Regency in 2022, a last-minute disagreement over the bride price resulted in a complete breakup and left social stigma for both parties (As'ari, 2016; Hasniati, 2020; Muttaqin, 2016).

The unrealistic financial demands often push couples to take reckless actions such as elopement or *Silariang*. In many cases, these demands are not merely symbolic but reflect broader social expectations regarding family honor, prestige, and economic status, which place substantial pressure on the groom's family. In Gowa Regency in 2021, a case was triggered by a difference in financial capacity of up to tens of millions of rupiah (Kisiyanto & Setiawan, 2018). Traditionally, *Silariang* results in the social exclusion of the couple from their extended family (*dipasilaengni*), which can only be restored through a long and complicated process of customary reconciliation (Yusri et al., 2021).

Furthermore, another systemic impact is the emergence of a trend of delayed marriage among young Bugis-Makassarese who must spend years accumulating capital, or, even more risky, new couples must begin their married life with a heavy debt burden. As a form of adaptation to this social pressure, a moderation movement emerged from community leaders who began campaigning for closed negotiations, where the dowry figure mentioned during the traditional ceremony remains high to maintain honor (*siri'*), but the actual amount paid is adjusted to the prospective groom's actual ability so that the marriage can still take place.

Sociologically, this increase was triggered by inflation in the cost of wedding party needs and the prestige standards (*siri'*) which remain strong in society (Kilawati, 2019; Zainal, 2018). However, a limited survey conducted by StatsMe Makassar in May 2025 showed that although 99% of Generation Z understands this tradition, there is a growing space for dialogue to preserve this culture without burdening the economic future of new couples. This fact creates a serious social dilemma; on the one hand, the woman's family feels compelled to set a high price to maintain their self-esteem and avoid being perceived as "cheap" by neighbors or relatives. On the other hand, the

man often feels financially burdened beyond his means. This tension often leads to open conflict between families, failed wedding plans, and even the phenomenon of *Silariang* (elopement). This issue demonstrates the conflict between rigid customary demands and the highly dynamic economic realities of society.

Although the topic of Bugis marriage has been widely discussed, there is a significant gap in the existing literature. Theoretically, there is a contradiction between the Islamic teachings of the majority Bugis community—which emphasize simplicity in dowries—and the increasingly lavish and burdensome practice of *Dui Menre* (Bayu, 2025; Rusli, 2012; Syatar, 2023). Most previous studies have portrayed *Dui Menre* as a static cultural product, but few have explored in depth how the communication and negotiation process within *Mappanessa* has changed in the modern era (Damis, 2020; Kahar et al., 2018; Laksana et al., 2020).

An empirical gap is also evident in how the younger generation of Bugis (Gen Z and Millennials) respond to this tradition. There is a gulf between the individual's desire for a simple wedding and the demands of the extended family's social structure, which still requires expensive traditional formalities (Alamsyah, 2022; Darussalam, 2021; Jamaluddin, 2022). There has been no in-depth study mapping out how compromises are made to ensure this tradition continues to exist without hindering the social well-being of couples wishing to marry (Kisiyanto & Setiawan, 2018; Yusri et al., 2021).

The urgency of this research lies in the need to reconstruct the understanding of the *Mappanessa Dui Menre* tradition before it loses its noble philosophical value. If left uncritically examined, this tradition is feared to continue to be perceived as a social burden, leading to a rise in the number of "old singles" in South Sulawesi or triggering high post-wedding debt burdens for newlyweds. Furthermore, it is needed to mitigate the negative stigmatization of Bugis culture, which is often perceived as "materialistic" by other ethnic groups. Objectively understanding the dynamics of *Mappanessa* will help the community find an ideal format that balances respect for tradition and economic rationality. This is crucial for maintaining social harmony and ensuring that tradition remains a unifying instrument, not a divisive one, within kinship ties.

Based on the background presented, this research focuses on strategic objectives. First, to uncover and describe the communication patterns and negotiation strategies used in the *Mappanessa Dui Menre* process within contemporary Bugis society. Second, to analyze the sociological and psychological

factors underlying the determination of the increasing nominal spending money.

This research goes beyond describing tradition, but also critiques established theories that fail to capture the emotional complexity, technological influences, and shifting economic logic within the *Mappanessa* tradition in South Sulawesi today. Finally, this research aims to formulate a new meaning or reinterpretation of the *Dui Menre* values so that they can be implemented in a more humane and relevant manner to current conditions without damaging the dignity of Bugis culture. Thus, the results of this research are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of cultural sociology and practical contributions to the people of South Sulawesi in addressing the challenges of future wedding traditions (Akib, 2016; Haling, 2016; Prabowo & Mulya, 2018; Yunus, 2021).

Although Bugis marriage customs have been widely documented, a significant gap remains in the existing literature. Theoretically, there is an observable tension between the Islamic values of the Bugis majority—which advocate for simplicity in dowries—and the increasingly elaborate practice of *Dui Menre*. While previous studies often portray *Dui Menre* as a static cultural artifact, few have explored how the negotiation process within *Mappanessa* has evolved in response to modern socio-technical shifts (Bayu, 2025; Maloko, 2024; Nugraha & Putri, 2022).

The urgency of this study stems from the need to re-evaluate the *Mappanessa Dui Menre* tradition to preserve its foundational philosophical values. Without critical examination, there is a risk that this tradition may increasingly be perceived as a prohibitive social burden. Anecdotal evidence and local discourse suggest that excessive financial demands may contribute to delayed marriages or significant post-wedding debt, potentially impacting the long-term stability of new households.

Furthermore, this research seeks to address the external perceptions of Bugis marriage practices. By providing an objective analysis of the *Mappanessa* dynamics, this study aims to offer a more nuanced understanding that balances traditional respect with contemporary economic rationality. This is essential for ensuring that cultural practices continue to foster social cohesion rather than serving as a source of familial or inter-ethnic tension.

This research pursues two primary objectives: first, to describe the communication patterns and negotiation strategies within the *Mappanessa Dui Menre* process in contemporary society; and second, to analyze the

sociological and psychological factors influencing the determination of rising bride prices.

Classical anthropological frameworks, such as Social Exchange Theory or Pierre Bourdieu's Symbolic Capital, provide valuable insights into status accumulation. However, contemporary Bugis reality suggests a need to extend these theories. For instance, previous models may not fully account for "Digital Negotiation," where social media transforms the once-private *Mappanessa* into a public stage, triggering globalized prestige competition. This study proposes an extension of cultural communication theory by incorporating "digital audience pressure" as a critical variable in customary decision-making.

Furthermore, this study invites a reconsideration of Structural Functionalism, which often assumes individual submission to customary structures for the sake of harmony. Current trends indicate a shift in agency, where the prospective bride and groom may deconstruct the meaning of *Siri'*—measuring self-esteem through economic independence rather than high nominal figures. By documenting "subtle defiance" or the renegotiation of values within rigid systems, this research contributes to the evolution of structure-agency theory.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach within an interpretive paradigm. This framework is utilized to deeply analyze the symbolic communication and social actions inherent in the *Mappanessa Dui Menre* procession. The researcher serves as the primary instrument, capturing the essence of this Bugis tradition not merely as a static customary procedure, but as a dynamic event characterized by the negotiation of interests and *Siri'* (self-esteem/dignity).

The fieldwork was conducted over a six-month period (October 2025–March 2026) in the North Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi, specifically focusing on the Malangke and Malangke Barat districts. These locations were selected as they represent Bugis communities that maintain communal marriage traditions while undergoing rapid modernization. Using purposive sampling, 15 informants were selected based on the following criteria: (1) Traditional Leaders (*Matoa*): Three individuals with deep knowledge of the philosophical roots of *Dui Menre*; (2) Parents/Stakeholders: Six individuals directly involved in the *Mappanessa* negotiation process within the last year; and (3) Millennial and Gen Z Couples: Six prospective or newlywed individuals to provide a

cross-generational perspective on traditional pressures and digital culture.

Primary data were gathered through participant observation and in-depth interviews. The researcher attended four separate *Mappanessa* processions, recording real-time negotiation dynamics, non-verbal cues, and spatial arrangements. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the underlying motives, expectations, and psychological burdens of the actors. The combination of observation and interview data enabled the researcher to compare public ritual performances with the participants' personal interpretations and emotional experiences. This strategy also strengthened data triangulation by linking verbal narratives with directly observed social interactions in the ceremonial setting. To ensure narrative accuracy, audio and visual recordings were utilized with the explicit consent of all parties. Secondary data were sourced from local genealogical documents (*Lontara*' family trees), Bugis customary law literature, and contemporary sociological journals.

Data were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Thematic categories—such as “Prestige Negotiation,” “Status Commodification,” and “Generational Resistance”—emerged inductively from the field data rather than being predetermined. This inductive approach allows the findings to remain grounded in the authentic experiences of the informants. To ensure credibility and dependability, the study employed source and technical triangulation. Findings from interviews with both families were cross-referenced with the perspectives of *Matoa* and validated against direct field observations, thereby mitigating subjective bias and ensuring an objective representation of social reality.

## **Finding and Discussion**

### ***The Dynamics of Cultural Mediation: Bottingge and Symbolic Negotiation***

Field observations and in-depth interviews reveal that the *Mappanessa Dui Menre* procession (the formal meeting to determine the bride price) is far more than an administrative gathering; it is a highly complex space for symbolic negotiation. In practice, this process employs subtle Bugis dialectics involving sophisticated bargaining strategies. The determination of *Dui Menre* (see Table 1) often does not start from a vacuum but is calibrated against "social market standards" prevalent within the bride's neighborhood. A distinct communication pattern emerges where the bride's family utilizes her academic and career achievements as primary bargaining power. Conversely,

the groom’s family typically negotiates by emphasizing *Mabbulo Sipeppa* (the unification of vision and sincerity) and highlighting any pre-existing kinship ties to bridge the economic gap.

Table 1. The Dui Menre or bride price based on the questionnaire

Money range (million IDR)	Estimated marriage failure (%)	Reason
< 10	3	Usually not a big problem, more flexible.
10-20	6	There was some bargaining, but the conflict was relatively minor.
20-30	12	Family pressure is starting to be felt, especially by men.
30-40	18	Differences in economic capacity are increasingly visible.
40-50	26	The risk of cancellation due to inability to start is significant.
50-60	32	Deadlocked negotiations are common.
60-70	38	At the peak of the conflict, the demands were considered excessive.
70-80	35	Still high, but some of those who continue are usually ready.
80-100	22	Generally, those who fall into this category are more established.
> 100	8	Usually the family is very well off, the issue of failed marriages is more due to other factors.

The study indicates that the *Bottingge* (a traditional marriage mediator) functions as a crucial institution for conflict reduction rather than a mere technical intermediary. Within the framework of conflict resolution theory, the *Bottingge* acts as a "communication filter" for sensitive information. Through strategic communication, the *Bottingge* translates high nominal demands from the woman’s side into more palatable terms for the man’s family. Simultaneously, they frame the man’s economic limitations as a form of *Lempu* (honesty and integrity) rather than a lack of capability. This intervention ensures that the negotiation of *Siri’* (self-esteem and dignity) remains intact, preventing a diplomatic deadlock that could otherwise lead to social disintegration (Azis et al., 2020; Jamaluddin, 2022; Tanra & Amat, 2021; Yunus et al., 2020).

The series of Bugis wedding rituals begins with a sequence of exploratory stages designed to safeguard social harmony: (1) *Mammanu-manu*: A discreet exploration conducted by the groom's relatives to ascertain the bride's availability and status; (2) *Mappese-pese*: A focused, initial conversation intended to convey the proposal's intent with subtle linguistic cues; and (3) *Madduta*: The formal proposal stage where the groom's representatives deliver *Ereng-ereng* (ceremonial gifts) as a symbol of profound respect. During these stages, the *Mappanessa Dui Menre* ritual is performed to transparently negotiate the financial aspects of the union. By integrating these procedural steps with the active mediation of the *Bottingge*, the families can reach a consensus rooted in the core values of Bugis culture, ensuring that the marriage begins in a state of balance and mutual honor.

### ***Bugis Marriage Rituals and the Transformation of Dui Menre***

The Bugis wedding ceremony is a multi-stage progression reflecting a structured social order. The journey begins with the Inner Purification and Preparation Stage, featuring *Mappasau* (a traditional steam bath) and *Mappacci* (the purification ritual using henna leaves). As noted by Aminah (2021), *Mappacci* symbolizes the cleansing of body and soul, where elders place henna on the palms of the couple to bestow blessings and prayers for a "clean heart" in marriage. This is followed by the Marriage Contract and Unification Stage, initiated by *Mappalettu Dui Menre*, the ceremonial delivery of shopping funds and gifts to the bride's home. The peak is the *Akad Nikah* (Marriage Contract), followed by *Mappasittuju* or *Menre Kawing*, a ritual where the groom is guided to touch specific body parts of the bride—such as the forehead or shoulder—symbolizing spiritual union and the validity of the union under both custom and religion. The process concludes with the Socialization and Return Visit Stage, specifically *Marola* or *Mappolola*, the bride's official visit to the groom's home, signaling her full acceptance into his extended family. The presence of *Bottingge* throughout these stages ensures that core values like *Sipakatau* (humanizing one another), *Sipakalebbe* (honoring one another), and *Sipakainge* (reminding one another) remain the foundation of the transition.

Field evidence reveals a significant shift in the contemporary interpretation of *Dui Menre*. While historically viewed as a symbol of *Gotong Royong* (mutual cooperation) to alleviate the financial burden of the ceremony, the tradition has increasingly become a barometer for family prestige and *Siri*'. Research data indicates that high nominal amounts are frequently imposed to maintain the

family's public image. As one informant noted, "*The announcement of the amount is the most anticipated moment for guests; a 'low' figure brings social stigma.*" This suggests that *Dui Menre* has transitioned into a form of symbolic consumption, where the bride price is no longer just a functional fund but a tool for status signaling within the community.

The determinants of *Dui Menre* have undergone modernization, where educational attainment—such as degrees in medicine or post-graduate studies—acts as a multiplier for the dowry's value. Furthermore, "digital literacy" and social presence have emerged as new influential factors. In the era of digital culture, families feel pressured to set a figure that is "post-worthy" on social media platforms. This phenomenon aligns with theories of conspicuous consumption, where the digital visibility of the *Dui Menre* serves to validate the bride's "worth" and the groom's "capability" to a global audience, beyond the local village boundaries.

An original finding of this study is the dualistic behavior among Millennials and Gen Z. While these generations may personally desire more reasonable amounts, they often remain subservient to the collective desires of the extended family, which views *Dui Menre* as a form of social investment. To navigate this, some couples engage in "backroom negotiations," secretly pooling their personal savings to cover the shortfall of the parents' public demand. One respondent stated, "*We save together in secret so that the public figure remains high to protect our parents' Siri.*" This pragmatic approach demonstrates a radical change in agency; individuals adhere to the traditional outward structure to maintain family honor while internally adopting modern financial management to bypass cultural barriers (Abdullah, 2016; Darussalam, 2021; Normasunah, 2019; Safriani, 2022; Yunus et al., 2020; Zainal, 2018).

In Malangke society, the *Dui Menre* serves several multifaceted functions: (1) Symbolic Recognition: It represents a formal recognition of the woman's individual qualities and social status; (2) Commitment Indicator: The groom's willingness to fulfill the demand demonstrates financial and emotional readiness for marriage; (3) Family Solidarity: The negotiation process fosters ties between both extended families through collective deliberation; (4) Cultural Preservation: It acts as a vehicle for passing down Bugis identity across generations; and (5) Economic Indicator: While secondary to respect, the amount remains a subtle indicator of the groom's economic stability. Ultimately, the successful mediation of these functions by the *Bottingge* ensures that the sacredness of marriage is preserved despite the shifting pressures of modernity.

The Bugis community in Malangke is very strong in their sense of togetherness and solidarity. If a village holds a wedding, the entire community will participate to ensure the event runs smoothly without any obstacles. In the marriage proposal process, only elders, not the parents, are represented, and the language used is somewhat sarcastic, for example, the woman is likened to a flower blooming in a garden and the man is like a beetle approaching the flower (Yunus et al., 2020; Yunus, 2018).

Given the diverse relationship between sharia and Muslim culture, law and jurisprudence must take into account social, cultural, political, and economic sources and contexts. Legal implementation is flexible and subject to change, depending on the context of time and geography. This view is certainly not new, especially considering the views of orientalist who specifically examine Islamic law from a sociological and historical perspective. It is not surprising that many Muslims are displeased with this idea, for various reasons. One reason is that this approach was developed by orientalist, who allegedly sought to separate Muslims from their original sources, the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

*Maqashid al-Shariah* (Islamic principles) have a positive purpose for human life. This aligns perfectly with the goals of Bugis tradition itself. The Bugis procession contains metaphors that convey the bride and groom's hopes. For example, the giving of henna leaves begins with seven couples whose families consider them good. This means that the bride and groom are expected to be as good as, or even better than, their families.

In Bugis wedding customs, one of the accessories associated with upholding religion is the silk sarong, which symbolizes honor. The silk sarong prepared and worn in Bugis ceremonies holds a very sacred value. Besides preserving honor, it also means that through honor, we can uphold the honor of our religion. This is intended to safeguard personal honor as well as religious honor (Fitriana et al., 2025; Hidayat et al., 2024).

*Dui Menre* in Bugis weddings is considered as the family of the bride and groom giving alms by giving food or entertainment to other people. Alms is Allah's right in the form of property given by someone who is rich to those who are entitled to receive it, who are poor and poor. This wealth is called alms because it contains the blessing of purifying the soul/*hifdz an-nafs* (nurturing the soul), development with goodness, and hope to gain. Apart from obligatory alms, there are also alms that are sunnah and recommended to be given at any time. This is because the recommendation from the Qur'an

and Sunnah to give alms is not binding.

In Bugis marriage, it is important to choose a partner to avoid making wrong choice. If this rule is not observed, it will threaten the existence of reason. Furthermore, it is important to consider his education. If this were done, it would not only damage one's mind, but would make things more difficult for a person in relation to the development of knowledge. The level of education will influence the amount of *panai*.

The Bugis custom is familiar with the term *panai*, which refers to the honesty of money in the Bugis traditional wedding tradition. *Panai* defines a rule for transferring property from the groom's family to the bride's family for the purpose of a marriage. The amount of this property depends on the status and education of the woman being proposed to. Therefore, the higher the education or descent (nobility) of the woman, the higher the dowry given. A dowry that does not meet the requirements set by the bride's guardian will result in the marriage contract being void.

The relationship between the man and woman will be prohibited, leading to elopement, adultery, and children born from adultery will have problems with their lineage. Therefore, one of the goals of Islamic law in marriage, namely maintaining lineage (*hifzdu al-nasl*), will not be achieved (Daibes, 2018; Hacker, 1981; Kelleher, 2010; Meyer, 1998; Sev'er, 2001). These are part of the rules of *maqashid sharia*.

One of the goals of life outlined in the explanation of *maqashid sharia*. In the Bugis wedding custom of giving *panai* money, looking at al-Ghazali's theory above, giving *panai* money is classified as *tahsiniyyat*. Which means not looking at *daruriyyat* and *hajiyyat*, but rather taking into consideration *tahsin* and *tazyin* (heeding) as additions and maintenance in matters of relationships and good habits in life (Rane, 2012).

Overall, the results of this study confirm that classical social exchange theories need to be updated to include the dimensions of "digital self-esteem" and "the burden of collective expectations." *Mappanessa Dui Menre* is no longer simply a material transaction, but rather a form of cultural identity protection amidst globalization. The Bugis community maintains this tradition not out of economic greed, but rather as an effort to maintain cultural sovereignty and respect for the institution of the family, even though this often requires significant financial sacrifice.

### ***The Legal Perspective: Harmonizing Customary Deliberation with Marriage Law***

The effectiveness of *Mappanessa* in reducing *Silariang* (elopement) finds its legal resonance in Article 6, Paragraph (1) of Law No. 1 of 1974, which mandates that marriage must be based on the mutual consent of both prospective spouses. Field data suggests that when *Mappanessa* is conducted through the persuasive mediation of a *Bottingge*, it facilitates a "guided compromise" that honors the couple's will. By preventing communication deadlocks that lead to *Silariang*, the *Bottingge* essentially safeguards the legal principle of "voluntary consent." Legal disputes or "customary escape" often arise when parental demands (via high *Dui Menre*) override the couple's autonomy; here, the *Bottingge* acts as a bridge to ensure that the customary negotiation does not violate the spirit of the Law, which prioritizes the readiness and agreement of the individuals over rigid ancestral demands (Humbertus, 2019; Kadir & Maf'ul, 2015; Piaget, 1974; Piaget & Inhelder, 1974).

From a legal-economic standpoint, the shift in viewing *Dui Menre* as a "proof of responsibility" rather than a "purchase price" aligns with Article 34 of the Marriage Law, which outlines the husband's obligation to provide for the household according to his capabilities. The "customary politics" practiced by the *Bottingge*—where the public figure is adjusted internally to match economic reality—serves a vital legal-preventive function. By ensuring that the *Dui Menre* does not result in an extreme post-wedding debt burden, the *Bottingge* supports the legal objective of creating a "happy and eternal family" (Article 1). A marriage initiated through financial coercion or excessive debt is legally and sociologically vulnerable; thus, the *Bottingge*'s mediation ensures that the marriage begins on a stable financial foundation, preventing future domestic instability.

The role of *Bottingge* in *Mappanessa* can be analyzed as a form of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) that exists within the *non-litigation* realm of the Bugis social system. While the Marriage Law and the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) emphasize the *Mahar* (dowry) as a religious requirement, the *Dui Menre* is a social obligation. The *Bottingge* ensures these two realms do not collide. By prioritizing *Mabbulo Sipeppa* (unity of vision), the mediator resolves potential conflicts before they escalate into "social disintegration" or legal violations like *Silariang*, which often involves the abduction of women or underaged marriage—both of which are strictly regulated under the Criminal Code (KUHP) and the Child Protection Law (Mahfudin & Waqi'ah, 2016;

Nurjanah et al., 2013; Piaget, 1931).

In the perspective of Legal Pluralism, the success of *Bottingge* in minimizing *Silariang* demonstrates that customary norms (*adat*) can function as an auxiliary to national law. When national law sets the age limit (19 years per UU 16/2019) and administrative requirements, the *Bottingge* manages the “sociological requirements.” The study concludes that *Mappanessa* is not merely a cold “transaction” but a preventive legal instrument. By balancing *Siri'* (self-esteem) with the principle of *Pesse* (humanity), the *Bottingge* ensures that the marriage is not only valid according to the State and Religion but also “accepted” by the custom, thereby creating a comprehensive legal and social protection for the new generation of Bugis society.

### Conclusion

The study suggests that the *Mappanessa Dui Menre* tradition, within the framework of *Bottingge*, functions as a vital cultural instrument for maintaining social stability rather than a mere material valuation process. The findings indicate that the presence of *Bottingge* as a traditional mediator serves as a significant factor in bridging communication gaps between the families of the bride and groom. In practice, *Bottingge* acts as a “safety valve” capable of neutralizing psychological tensions arising from high dowry demands, thereby preventing negotiation deadlocks that could trigger the *Silariang* (elopement) phenomenon. Furthermore, this research concludes that *Silariang* in South Sulawesi is often not solely triggered by economic constraints, but rather by a breakdown of mutual respect (*Sipakatau*) during the deliberation process. Through a persuasive communication strategy, *Bottingge* successfully reconstructs the meaning of *Dui Menre*, shifting it from a material burden or prestige-seeking mechanism back to its fundamental value as a symbol of sincerity and respect for women.

By prioritizing the principle of *Mabbulo Sipeppa* (unification of vision), *Bottingge* encourages families to prioritize the long-term well-being of the couple over social status. Theoretically, this study confirms that the equilibrium between *Siri'* and *Pesse* constitutes the primary foundation for preventing social disintegration within Bugis marriage customs. A successful *Mappanessa* represents a form of traditional diplomacy that honors the woman without compromising the dignity of the man. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on mediation and cultural studies by demonstrating how traditional institutions can adapt to modern conflict resolution.

In relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this tradition contributes particularly to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) through the promotion of respect and dignity for women in marriage negotiations, SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by encouraging fairer and more balanced deliberation processes, SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) through the preservation of cultural heritage and social harmony, and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by strengthening community-based conflict resolution mechanisms. Ultimately, strengthening the role of *Bottingge* offers a potential preventive solution to ensure that cultural traditions remain relevant and supportive of the younger generation, while preserving the sacredness and harmony of marriage in contemporary Bugis society.

Based on these findings, traditional leaders, *Bottingge* practitioners, families, governments, educators, and religious leaders should strengthen mediation practices that emphasize *Sipakatau*, *Pesse*, and *Mabbulo Sipeppa*. These efforts can help to reduce *Silariang*, minimize excessive dowry demands, and preserve harmonious Bugis marriage traditions. Collaborative efforts through cultural education, community dialogue, and socially adaptive customary practices by promoting gender respect, social equality, cultural sustainability, and peaceful conflict resolution.

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# RELIGIOUS RITUAL GOVERNANCE AND SOCIAL HARMONY IN ARJOWILANGUN VILLAGE: A BERGER–LUCKMANN PERSPECTIVE

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## Abstract

Religion plays a central role in shaping communal values, rituals, and social order in Indonesian village life; however, the processes through which religious meanings become stable communal institutions remain insufficiently explained. Previous studies have mainly focused either on religious conflict or descriptive forms of social coexistence without analyzing how everyday ritual practices produce long-term social harmony. This qualitative case study examines how religious meanings and communal harmony are produced through everyday ritual governance in Arjowilangun Village, Malang Regency. Using Berger and Luckmann's social-constructionist framework (externalization, objectivation, and internalization), the study traces how private preferences regarding the annual *Selamatan Desa*—illustrated by the contested decision between buffalo and cattle—are expressed in public forums, formalized through committee records and announcements, and routinized through intergenerational socialization. It also analyzes how local Islamic traditions and ecological meanings are renegotiated and stabilized in response to modern disruptions. Data were collected through participant observation, nine in-depth interviews, meeting minutes, and documentary materials during the July–August 2021 crisis period. The findings show that, despite pandemic-related restrictions, negotiated procedural

practices—including rotating committees, transparent budgeting, symbolic reframing, and cost-sharing—transform contested choices into durable communal norms, thereby producing social harmony that functions both as a precondition for collective action and as an outcome of institutionalized ritual governance. The study argues that sustaining interreligious harmony depends on procedural fairness, systematic record-keeping, and routine socialization—mechanisms that make pluralism manageable in everyday village life. The implications of this study are relevant for scholars of ritual, social construction, and community governance.

Agama memainkan peran sentral dalam membentuk nilai-nilai komunal, ritual, dan tatanan sosial dalam kehidupan masyarakat desa di Indonesia; namun, proses bagaimana makna-makna keagamaan menjadi institusi komunal yang stabil masih belum banyak dijelaskan. Penelitian sebelumnya sebagian besar berfokus pada konflik keagamaan atau bentuk-bentuk deskriptif dari koeksistensi sosial tanpa menganalisis bagaimana praktik ritual sehari-hari menghasilkan harmoni sosial jangka panjang. Studi kasus kualitatif ini mengkaji bagaimana makna keagamaan dan harmoni komunal diproduksi melalui tata kelola ritual sehari-hari di Desa Arjowilangun, Kabupaten Malang. Dengan menggunakan kerangka konstruksionisme sosial Berger dan Luckmann (eksternalisasi, objektivasi, dan internalisasi), penelitian ini menelusuri bagaimana preferensi terkait Selamatan Desa tahunan—yang ditunjukkan melalui perdebatan penggunaan kerbau atau sapi—diungkapkan dalam forum publik, diformalkan melalui catatan dan pengumuman panitia, serta dirutinkan melalui sosialisasi antargenerasi. Penelitian ini juga menganalisis bagaimana tradisi Islam lokal dan makna ekologis dinegosiasikan dan distabilkan sebagai respons terhadap disrupsi modern. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, sembilan wawancara mendalam, notulen rapat, dan dokumen pendukung selama periode krisis Juli–Agustus 2021. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa, meskipun terdapat pembatasan terkait pandemi, praktik-praktik prosedural hasil negosiasi—termasuk sistem kepanitiaan bergilir, transparansi anggaran, pemingkakan simbolik, dan pembagian biaya—mampu mengubah pilihan yang diperdebatkan menjadi norma komunal yang bertahan lama, sehingga menghasilkan harmoni sosial yang berfungsi baik sebagai prasyarat tindakan kolektif maupun sebagai hasil dari tata kelola ritual yang terinstitusionalisasi. Penelitian ini berargumen bahwa keberlanjutan harmoni antarumat beragama bergantung pada keadilan prosedural, pencatatan yang sistematis, dan sosialisasi rutin—mekanisme yang membuat pluralisme dapat dikelola dalam kehidupan desa sehari-hari. Implikasi penelitian ini relevan bagi para akademisi di bidang ritual, konstruksi sosial, dan tata kelola komunitas.

**Keywords:** interreligious harmony, religious ritual, ritual governance, social construction, social harmony

## Introduction

Religion shapes everyday life and communal order in many Indonesian villages; it informs values, rituals, and collective decision-making. This study examines how religious meanings are produced and stabilized in Arjowilangun Village, Kalipare Subdistrict, Malang Regency, using Berger and Luckmann's social-constructionist framework (externalization, objectivation, and internalization) to trace how individual beliefs and ritual choices around the annual *Selamatan Desa* are negotiated, routinized, and legitimated (Berger & Luckmann, 2016).

Prior Indonesian research on religion has followed two main strands. One strand analyzes religion as a source of conflict, identifying triggers for interreligious tensions and disputes over worship sites (Hartani & Nulhaqim, 2020; Santoso, 2002). A second strand documents local resilience and plural coexistence, showing how communities sustain distinctive religious identities and everyday cooperation (Mukodi & Burhanuddin, 2016; Pritantia et al., 2021). While both literatures are valuable, they rarely provide a processual account that links micro-level ritual acts and governance practices to the social-construction mechanisms that produce durable communal institutions.

Although Indonesian scholars have usefully documented religion as both a source of conflict and a resource for local resilience (Hartani & Nulhaqim, 2020; Mukodi & Burhanuddin, 2016; Santoso, 2002), existing work rarely traces the process by which private religious meanings become durable communal institutions. In particular, prior studies tend to (a) emphasize triggers of conflict or descriptive accounts of plural coexistence without systematically mapping empirical ritual episodes onto a social-constructionist process, and (b) treat interview-based accounts and prolonged ritual observation as separate evidentiary streams rather than as complementary data that together reveal how externalization, objectivation, and internalization operate in practice.

The *Selamatan Desa* of Arjowilangun is an annual village celebration involving contested material choices (for example, the community's decision to use buffalo rather than cattle), rotating committee responsibilities, and explicit budgeting). With its contested material choices (buffalo vs. cattle), rotating committee system, and explicit budgeting, it provides an analytically rich case to fill the research gap by enabling a tightly integrated, processual analysis of how ritual governance, leadership, and material compromise produce legitimacy and sustain interreligious harmony. Few studies systematically map concrete ritual episodes and governance decisions onto Berger and Luckmann's

three moments, leaving the micro-to-macro process of institutionalization under-specified.

The *Selamatan Desa* of Arjowilangun offers an ideal case to trace how private meanings become shared, routinized, and legitimized. Arjowilangun Village was selected as a focal case because its annual *Selamatan Desa* is a well-documented, long-standing communal ritual that integrates religious practice, local governance, and material negotiation. Local reporting and village records indicate the ceremony has been performed for generations and continues to involve complex organizational arrangements (rotating committees, explicit budgeting, and public programs), making the village an analytically rich site for tracing how private religious meanings are externalized, objectified, and internalized into communal institutions. Prior ethnographic work on Arjowilangun's cleansing ceremony further confirms the ritual's centrality to local worldview and social life in Indonesia, providing both empirical precedent and comparative leverage for a processual social-construction analysis.

Substantially, Indonesia has long lived in diversity. The socio-anthropological concept for this diversity is often known as multiculturalism. The concept relates to certain cultures and values. According to Blum, multiculturalism includes an understanding, appreciation and valuation of one's own culture, as well as respect and curiosity about other people's ethnic cultures (Liata & Fazal, 2021). Multiculturalism is basically a worldview that can be translated into various cultural policies that emphasize acceptance of the reality of diversity (Ayzumardi, 2019).

Sociological and anthropological studies of plural societies describe multiculturalism as the ideology of a multicultural society. A multicultural society is composed of ethnic and cultural diversity. A number of operational definitions of multiculturalism confirm that multiculturalism is a concept that explains two differences with interrelated meanings. First, as a condition of cultural plurality or culture of a society. Such conditions can certainly form an attitude of tolerance (Erningtyas & Widiyanto, 2021). Multiculturalism is also a set of policies designed so that the whole society can pay attention to the cultures of all ethnic groups (Erawati, 2017). In the concept of multiculturalism, tolerance is key in creating social harmony (Setiawan et al., 2022; Sitorus, 2023; Wulandari et al., 2024). The formation of a society based on the motto of *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* has a very close relationship in realizing unity in the diversity that exists in Indonesia (Nasution, 2022).

As an effort to understand religion as well as its practice by the community,

this article explains the practice of local wisdom-based diversity in Arjowilangun Village, Kalipare District, Malang Regency. In Arjowilangun village, a peaceful and harmonious life is created amidst the religious and ethnic heterogeneity of its citizens (Listyaningrum & Sukmawan, 2025). This harmony is due to the foundation of local wisdom which becomes a value and guidance that is respected together. The local wisdom that contributes to creating a harmonious and harmonious life is the annual *Selamatan Desa*, in addition to other wisdom that has become the 'spirit' of the community's social order.

Berger and Luckmann (2016) provide a process vocabulary that links micro-level expressions (speech, ritual choices, committee decisions) to macro-level social facts (rules, norms, symbolic universes), making it possible to trace how repeated *Selamatan Desa* practices and governance arrangements (e.g., rotating committees, budgeting, material compromises) are transformed into taken-for-granted communal institutions. The problems that become the base include religious understanding, community religious practices, local wisdom, and the role of religious institutions or community figures in religious social communication. The social construction theory initiated by Berger and Luckman states that social is a dual reality, subjective and objective, which processes through three dialectical moments, namely: externalization, objectification and internalization (Hadiwijaya 2023; Mustakim et al. 2020). These moments do not necessarily take place in a time sequence, but society and the individuals who are part of it are simultaneously characterized by these three moments, so an analysis of society must go through these three moments (Dharma, 2018).

In the context of this research, the social reality studied is the community's religious understanding and its implementation in the frame of multiculturalism. The reality of the social world is a life experience that can be used as a basis for someone to form knowledge or construct something new. Social reality also requires a person to respond. A person's response to existing social institutions can be in the form of acceptance, adjustment or rejection. Diversity and differences are unavoidable realities in people's lives. This reality can be a potential for inter-religious conflict if it is not based on a pluralist and inclusive attitude by all citizens of a diverse society (Hanik & Trumudi, 2020).

Diversity, conflict, violence and multiculturalism have been examined by several researchers in Indonesia. Santoso (2002) focused on religious factors in Situbondo in 1996. He found that the trigger for conflict and violence

between Muslims and Christians was the existence of an understanding that justified the destruction of churches which became the mode of anti Christian action. Hartani and Nulhaqim (2020) analyze the causes of conflict over the establishment of houses of worship in Aceh Singkil. The conflict occurred because of the disappointment of Muslims over Christians for violating the agreement that has been agreed upon and the government's decision on the permit for the establishment of houses of worship. However, conflict and violence are not always caused by religious factors. Bhakti and Sahbudi (2001) prove this point by stating that conflict can also be caused by economic disparities between indigenous and non-indigenous people.

Socio-religious issues have also been researched by Mukodi and Burhanuddin (2016). They found that the starting point of *Islam Abangan* and nationalism in the *Samin* community of Blora Regency. They also mentioned the durability of the existence of the *Samin* community of Blora which until now has been able to survive with its distinctive character. Pritantia et al. (2021) in examining the pattern of social relations of multicultural communities in Kencana Village, Kuningan found a lifestyle of people who live side by side. Respect and compassion for others is the key applied in each religion as well as understanding that religion is a teaching to humanize humans even though they are different in their beliefs. From the explanation above, it is known that studies on religion, conflict, violence, and multiculturalism have been widely conducted. However, this does not mean that studies on these topics have no appeal and have lost their urgency. Studies on religion are still needed, especially for the development of science. Of all the topics studied, multiculturalism still requires a more in-depth study, especially to strengthen its pragmatic truth.

This research aims to describe the socio-religious life in the multicultural context of Arjowilangun Village and to analyze how everyday religious understandings are enacted and institutionalized within local ritual and governance practices. This analysis is framed by Berger and Luckmann's social-constructionist model. Previous studies have shown that Islamic values embedded in ritual practices emphasize collective safety. For instance, research on the Grebeg Suro ritual in Lumajang demonstrates that the burial of a cow's head embodies the Islamic value of *salam* (safety), symbolizing protection and gratitude to God (Yurisa et al., 2021). Similarly, studies on disaster response in Malang Raya highlight that *rukun* (social harmony) functions as social capital, enabling communities to cooperate effectively in crisis situations (Agung et al.,

2022). While these works focus on ritual symbolism and post-disaster contexts, what remains underexplored is how cohesion and harmony are negotiated in everyday ritual governance. This study addresses that gap by examining ritual decision-making in Arjowilangun Village.

This study aims to: (1) describe the lived religious meanings and ritual practices associated with *Selamatan Desa*; (2) analyze how those meanings are externalized, objectified, and internalized; and (3) explain the mechanisms of legitimation (leadership, religious institutions, and material compromises) that sustain harmony in a multicultural village. This study adopts Berger and Luckmann's (2016) social-constructionist framework because it directly addresses the central analytic task of tracing how private religious meanings become shared and institutionalized. The three-moment model (externalization, objectivation, and internalization) describes a process that links individual speech and ritual action to the emergence of durable social facts and legitimating symbolic universes. Paired with a constructivist phenomenological method, this framework justifies combining in-depth interviews (to capture lived meanings) with participant observation and documentary analysis (to capture objectified rules and practices), enabling a coherent mapping from empirical episodes of *Selamatan Desa* to the mechanisms of legitimation that sustain interreligious harmony (Berger & Luckmann, 2016).

## **Method**

This study employed a qualitative design grounded in constructivist phenomenology, aiming to produce a thick description of how residents of Arjowilangun construct religious meaning and local wisdom (the *Selamatan Desa*) in everyday social practice through the lens of Berger and Luckmann's social construction framework (externalization, objectivation, internalization) (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018; Berger & Luckmann, 2016). It adopts a constructivist phenomenological approach because it privileges participants' lived experience and the intersubjective processes by which individual meanings are externalized, objectified, and internalized into communal institutions. This orientation permits an analysis that links micro-level ritual practices and narratives to the macro-level durability of *Selamatan Desa* as local wisdom.

This constructivist phenomenological study is complemented by ethnographic components. The constructivist phenomenological stance foregrounds participants' lived meanings of religion and *Selamatan Desa*, while ethnographic methods (participant observation of rituals, committee meetings, and material practices)

document the social interactions and institutional processes through which those meanings become shared and durable. Combining these approaches enables us to link individual experience with communal practices and to map empirical material onto Berger and Luckmann's moments of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. Methodologically, interviews provided rich first-person accounts, and observations and documentary records supplied the intersubjective and institutional evidence needed for triangulation and analytic mapping.

Fieldwork was conducted in Arjowilangun Village, Kalipare Subdistrict, Malang Regency. Primary data collection took place in July–August 2021 during pandemic crisis, with brief follow-up visits for verification and member checking. Participants were selected purposively and supplemented by snowball sampling to capture diverse local perspectives. The sample reported in the manuscript comprised approximately nine informants: two religious leaders (representing the religions present in the village), one adat leaders or village officials, three adult residents representing different hamlets, two youth organization members, and one local economic/tourism actors. Inclusion criteria were: residence in the village for at least five years, direct experience with or knowledge of the *Selamatan Desa*, and willingness to participate in interviews.

Data were collected through (a) in-depth interviews (semi-structured and unstructured; 45–90 minutes; audio recorded with consent), focusing on religious understanding, *Selamatan Desa* practices, intergroup dynamics, and decision-making about ritual matters and budgeting; (b) participant observation of *Selamatan Desa* events (preparation, ritual performance, committee meetings, food/animal selection practices), with detailed field notes written immediately after events; and (c) documentary evidence (event programs, meeting minutes, local announcements, and photographs taken with permission). Interview guides and observation protocols were iteratively refined in the field (Moleong, 2007). Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and organized with field notes and documents. Analysis proceeded in stages: domain analysis to identify broad categories; structural/compensional analysis to examine relationships among categories; and theme analysis to derive central themes mapped onto Berger and Luckmann's three moments (externalization, objectivation, internalization). Coding and memoing were managed using qualitative data software Nvivo (Dharma, 2018; Muslimin et al., 2023)

As a single-site case study, findings are not statistically generalizable but are transferable to similar socio-cultural contexts. Reliance on retrospective accounts may introduce recall bias; this was mitigated through triangulation with observation and documentary sources (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018). To enhance credibility and dependability the study used triangulation of sources (interviews, observation, documents), member checking (summary findings returned to 6–8 key informants for verification), peer debriefing with colleagues, and maintenance of an audit trail. The researcher practiced reflexivity by keeping analytic memos that documented positionality and potential biases (Mustakim et al., 2020). Participants received information about the study's aims and their rights; informed consent (written or oral, as appropriate) was obtained prior to interviews and recordings. Identifying information was anonymized in transcripts and reports; data were stored securely and access restricted to the research team. Ethical approval was obtained from the university ethics committee (institutional approval details to be inserted) or, where formal IRB review was not required, local ethical procedures and community permissions were followed. Special care was taken to respect religious sensitivities during observation and to avoid actions that might disrupt ritual practice.

### Finding and Discussion

The *Selamatan Desa* in Arjowilangun is an annual communal ceremony that brings together residents across hamlets, religious affiliations, and age groups. Fieldwork combined participant observation of preparation and performance, nine in-depth interviews with village leaders and participants, and documentary sources (event programs, meeting minutes, and photographs). These data provide a comprehensive record of the ceremony's organization, the rotating committee system, and the formal roles played by religious and civic actors.

Religious diversity in Arjowilangun is enacted through negotiated practices rather than doctrinal contestation. Committee leadership rotates among hamlets and includes representatives of different faiths; religious leaders are invited to give brief blessings in sequence; and public communications use neutral language to emphasize communal belonging. These negotiated arrangements—who speaks, which prayers are included, and how offerings are handled—set the stage for formal committee deliberations about material choices. Observational notes show that seating and procession routes are

arranged to avoid exclusive religious symbolism, and public announcements use neutral language to emphasize communal belonging [Field note, 12 July 2021; Program leaflet, 2021].

Community pluralism, such as in Arjowilangun, is one of the main characteristics of a multicultural society. In a multicultural society, there is a spirit of shared nationality while still appreciating and even taking pride in the diversity that exists. This is clearly shown in the annual village celebration in Arjowilangun such as *Selamatan Desa*. The principles of freedom to express oneself, coexist and cooperate between various groups of people make the concept of multicultural society also close to a number of concepts echoed by democratic societies and civil society today.

Decisions about material aspects of the *Selamatan Desa* (animal choosing, procurement, and budget allocation) are made in committee meetings that combine formal rules and ad hoc bargaining. Committee minutes and field notes document a clear deliberative sequence during the 5 July 2021 meeting about whether to procure buffalo or cattle. A youth representative raised cost concerns, an elder invoked customary precedent, and the village head reframed the choice as a matter of tradition and fairness. After deliberation the committee resolved to purchase one buffalo and split costs across hamlets; the decision was recorded in the minutes and announced publicly. This episode shows how procedural bargaining, symbolic reframing, and cost-sharing produce a pragmatic compromise that preserves communal legitimacy and allows diverse participants to accept a single communal outcome [Interview, Committee Chair; Meeting minutes, 05 July 2021].

These findings resonate with psychological perspectives on social cohesion. Prior work emphasizes that cohesion comprises forces that bind members to a group and motivate active participation in pursuit of collective goals (Agung & Surur, 2018). In Arjowilangun, the buffalo-versus-cattle compromise illustrates this dynamic: despite differing preferences, participants remained committed to sustaining unity and collective tradition. Cohesion thus functions both as a condition for and an outcome of successful collective action for instance to **build the spirit of togetherness in the village ceremony as stated below:**

*“In a series of clean villages there is something called the village stage, this event is a series of clean village events but is held on the night of August 17. The village stage event received assistance from the village of approximately Rp.6,000,000, the rest of the money from the youth organization. The village stage event is a turn committee system, which is rotated by each hamlet to become a committee. This year, it is the*

youth organization of Lodalem hamlet. This year, Lodalem Hamlet is the committee for the village stage and volleyball competition in Argowilangun village, each hamlet sends 3 teams.” (Kuswianto, July 5, 2021)

Villagers describe participation in Selamatan in pragmatic and relational terms—“we do this because it keeps the village together” [Participant A, 14 July 2021]—rather than as strict doctrinal obligation. Repeated participation across years, routine transfer of committee roles, and the involvement of children and youth in preparatory tasks indicate routinization. Field notes record moments when long-standing participants corrected newcomers about “how we do it here,” signaling internalized expectations. These patterns show that the ceremony’s practices have been incorporated into everyday communal life.

Taken together, the observational record, meeting minutes, and interview accounts show a consistent pattern: private preferences are voiced in public forums, negotiated through committee procedures, and converted into durable practices that participants accept as normal. These empirical patterns provide the basis for mapping the Selamatan Desa onto Berger and Luckmann’s social-construction moments.

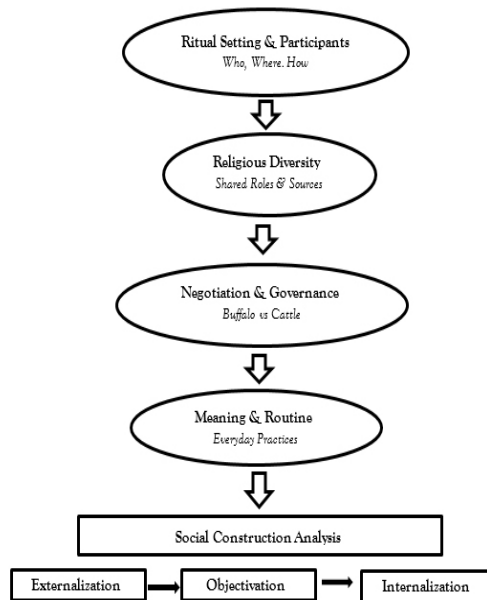


Figure 1. Flow from empirical description to social-construction model

The Arjowilangun case extends prior work on ritual symbolism and social capital by showing how cohesion and harmony are actively negotiated in everyday ritual governance. As Figure 1 summarizes, micro-level proposals and speeches are transformed into objectified rules and routinized practices; the following sections map the empirical episodes onto Berger and Luckmann's (2016) three moments and relate these mappings to existing literature on cohesion and harmony.

### ***Externalization of Religious Meanings in Selametan Desa***

Religion in Arjowilangun is understood as a guide for everyday life and social interaction. For most Muslim residents, religion functions not only as a theological belief but also as a moral framework that shapes communal attitudes, mutual respect, and collective responsibility. Religious understanding is expressed through local wisdom practices such as *silatullah*, social cooperation, artistic performances, and participation in village rituals. In Berger and Luckmann's (2016) perspective, this process reflects externalization, namely the continuous expression of subjective meanings into the social world.

Externalization appears when individual preferences and meanings are made public through proposals, speeches, and committee debate. The 5 July meeting—where cost concerns, customary arguments, and youth voices were openly aired—provides a clear instance of private meanings being expressed in a public forum. These public expressions are the raw material for subsequent institutionalization.

The process of externalization appears in the way villagers negotiate religious values within public ritual practices. Humans continuously adapt themselves to their social environment through interaction, language, and action. In Arjowilangun, respect for religious diversity is reflected in the community's decision to slaughter buffaloes instead of cattle during the annual *Selametan Desa*. Although cattle were once used, the decision generated conflict because cows are considered sacred in Hindu belief. As stated by M. Chafidz: “During village celebrations, buffaloes are the animals slaughtered for consumption. At one time it was replaced with cattle, but there was a conflict, because it contradicted Hinduism, which forbids the consumption of beef because it is a respected animal.” (Interview, July 21, 2021)

This ritual negotiation demonstrates how individual religious understandings are verbalized and transformed into shared social considerations. Externalization therefore becomes a process through which subjective beliefs

are expressed publicly and adjusted to existing socio-cultural realities. Different interpretations among villagers create intersubjective dialogue that later forms collective agreement and social harmony.

### ***Objectivation through Ritual Governance and Communal Regulation***

The second process is objectivation, namely the transformation of negotiated meanings into objective social reality through institutional arrangements and communal governance. In Arjowilangun, repeated ritual practices gradually become habitualized and institutionalized within village life. Through repetition, these practices are recognized collectively as legitimate traditions and eventually function as social norms guiding communal behavior.

The institutionalization process is maintained through ritual governance mechanisms such as rotating committees, collective budgeting, formal meetings, public announcements, and coordinated cultural programs. These organizational structures create legitimacy and reinforce the symbolic universe that sustains communal order. The symbolic universe provides moral justification for why individuals should participate in and preserve the ritual tradition.

The annual *Selamatan Desa* represents an objective social institution that integrates religious practice, local culture, and social organization. The ritual involves large-scale collective participation and significant financial management. Kuswiyanto, the Head of Arjowilangun Village, explained: “Approximately 500,000,000. It is quite large, because in addition to the village salvation event there is also a *campursari* program, *Banyuwangi* dance, orchestra, and closed with a recitation.” (Interview, July 5, 2020)

Objectivation occurs when negotiated outcomes are converted into durable social facts. In Arjowilangun, committee minutes, public announcements, and program leaflets function as objectifying artifacts: they record the buffalo compromise, formalize committee responsibilities, and present the decision as a communal fact. These records stabilize the compromise beyond the immediate meeting and make it available for public reference and enforcement.

This institutionalized governance structure transforms religious values into observable communal realities. The ritual is no longer understood merely as an individual religious expression, but as a collectively organized social institution supported by village authorities, religious leaders, and local cultural actors. Through objectivation, negotiated meanings become durable communal facts that organize social interaction and maintain social cohesion.

### ***Internalization and the Construction of Social Harmony***

The final process is internalization, namely the incorporation of objective social reality into individual consciousness through lifelong socialization. In Arjowilangun, the values embedded within *Selamatan Desa* are transmitted intergenerationally through participation, observation, language, and communal experience. Individuals gradually perceive the ritual tradition as a natural and legitimate part of village life.

Internalization occurs when community members emotionally and socially identify themselves with collective activities. Participation in village celebrations becomes a moral expectation and social responsibility. Villagers feel reluctant to distance themselves from communal events because the ritual has become part of their shared identity and social belonging. This case is evident when the committee's decisions are accepted without further dispute and when newcomers are socialized into established practices. The routine transfer of roles, the participation of youth in preparatory tasks, and the corrective interactions recorded in field notes indicate that the committee's decisions have become taken-for-granted norms—internalized by successive cohorts of participants.

The routinization of ritual practices creates harmony and cohesion within the multicultural social structure of Arjowilangun. Religious values are internalized not only through formal teaching but also through daily interaction and collective experience. The repeated performance of *Selamatan Desa* reproduces mutual respect, tolerance, and solidarity among villagers.

Through this dialectical process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization, the socio-cultural reality of Arjowilangun society is continuously constructed and maintained. Religious harmony is therefore not merely a passive condition but an actively produced social reality sustained through ritual governance, collective participation, and intergenerational socialization.

In this case, from the social construction theory which asserts that the moment of internalization is the moment of withdrawing socio-cultural reality into oneself or withdrawing socio-cultural reality into subjective reality, then the results of objectivation are re-instilled so that they structure the world of human thought, then the objective realities that underlie the construction of the meaning of religion for religious believers with personal individual understanding are internalized in the mass movement, so that it becomes a reality that can be observed and understood in the expression of harmony and harmony which can simply be concluded as a form of society that upholds local

values, without losing its footing on its sacred and personal religious basis.

These processual findings align with prior Indonesian studies that link ritual practice and social cohesion. For example, research on Grebeg Suro shows how ritual symbolism (*salam*) expresses collective safety (Yurisa et al., 2021), while disaster studies in Malang emphasize *rukun* and mutual cooperation as social capital that supports recovery (Agung et al., 2022). The Arjowilangun case complements these studies by showing how cohesion is produced through everyday governance mechanisms (committee deliberation, record-keeping, and routinized participation) rather than appearing only as ritual symbolism or post-disaster solidarity.

Religious plurality in Arjowilangun demonstrates that adherents can live with tolerance when institutional arrangements and procedural norms are in place. Freedom of religion is protected by the state, but local harmony depends on precise and inclusive management of diversity; without such efforts, pluralism can become a source of division. The Arjowilangun case shows that procedural fairness and symbolic accommodation reduce the risk that religion will be instrumentalized for narrow interests (Pahrudin & Wekke, 2021).

Analytically, the *Selamatan Desa* demonstrates that cohesion functions both as a precondition for collective action and as an outcome of institutionalized ritual governance. The findings further indicate that sustaining interreligious harmony depends on procedural fairness and transparent record-keeping. In addition, continuous intergenerational socialization enables contested choices to be transformed into shared and enduring communal practices.

The findings of this study are subject to several limitations. First, the research is based on a single qualitative case in Arjowilangun Village, which limits the generalizability of the results to other socio-cultural and religious contexts. Second, the data were collected during the July–August 2021 pandemic period, meaning that the observed forms of ritual governance and social interaction may have been influenced by exceptional circumstances rather than reflecting ordinary conditions. Third, the study primarily relies on interviews, observations, and local documents, focusing on the perspectives of community participants involved in the *Selamatan Desa* tradition. Consequently, the findings do not capture broader comparative dynamics across villages or provide quantitative measures of social harmony. Future research involving multiple sites and mixed-method approaches would help assess the wider applicability and long-term sustainability of the mechanisms identified in this study.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study demonstrate that religion plays a central role in shaping communal values, social behavior, and collective decision-making in Arjowilangun Village. Religion is not merely understood as a set of doctrinal teachings, but as a lived practice reflected in everyday attitudes, ritual participation, mutual cooperation, and social responsibility. The annual *Selamatan Desa* tradition illustrates how religious values are institutionalized through communal rituals that integrate sacred meaning, cultural identity, and social cohesion. Despite the multicultural structure of the village community, harmony is maintained through negotiated ritual governance, collective participation, and respect for local traditions.

This study also shows that religious leaders, mosque institutions, and local cultural figures function as important agents of social construction who shape communal norms and mediate collective responses during times of crisis. During the pandemic period, the community adapted ritual practices through procedural negotiation, symbolic reframing, transparent budgeting, and collective cost-sharing, demonstrating the community's capacity for resilience and social solidarity. In this context, Islamic ecological values emerged through communal awareness of balance, sustainability, and ethical relations between humans, religion, and the environment, particularly in discussions surrounding ritual materials and local resources.

The study contributes to broader discussions on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and SDG 13 (Climate Action), by showing how local religious traditions can strengthen social harmony, participatory governance, and community resilience in times of disruption. The findings suggest that traditional religious institutions and ritual practices remain relevant in addressing contemporary social and ecological challenges, including crisis management in the digital era.

This research acknowledges limitations in scope, as it primarily captures the initial phenomenological adaptation of socio-religious and ecological values through digital spaces during a specific crisis window (July–August 2021). Because this study focuses on immediate coping mechanisms, the researcher recommends future, more comprehensive studies to investigate the long-term sustainability of these digital-traditional hybrids. Specifically, future research should explore whether these digitally-mediated practices have permanently altered the social construction of Islamic ecology and ritual governance in

post-crisis rural societies.

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