

Jurnal Kinabalu

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DISRUPTING THE UNIVERSAL: KADAZANDUSUN WOMEN'S SACRED LEADERSHIP AND THE DECOLONIZATION OF FEMINIST THOUGHT

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ABSTRACT This work critiques the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from a Subaltern theoretical perspective, arguing that its application to women has been predominantly Eurocentric. The paper examines how Orientalism and Eurocentrism have shaped Western perceptions of human rights, historically positioning non-Western societies as backward or deficient. Within this framework, Southeast Asian women were doubly marginalized both by colonial patriarchy and by hierarchical structures within their own communities. The study challenges the hierarchical and binary worldview embedded in Western human rights discourse and mainstream feminism, in which the European West is privileged as the universal reference point while the rest of the world is relegated to a secondary status. To illustrate this critique, the paper turns to the egalitarian and bilateral social structure of the Kadazandusun community of Sabah, Malaysia, where women traditionally hold significant authority. The religious leadership of the *Bobohizan*, female ritual specialists, demonstrates the community's recognition of female power and social centrality. Methodologically, this research employs a qualitative approach, drawing on previous scholarly work in anthropology, gender studies, and indigenous epistemologies related to the Kadazandusun. By synthesizing existing ethnographic studies, historical analyses, and feminist critiques, the paper situates indigenous Sabah women within broader debates on rights and representation. By examining the role of women within this indigenous society, the paper calls for a re-examination of feminist and human rights frameworks to incorporate more diverse, contextual, and culturally grounded understandings of women's agency across societies.

Keywords: Human Rights, Oppressed women, Eurocentrism, High Priestess, Women leadership

INTRODUCTION

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948) was conceptualized as a comprehensive charter of human equality and human dignity universal to all societies. But if we read the UDHR and Western discourse on human rights through the lens of Subaltern theories, it is apparent that the UDHR and Western human rights utilize an exclusivist Eurocentric voice that dismisses non-Western societies. This is particularly applicable to women's rights because the Western model of human rights has been exported into the East as conforming to it is to be modern and part of civilization and is against being 'backward' or 'lesser' (Said, 1978). The imposition of Western values on non-Western societies and Southeast Asia in particular has resulted in an exclusive and systematically stereotypical definition of women's roles and their rights in Southeast Asia (Chakravarti, 2003). Southeast Asian women were twice oppressed by colonial and patriarch power—the objects of local cultural norms as well as objects of colonial power. Both these dual powers pushed women to the lowest rung in the hierarchy with their oppression created as an inalienable cultural issue as well as one conferred upon them through their subordination to colonial power.

In deconstructing universal human rights, one has to spot the hierarchical binary world perception in Western human rights discourse and feminism. This has the effect of leaving the European West in the position of being the origin of progress and equality with the rest of the world acting in its shadow. This is similar to a child-parent equation in which the West takes the lead with the world in its wake. This has historically influenced feminist movements with their Western inclination suppressing the meaning of gender equality in indigenous non-West societies (Mohanty, 1988). This imposition disregards the richness and diversity in gender relations in societies. A reorientation of feminism and human rights is thus imperative in which one is open to indigenous models of gender equality such as the one in the Kadazandusun tribe of Sabah in Malaysia.

The Kadazandusuns are an indigenous people in Sabah who are a powerful example of an egalitarian system in which women are predominant in religious and social leadership. The paper argues through a discussion of women in leadership roles in the traditional religious system of the Kadazandusuns that Western conceptions of gender relations and human rights need to be reorganized. More precisely, it requires an enhanced and universalistic focus that critically analyzes the Eurocentric presuppositions of human rights thinking and insists on the strength of indigenous knowledge systems to construct gender equality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarship is guided by literature drawing on critical subaltern studies, postcolonial feminisms, and indigenous feminist theory. Timeless works such as Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism* and Dipesh Chakrabarty's (2000). *Provincializing Europe* illustrate that Western epistemologies have long represented non-Western societies as "backward" and requiring rescue and reform. This critique is particularly applicable when applied to global human rights discourses universalizing individualism, secular liberalism, and gender equality in terms of Euro-American values.

Mohanty's (1988, 2003) critique of the Western feminist homogenizing impulse to represent Third World women as victimized and passive highlights the need to resist such homogenizing representations. Her requirement that we privilege women's historical and cultural experiences in all their complexity is especially relevant in the case of Kadazandusun ritual leaders. In this case, the *Bobohizan*, far from being ostracized or oppressed, occupies a

central place in spiritual leadership, kinship regulation, and ritual decision-making authority. This discredits Western feminist measures of empowerment that emphasize formal political or economic participation.

Lugones (2007) builds upon this with the coloniality of gender, showing how Western gender configurations were imposed via colonial conquest. This is crucial to understanding how Kadazandusun women's ritual specialist roles, rooted in indigenous cosmology and mutual relationality, are rendered invisible or "non-modern" according to Eurocentric standards. The *Bobohizan*'s authority, rooted in holy knowledge and ancestor continuity, provides an alternate feminist ontology with an emphasis on relational power, community guardianship, and spiritual sovereignty. Expanding this decolonial critique, the study also draws on intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989; Hill Collins, 2000), which maps the intersecting systems of oppression—colonialism, patriarchy, racialization—that organize indigenous women's lives. The study enriches local ethnographies tracking how gender intersects with spiritual and cultural duties in non-Western societies.

But alongside these global theoretical advances, recent ethnographies specific to the region also situate the research firmly in their local empirical context. For instance, Hanafi Hussin's (2003) ethnography of the *Bobohizan* of Penampang provides rich empirical data on ritual practice and gendered authority. Martin Potter's (2017) investigation of liminal spirits and storytelling among the Dusun lays out how sacred cosmologies influence indigenous leadership structures. Similarly, Low and Ishak's (2018) work on *komburongo* rituals illustrates how medicinal plants and sacred systems of belief are intertwined with women's work as spiritual mediators. These studies corroborate the argument that Kadazandusun spiritual leadership is not symbolic, but operational, informing both cosmological balance and communal governance. By synthesizing macro-theoretical critique with micro-level ethnographic evidence, this review contends the *Bobohizan* as a challenge to, rather than an exception of, Western feminism and its constitutive assumptions. It also illustrates that decolonial feminist theory must remain anchored in the local—in the spiritual, linguistic, and ontological particularity that makes up women's leadership in indigenous worlds such as Sabah.

METHODOLOGY

This project employed a qualitative, interpretive, decolonial research approach, informed by postcolonial feminist and indigenous knowledge systems theoretical frameworks, to research Kadazandusun women's cultural and spiritual leadership, particular the *Bobohizan* and *Bobolian*, practices. The research employed a case study approach, with ethnographic textual analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) employed to challenge how indigenous women's leadership is understood, enacted, and represented in and beyond Kadazandusun cosmology. The analytic framework for this research drew on the contributions of Fairclough (1995) and, Wodak and Meyer (2009), whose models of CDA provided a means of unearthing the tacit power relations in textual constructions of gender, spirituality, and community. The research focused exclusively on secondary data published academic reports, ritual texts, oral histories, and prior ethnographic reports. Among the main sources include Hussin (2003), in which the ritual roles of the *Bobohizan* priestesses among the Penampang are described; Potter (2017), in which spiritual narrative and heterotopic space among the Dusun are explored; and Low and Ishak (2018), in which the use of sacred plants and cosmological knowledge among the Dusunic peoples are outlined. These texts provided rich cultural, spiritual, and gendered data in the research subject area of interest.

Data collection involved meticulous desk research using scholarly databases and ethnographic literature. Content was inductively coded thematically to call forth patterns around indigenous gender leadership, communal government, and epistemic resistance to Eurocentricity. This was then followed by axial coding to ascertain broader conceptual relationships, for example, spiritual authority and relational equality. Coding was manual to permit space for interpretative depth and close text reading. There were no human subjects in this research. Instead, analysis was conducted on published ethnographic field data and textual materials, including cultural narratives, oral histories, and transcribed interviews. Although no fieldwork was carried out, research ethics were upheld by ensuring respectful representation of Indigenous knowledge systems. In line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007), the study resists essentializing interpretations and safeguards the intellectual and cultural autonomy of Indigenous perspectives.

The analysis employs a qualitative interpretive technique, specifically thematic and discourse analysis, to examine how Kadazandusun women's roles, particularly the spiritual authority of the *Bobohizan* function as counter-epistemologies to Western-dominant feminist and human rights narratives. Themes were identified across ethnographic descriptions, oral traditions, and scholarly interpretations, while discourse analysis was used to interrogate the language, assumptions, and power dynamics embedded in existing literature on human rights, feminism, and Indigenous societies. This methodological approach enables a culturally sensitive and contextually grounded interpretation of feminist and human rights discourse by centering Kadazandusun women's spiritual leadership as an alternative framework to Eurocentric paradigms.

RESULTS

There are three prominent themes within the literature on Kadazandusun women's ritual leadership revealed through this research: spiritual mediation, communal governance, and gendered power-disruption. In terms of *spiritual mediation*, Kadazandusun female ritual specialists—*Bobohizan* or *Babalian*—share a central role as mediators between the human world and the spiritual realm. Across ethnographic narratives, their authority derives from mastery of ritual language (*rinait*), healing practices, and cosmological knowledge. Their mediating role situates them as guardians of spiritual balance and cosmic harmony, positioning women at the apex of religious leadership in ways that directly challenge Western assumptions that leadership must be secular, bureaucratic, or rational-legal.

In *communal governance*, which extends beyond ritual practice, female priestesses function simultaneously as community decision-makers. Ethnographic accounts describe them adjudicating conflicts, advising agricultural cycles, overseeing initiation rites, and shaping communal ethics. These responsibilities operate within a bilateral kinship system that affirms women's participation in domestic, lineage-based, and sub-village authority structures. Thus, female religious leadership in Kadazandusun culture is not merely symbolic but structurally embedded in social organization.

The third theme, *gendered power-disruption*, highlights how the *Bobohizan* role contradicts dominant Western and colonial gender discourses that often portray Indigenous women as passive, oppressed, or peripheral. Female ritual leadership resists patriarchal expectations by placing women in hegemonic positions within spiritual and cosmological

orders. These culturally grounded models of authority resist Western feminist and human rights frameworks that equate women's empowerment solely with political citizenship, secular public participation, or democratic representation. Instead, they offer alternative epistemologies rooted in Indigenous cosmology and relational forms of power.

These themes were derived through inductive thematic coding of secondary ethnographic texts and further examined using Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Together, they demonstrate that *Bobohizan* and *Bobolian* leadership articulates culturally embedded forms of authority that subvert hegemonic feminist and human rights discourses.

As cosmological intermediaries, *Bobohizan* engages in ritual chanting (*rinait*), offering oblations, and employing sacred flora such as *komburongo* to maintain cosmic harmony. Their authority is typically inherited matrilineally or acquired through spiritual apprenticeship, and it is legitimized cosmologically rather than bureaucratically. This model of leadership rooted in ritual expertise and ancestral mandates, differs fundamentally from Western notions of political authority.

Beyond spiritual duties, *Bobohizan* and *Bobolian* women contribute to village governance and moral arbitration. In times of illness, interpersonal conflict, or agricultural uncertainty, they are invoked as custodians of wisdom and spiritual veracity. Their ritual responsibilities also function as a form of local jurisprudence, affirming their dual status as spiritual experts and community authorities. Scholars such as Lambert (2013) and Rani (2014) note that women ritualists often mediate land disputes and enforce agricultural taboos—roles that lie outside Western conceptions of leadership but are integral to indigenous governance. These forms of ritual and relational power challenge assumptions that authority must be visible, institutional, or formal. Instead, leadership is grounded in cosmological responsibility, ancestral care-taking, and collective well-being. Such forms of authority resist liberal feminist models that prioritize economic autonomy or political enfranchisement and instead foreground culturally specific expressions of women's empowerment.

Collectively, these insights position Kadazandusun ritual leadership as a decolonial feminist potential—shared, sacred, and epistemologically situated within indigenous worldviews. They enrich global understandings of gender, leadership, and rights by centering plural, cosmologically grounded models of authority rather than universalizing Western frameworks.

DISCUSSION

Kadazandusun Women's Ritual Leadership as Decolonial Feminist Praxis

The findings of this research complicate dominant feminist and human rights stories by demonstrating how Kadazandusun women's ritual leadership offers an alternative model of power, equality, and communal governance. Rather than rehearsing a reductionist binary of "Western" and "indigenous," this analysis locates the importance of each of the theme's spiritual mediation, communal governance, and gendered disruption of power within the decolonial feminist possibility in which they occur. The Kadazandusun female ritual practitioner, the *Bobohizan*, is not merely a religious functionary but exercises a culturally authoritative political leadership grounded in sacred cosmologies. Her practice disrupts mainstream liberal feminist presumptions that identify empowerment with formal

representation in institutions and secular individual rights. Rather, this article argues that indigenous ritual leadership needs to be recognized as a legitimate political practice, one that reconfigures power in a relational, ecological, and ancestral imaginary.

Ritual as Legitimate Political Practice

The spiritual mediation motif makes explicit that the ritual practice of the *Bobohizan* is political and not merely religious or symbolic. The *Bobohizan* performs sovereign acts of reasserting cultural survival and communal integrity through ritual language, plant calling, and ancestor work. Her leadership is not based on visibility in state institutions or economic productivity, but epistemic legitimacy based on ritual expertise, land-based knowledge, and sacred temporality. This is precisely the opposite of liberal feminist norms of prioritizing access to state power, wage labor, or legal reforms as the standards of women's advancement (Mohanty, 2003).

Ritual leadership offers a new ontology of power—one that is neither hierarchical nor anthropocentric, but founded upon interrelation among human, spirit, and land. Decolonization, Tuck and Yang (2012) argue, requires a radical unsettling of settler assumptions about land, governance, and identity. The *Bobohizan* is not merely mediating material and spiritual worlds; she sustains a kind of governance that is deeply ethical, cosmological, and place based. Invocation of the land or calling upon rice spirits is not an anachronistic or marginal practice—it is a political act that reclaims Kadazandusun sovereignty and disrupts settler-colonial temporalities that frame Indigenous cultures as “pre-modern” (Smith, 2012).

This position resonates with María Lugones' (2007) decolonial theory of the *coloniality of gender*, which critiques how colonialism imposed binary and Eurocentric understandings of gender that erased Indigenous spiritual and gender complexity. The secular state and colonial gender regimes undermined the epistemic authority of women like the *Bobohizan*. Decolonially recognizing her leadership as political labour, anchored in ancestral knowledge and cosmological responsibility, disrupts this erasure. Ritual, thus, is not the opposite of politics but a decolonial site of power, memory, and resistance (Lugones, 2007; Simpson, 2014).

This paper submits that the feminist and human rights movements should reconsider their strategies in an appreciation of the viability of indigenous models of leadership and gender equality. The models are not grounded in Western notions of gender equality but are effective in their cultural context in an empowering sense and in meaningfulness. The indigenous models of leadership such as those in the Kadazandusun tribe paint a different picture of gender equality one based not on Western standards or on formalistic ways but one that acknowledges the spiritual, communal and cultural roles of women (Alcoff, 2014). In appreciating and respecting the diversity of gender systems in different societies, the feminist and human rights movements can go on to an even better appreciation of gender equality one based on context, difference in culture and women's agency in their own societies. This would not only challenge Western dominant paradigms but would also allow the marginalized voices to be heard and create space in which to discuss gender, rights, and equality in a complex and nuanced way (Lugones, 2010; Mohanty, 2003).

Reimagining Human Rights and Feminism: A Call for Reinterpretation

The idea that the West has an exclusive monopoly on universal human rights has also been criticized by theorists and activists who presume that human rights are dynamic and evolving set of principles adaptive to the universal character of human diversity and not a static Western-based norm (Baxi, 2002). Postcolonial feminist theorists specifically refer to the way in which Western feminism's equating of women's equality has had the effect of ignoring or distorting women's leadership and roles of agency in non-West societies. Application of Western notions of gender equality to non-West societies has the effect of distorting or undermining indigenous gender systems based on other values or an alternative focus on collective well-being or balance (Spivak, 1988; Mohanty, 2003). For example, in most indigenous societies, roles played by women in the past were leadership-based, spiritual guidance-based, or based on communal decision-making. Contrary to the individualistic and formalistic concerns of Western feminism, these societies might be based on collective well-being, balance, and respect to tradition. Indigenous societies might place high value on the role played by women as decision-makers, spiritual guides, and leadership roles but these roles might not be based on the leadership models in Western feminist discourse based on individual rights, formal equality, and political representation (Narayan, 2000; Delgado, 2013).

One such example can be seen in the Kadazandusun tribe in Sabah, Malaysia. In their religion, the Bobohizan priestesses are a class of priestesses who are powerful and lead their people. The Bobohizan are not mediators or ceremony figures but are in charge of the spiritual and communal leadership in the tribe. Leadership is based on the tribe's worldview of balance and mutually beneficial relationship between human beings and nature and the world of spirits. This leadership pattern based on equality with women in the dominant or central position is contrasted with Western descriptions of gender oppression and exclusion. For the Kadazandusun people, gender equality is framed in the context of their spirit world and worldviews of their world and not in the context of Western feminism (Borneo Post, 2021; Muecke, 2002).

Communal Leadership and Relational Power

Community governance exhibits how the *Bobohizan* functions within a relational and distributed leadership model. Her authority is not coercive but built upon trust, accountability, and deep knowledge of spiritual and natural cycles. Her practice refuses to dichotomize the social and sacred; instead, it manifests a holistic system in which healing, land care, and conflict resolution are inseparable (Battiste, 2000).

This governance model finds theoretical support in Leela Gandhi's (1998) postcolonial critique of Western individualism and liberal legalism. The *Bobohizan* enacts an alternative model of leadership that dissolves the rigid distinctions between private and public, sacred and political. Her decision-making is not institutional but communal, rooted in her perceived ethical and spiritual authority.

Moreover, the relationality of the *Bobohizan*'s governance corresponds with indigenous feminist critiques that emphasize responsibility over rights. Glen Coulthard (2014) contends that settler-state legalism tends to prioritize individual rights while neglecting land-based relational ethics. The *Bobohizan*'s governance is based on reciprocity, not only among humans,

but also with spirits, ancestors, and non-human beings. This ethics of interconnection introduces a broader, posthuman sense of political accountability (TallBear, 2011).

By doing so, the *Bobohizan* resists neoliberal and NGO-centric paradigms that reduce women's empowerment to economic productivity or legislative inclusion. Her practice embodies what Audra Simpson (2014) describes as "refusal"—an intentional disengagement from settler-state logics in favor of sovereign Indigenous ways of life. Such governance should not be dismissed as "non-modern" but understood as a complex, ethical, and culturally legitimate political formation

The Kadazandusun Tribe: Rethinking Indigenous Gender Equality Through a Cultural Lens

The Malaysian Sabah Kadazandusun is an interesting and striking example of an indigenous group in which gender equality is not simply the case but is enacted through leadership roles in opposition to the dominant discourse of patriarchy that so strongly influences non-Western societies in Western discourse. The Kadazandusun is one of the Sabah's largest of the indigenous people and constitute approximately 18% of the state's population. Their social structure is bilateral and egalitarian in which women and men are involved in decision-making and roles are not defined along gendered lines. Their social structure revolves on men and women being in respect with one another and with each other in a cooperative association and with each other in an interdependent status and emphasizes that gender roles are not structurally hierarchical or oppressive in character but complementary and equal in a specified cultural environment (Sukumar, 2007; Rani, 2014).

At the heart of Kadazandusun society is their religious system based on tradition and led by women religious heads known as the *Bobohizan*, *Bobolian*, that take care of *Tantagas* (rules). Female religious heads are highly respected in their society and are tasked with functions such as acting as mediators between the world and the spirit world to bestow well-being upon people through rituals and spiritual guidance. The *Bobohizan* has significant political, social, and cultural power and bases her power on her huge knowledge of spirits and the mediating functions in terms of significant cultural and religious rituals. Far from representative or ceremonial in character, their functions are characterized by significant decision-making power with far-reaching effects on the people's lives (Schoenfelder, 2009; Pung, 2004).

The *Bobohizan* is the senior woman spiritual leader within Kadazandusun society and has the key role to perform fertility, harvest, and curing rituals. Women perform the key roles in the people's spiritual life while also exerting considerable power over social and political matters. They basically inherit leadership through lineage and their power does not end there, they also exercise power over communal life and decision-making to the extent of exhibiting a kind of gender equality that openly defies the Western construction of indigenous societies as male-gendered (Brettell, 2000; Panak, 2010).

While the senior spiritual practitioner is referred to using the term *Bobohizan* or *Bobolian* are also referred to in the context of women in leadership but with different connotations and roles. While also a spiritual practitioner, the *Bobolian* has in contrast to the *Bobohizan* the specialist role. The *Bobolian* would specialize in specific rituals of protection or curing and would wield influence in local or smaller spaces in the local community. In some

cases, the *Bobolian* would not wield the expansive communal power wielded by the *Bobohizan* but is none the less an important element in the people's religion (Lambert, 2013; McCall, 2017). Both is respected through knowledge and spiritual leadership but perhaps has her power in localized customs or local rituals compared to communal rituals wielded by the *Bobohizan* (Schoenfelder, 2009; Sukumar, 2007).

The Kadazandusun High Priestess Leadership

Bobohizan's and *Bobolian's* leadership defies the Western stereotype of indigenous societies as oppressive and patriarchal. Gender equality can be found to be embedded in traditional customs and these women exercise powerful leadership roles that defy the perception that women in indigenous societies are marginalized or powerless. The power and respect accorded these women to exercise roles of spiritual and cultural leadership are glaring evidence of indigenous leadership structures perhaps offering alternative models of gender equality, independent of the Western feminist model (Chakrabarty, 2000; Mohanty, 2003). Western feminism, particularly in its mainstream and historical constructions, presumes a universal model of gender equality developed along Western ideals such as rights as an individual, participation in political processes, and empowerment through participation in Western processes of commerce, jurisprudence, and education (Tong, 2009; Walby, 1990). The Kadazandusun model of gender equality is an alternative construction of women's leadership and power that defies the Western feminist model.

Western feminism has maintained its focus on individual autonomy and rights as the vehicles to achieving gender equality. It sees women's participation in political life, business life, and the bench as measures of empowerment. This resonates with the individualistic character of Western societies in which individual freedom and autonomy are primary (Molyneux, 1985). This is in contrast to the Kadazandusun approach to achieving gender equality as one centred on communal and network leadership in which women's power and influence stem from their place in the community, in the household, and in the spiritual world. The *Bobohizan* and *Bobolian*, take leadership based on religious leadership and communal leadership and not on individual freedom or political power in the Western sense. This is in contrast to the Western feminist perception that empowerment has to be some kind of independent mechanism of individual success and entry into the public realm such as into political life or professional life. Rather, the Kadazandusun example shows women can be powerful and influential even if they do not conform to the Western standards of individual autonomy and professional success in public life (Mohanty, 2003). It shows leadership can be described in religious and communal terms and not in individualistic and political terms.

Western feminism aims to establish material and secular grounds on which the equality of the sexes should be based such as economic autonomy, political representation and rights in the law (Scott, 1986). However, in the Kadazandusun civilization religious leadership is paramount and the *Bobohizan* and other women religious world-views sit in leadership over public ritual and cultural life. The women are in leadership in a religious context in which women draw their power from religious understanding and cultural custom and not in political or secular contexts. This reverses the Western feminist hypothesis that secular formal power in the areas of politics and economics represents the apogee of women's empowerment. It shows that religious and cultural power can be as legitimate and perhaps more culturally relevant to its environment in some situations. By locating women's leadership in the foreground of indigenous faith and custom-based belief and rituals the Kadazandusun model shows that

women's leadership can thrive in non-secular contexts to the contrary to Western feminist idea that religion or customary power forms are either reactionary or suppressive (Chakrabarty, 2000; Spivak, 1988).

Western feminism has also been criticized on its so-called "universal" approach in assuming that the Western experience of gender inequality represents a universal one applicable to all women everywhere (Mohanty, 1988). This approach has the unintended consequence of imposing European-American ideals and values on other societies in disregard of alternative historical, social, and cultural context (Chakrabarty, 2000). The case of the Kadazandusun has defied this presupposition of one universal path to gender equality. The *Bobohizan* and *Bobolian* are culturally specific representations of gender equality based on indigenous values and tradition that do not fit into Western feminist ideals but are themselves effective and empowering in their own right in the local context.

This defies the idea of Western feminism as the universal standard on gender equality. It invites a pluralist approach to feminism that responds to the diversity of experience and means of empowerment between societies (Spivak, 1988). The case of the Kadazandusun shows that gender equality is not required to follow Western ideals on empowerment but can take different forms in proportion to the cultural context.

In Western feminist ideology, equality between men and women has traditionally existed in terms of countering patriarch forces to allow women to gain power and influence. While such an analysis has some truth to it in some situations, it fails to accommodate the possibility that some roles can be power-enhancing. The leadership roles of the *Bobohizan* and *Bobolian* show that women can wield power and influence in their societies in a way that does not undermine or suborn the gender roles in such societies. The roles themselves are neither considered constricting nor oppressive but are integral to the social and religious life in Kadazandusun people. Women's power is complementary to men's power but integral to the greater social order (Schoenfelder, 2009; Brettell, 2000).

The leadership of all the *Bobohizan* and *Bobolian* serves to prove the socially and spiritually driven element such societies require. All these women possess an alternative complementary leadership role to exercise in the social, religious and political lives of the Kadazandusuns people.

The *Bobohizan* is the senior woman religious specialist among people in the Kadazandusun. She is held in esteem due to knowledge of the spirit and leadership in important rituals such as the fertility ceremonies, harvest festivals, and communal rituals of healing. Her power comes from her deep spirituality in the corporeal and spiritual world such that she can guide the people in matters regarding the spirit and lead them through rituals critical to the well-being of people (Schoenfelder, 2009). Her position is critical to people's spirit and cultural identification in that it indicates people's respect for balance and equality of men and women roles. The *Bobolian* is also a religious specialist but tends to perform specialized spiritual functions as a contrast to the *Bobohizan*. She can be responsible to perform curing or protection rituals of the people against evil spirits. While missing the all-encompassing religious power of the *Bobohizan*, her position in the people is also critical. She can conduct small rituals, advise people or families or assist in local ceremonies. Her power goes beyond ceremonial roles and is a result of her power to protect, cure and guide the people through more individualistic spiritual activities (McCall, 2017; Pung, 2004).

These two roles in aggregate *Bobohizan* and *Bobolian* richly testify to the exercise of leadership by women in Kadazandusun society. These roles complicate the Western stereotype that indigenous societies are patriarchalism or that women in non-West societies are monolithically oppressed. Nowhere are these women passive or subordinated; on the contrary, these women are agents in themselves in their own societies, mediating the ritual, offering spiritual leadership, and influencing social life. Their power is rooted in their knowledge of the world of spirits, their mediating function between the spirit and physical world, and their function in giving life and wealth to their society (Brettell, 2000; Rani, 2014).

This leadership goes against the Western myth that indigenous societies are patriarchally oppressed and introduces an alternative history in which women had considerable power. The women who held these roles are not metaphorical, and their power was practical and real and was found in social, religious, and political domains. The roles present alternative models of gender relations in which women held leadership roles grounded in indigenous tradition and cultural practice. This goes against the conventional Western myth that indigenous societies can be described as enabling or progressive only if we can fit them into Western models of gender equality. In seeing the roles of the *Bobohizan* and *Bobolian*, it can lead to an appreciation the diversity of gender relations between societies and recognize that indigenous models of leadership such as that in Kadazandusun society left us with much to learn in terms of non-Western models of gender equality. The roles emphasize that gender relations do not need to manifest in a Western idealized way in order to be enabling. Instead, it emphasizes that cultural context, spiritual power, and community-based models of leadership are all valid means to gender equality.

In summary, the leadership of the *Bobohizan* and *Bobolian* is a powerful example of women's empowerment in Kadazandusun society. Their roles demonstrate a richer conceptualization of gender equality based on local custom and practice and an alternative to Western models of feminism. By recognizing and validating these patterns of leadership, we can construct a broader and richer concept of gender equality that prioritizes multiple cultural practice and empowers women in multiple contexts. The example of the Kadazandusun tribe resists the Eurocentric presuppositions of feminist discourse as well as Western human rights discourse. By examining the roles of the women in the Kadazandusun religious practice, we can observe that the non-Western societies had long had a positive appreciation of women's leadership and participation in different forms but none the less valid. The *Bobohizan* and *Bobolian* demonstrate the different ways gender equality can be exercised in different forms based on the local custom, spirituality, and social structures. This paper is an argument in favour of a richer conception of human rights and feminism that recognizes the pluralism of gender roles and patterns of leadership in indigenous societies and resists the presupposition that the Western ideals are the universal norm of equality and justice.

The imposition of Western models of human rights as universal and objective models to be exported to all societies overlooks the vast variability in gender arrangements in societies. The Western human rights model is normally based on a linear evolutionary model of social development in terms of individual rights, political participation and economic autonomy. Most indigenous societies such as the Kadazandusun are rooted in systems that emphasize communal welfare, religious unity, as well as communal responsibility. There are alternative yet no less valuable means of gender equality in these systems in which women exercise spiritual, political, and social power. For example, the *Bobohizan* is not only revered as a healer in the religious context, but also one who can exercise power in communal decision-making, an

indicator of a leadership model with gender equality as an inherent component of communal spirituality and societal life (Schoenfelder, 2009).

The Kadazandusun example forces one to question feminist and Western human rights assumptions. Both models are open to perceiving non-Western practice in terms of victim or oppression models and neglecting women's leadership and agency in indigenous societies. Western feminism traditionally has had its focus on the concept of individual empowerment to the point of ignoring that women in the majority of indigenous societies gain power and influence through communal roles, familial roles, or spiritual roles. The leadership roles played by Kadazandusun women as *Bobohizan* and *Bobolian* demonstrate that to command, to cure, and to influence do not necessarily rely on the concept of individualism in Western thinking but on communal roles that the Western feminist model is not familiar with (Pung, 2004).

This piece calls on the human rights platform to be decolonized and requires thinkers, policymakers, and activists to take indigenous knowledge systems seriously and to break away from the one-size-fits-all approach to gender equality. This means that human rights are not Eurocentric by default and that applying Western conceptions of what "gender equality" entails has a tendency to disregard the cultural context in which these are being embedded. By considering indigenous knowledge systems, we are able to create human rights instruments that take into consideration the everyday lives of other people and are compatible with the broader principles of equality and fairness.

In this respect here, the global discourse on human rights and gender equality has to go beyond the limits of a binary-hierarchic world with Western values as the norm to be emulated. Instead, it has to be one in which equality and fairness are in no way a one-size-fits-all formula but one perceived within the context of cultural values, tradition, and history. The Kadazandusun example is precisely such a powerful instance of gender equality in a context so rooted in values of spirituality, of communal care, and of respect between persons with respect to each other. The Kadazan concept of *filosofia* is rooted in the richness of local experience and in communal values of respect and spirituality. This is not one to be exported to other societies or forced upon other people but one which can be replicated if other societies are willing to accept its spirit.

Decolonizing Feminist Frameworks: Empowering Indigenous Voices and Reimagining Gender Equality

The intersectionality of power, gender, and culture is traditionally explained with language grounded in human rights theory and Western feminist thought, both with their basis in Eurocentric values. Both of these dominant discourse systems in global claims-making on gender equality are likely to overlook the diversity in leadership roles and gender arrangements in non-Western societies. The Kadazandusun people, an indigenous Malaysian people whose indigenous knowledge systems are based on alternative conceptualizations of leadership, spirituality, and gender equality, are a case in point. Examining women's roles in the Kadazandusun religious and cultural systems of the *Bobohizan* and *Bobolian*, this paper attempts to subvert the constraints of Western feminist thought and human rights approaches. This paper argues in favour of an expanded feminist theory and human rights approach based on indigenous knowledge systems and ultimately calls for the process of decolonizing gender equality frameworks globally.

Indigenous knowledge systems are also a powerful counter-discourse to dominant Eurocentric paradigms in mainstream feminist discourse. Mohanty (2003) argues that Western feminist theories tend to impose upon women in non-Western societies a homogeneous model of gender equality that does not capture the diversity of women's lived lives. Indigenous knowledge systems cut through such paradigms with their recognition of pluralities in women's roles and identities in different societies. The Kadazandusun example shows that women's roles as religious practitioners such as the Bobohizan can be read centrally as such in their societies with power and influence rooted in spirituality and not in formal political or economic roles. This is different from the Western tendency to confine empowerment to political participation and individual freedom (Lugones, 2007).

Gendered Power-Disruption and Epistemic Reclamation

The gendered power-disruption emphasizes how the *Bobohizan* challenges normative gendered expectations in both Indigenous and colonial contexts. While patriarchal elements exist in Kadazandusun society, the *Bobohizan's* continued centrality reveals the persistence of gender egalitarian or matriarchal traditions that colonialism failed to fully erase (Sodhy, 2004). Rather than interpreting these through Western feminist frameworks that assume universal patriarchy, they must be understood as culturally specific articulations of gendered authority.

The *Bobohizan* enacts what Kim TallBear (2011) calls “relational belonging”—a form of authority rooted in interdependence, ancestral wisdom, and care. Her power does not derive from domination or control but from stewardship, healing, and the ethical transmission of spiritual knowledge. This mode of power challenges Eurocentric categories like “female leadership” or “feminist activism” and instead calls for epistemologies that honor Indigenous worldviews (Simpson, 2017).

Her work also destabilizes the epistemic hierarchy that privileges written law and formal institutions over oral tradition and ritual knowledge. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) argues that decolonizing research requires a fundamental transformation of knowledge validation. Valuing the *Bobohizan's* ritual labor as both intellectual and political subverts the dichotomies of politics/religion and reason/myth. Her role is not one of heritage preservation alone—it is an act of epistemic reclamation in a world that has historically silenced Indigenous women's voices (Grande, 2004). This is not a romantic return to a mythic past, but an affirmation of a living indigenous futurity—one grounded in ancestral principles yet responsive to contemporary realities. The *Bobohizan's* leadership is simultaneously historical and future-oriented, presenting a vision of feminist politics that is land-based, ecological, and spiritually engaged.

CONCLUSION

This paper has engaged critically with the limitations of dominant feminist theory and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by bringing to the fore the lived lives and leadership of Kadazandusun women leaders—the *Bobohizan* and *Bobolian*, of Sabah, Malaysia. These leaders embody a form of spiritual and collective power that offers a compelling counterpoint to Eurocentric definitions of gender equality and empowerment. Rather than measuring progress in terms of formal political enfranchisement or abstract individual rights, Kadazandusun ritual leadership is in collective flourishing, sacred duty, and ecological balance. *Bobohizan's* ritual labour, relational leadership, and subversion of colonial

gender binaries articulate a decolonial feminist ethics in opposition to liberal individualism. Not only is she a rightful leader, but leadership from her is needed in reimagining what feminist power can do when grounded in land, cosmology, and ancestral knowledges. Towards this end, this research affirms that ritual is not separate from politics but is a kind of political practice in and of itself, one based on epistemic legitimacy, relational accountability, and intergenerational reciprocity.

These findings require a pluralistic and culturally sensitive formulation of human rights and feminist theory that not only recognizes indigenous systems of gender equity not as exceptions, but as worthwhile and legitimate paradigms in themselves. Rather than press for inclusion into colonial systems, decolonial feminist practice sets alternative modes of being, of knowing, and of leading. The policy and research implications for the future are substantial. Perhaps we will have to go back and reinterpret human rights texts in a language that includes non-Western ontologies, namely those that prioritize collective and spiritual bases of power. Scholars, activists, and policymakers must move toward indigenous knowledge systems not as add-on but integral to an expanded and more inclusive conception of gender justice. Last, this study urges a shift from prescriptive feminist theories of empowerment toward a richly situated, culturally located understanding of gender equality that honours women's everyday lives in diverse contexts. As we open ourselves up to epistemic difference and decolonize our theoretical and political vocabularies, we move toward achieving justice that is truly global, inclusive, and transformative.

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A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK MODEL FOR THE CREATION CERAMIC ART BASED ON ASH GLAZE IN THE PRODUCTION OF CERAMIC WORKS

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ABSTRACT The theoretical framework forms concepts, terms, definitions, models, and theories that become the basis and orientation of the discipline for the study to be carried out. The researchers have prepared a model for the creation of ceramic works of art to form a guide in the research process to identify terms relevant to the concept, definition, elements of ash production, the process of creative and artistic ceramic works, data collection strategies, manufacturing techniques, material selection. Researchers are inspired to create works of art based on natural forms by studying and sketching plants in their natural state. The researchers then made rounds of the relief design to observe the development of vertical and dynamic patterns. The art of creating ceramics is one of the indicators of the prosperity of human culture. It has existed in human society for thousands of years. Archaeological evidence shows that ceramics have been used in many aspects of daily life to this day, and glaze has been an important process to enhance the durability and beauty of ceramics. Glaze increases strength and hardness, as well as surface resistance to acidic and basic materials when ceramic items are fired at temperatures over 1200 degrees Celsius (°C). Ash glaze is one of the traditional (ancient) glaze. Chinese potters have been using it since the Han dynasty (206 B.C. – 200 A.D.), more than 2,000 years. In Malaysia, pottery is distinguished by its shape and design, as well as the colour produced by different types of glazes. In recent years, researchers have found that the consumption of organic waste produces a lot of waste and provides various methods and benefits in producing ash glaze. By using a simple and complex approach in understanding the formulation of blending as well as calculations in the production of ash glaze in the creation of ceramic art. In order to use this organic material, researchers are interested in experimenting with ash in experimental and practical methods. Raw materials are collected from various sources, then dried and burned. After being burned to ashes, glazes are made from it for ceramic creations according to the research process. Since it can be used for several types of ceramics, this study provides a model for using ash to make ceramic ash glazes. As a result, various forms of ceramic work with ash glaze were created.

Keywords: Theoretical framework, Ash Glaze, Blending Formulation, Sabah, Ceramic Art

INTRODUCTION

The production of ceramic artwork is a manifestation of feelings and thoughts that result through several techniques and formation processes in its production. Since time immemorial, ceramic art has existed in various utility forms such as tableware, jewellery and so on. It has a wide range of interpretations and is not only seen in the formal elements of its use, but it is also one of the production trends in ceramic art that is expressed according to expertise and creativity in a contemporary work.

The purpose of this research is to develop a series of ash glaze as an alternative in the development of creative and artistic process inventions in ceramic arts that utilize and exploit nature as a resource in creating. Its purpose can be domestic, decorative, ritualistic, or pure artistic expression, with forms and functions that vary greatly across time and culture. Ceramics used to be believed to function as daily and spiritual items. But now the making is more artistic in the context of developing ceramic art in terms of design, mixing clay materials, different burning processes and coloring elements (Ayob & Jusilin, 2016: 80).

The experimental method (studio study) operates as selecting techniques and materials and structuring the elements in the production of ash glaze in a basic and creative, artistic process in the work. This experimental method is carried out in a ceramic workshop and this study uses the blending formula. This formula understands the concept of using two or three materials to be applied in the production of ash glaze as a base glaze for mixing with oxides. These test pieces serve as decorative, smooth finishing, waterproofing, decorative effects, braiding and durable effects on surfaces. This study can have an impact on artistic innovation, the development of works and the integration of new education in the production of ash glaze that uses, saves and is sensitive to natural materials especially in Sabah and makes this an alternative in the production of creating ceramic artworks.

FLOWCHART REVIEW

Flowchart of Ash Glaze

Things that should be focus on the research aspect from the theoretical framework that include helping the researchers is identify the topic to be studied, guidance on finding past studies that focus on the study and bridging the gap between known and unknown information. By disseminating the results throughout the research period, the implementation of various perspectives (refer to Figure 1.1), combining opinions about the results, confirms the value of the research that illustrates how the process is applied to the results of this research.

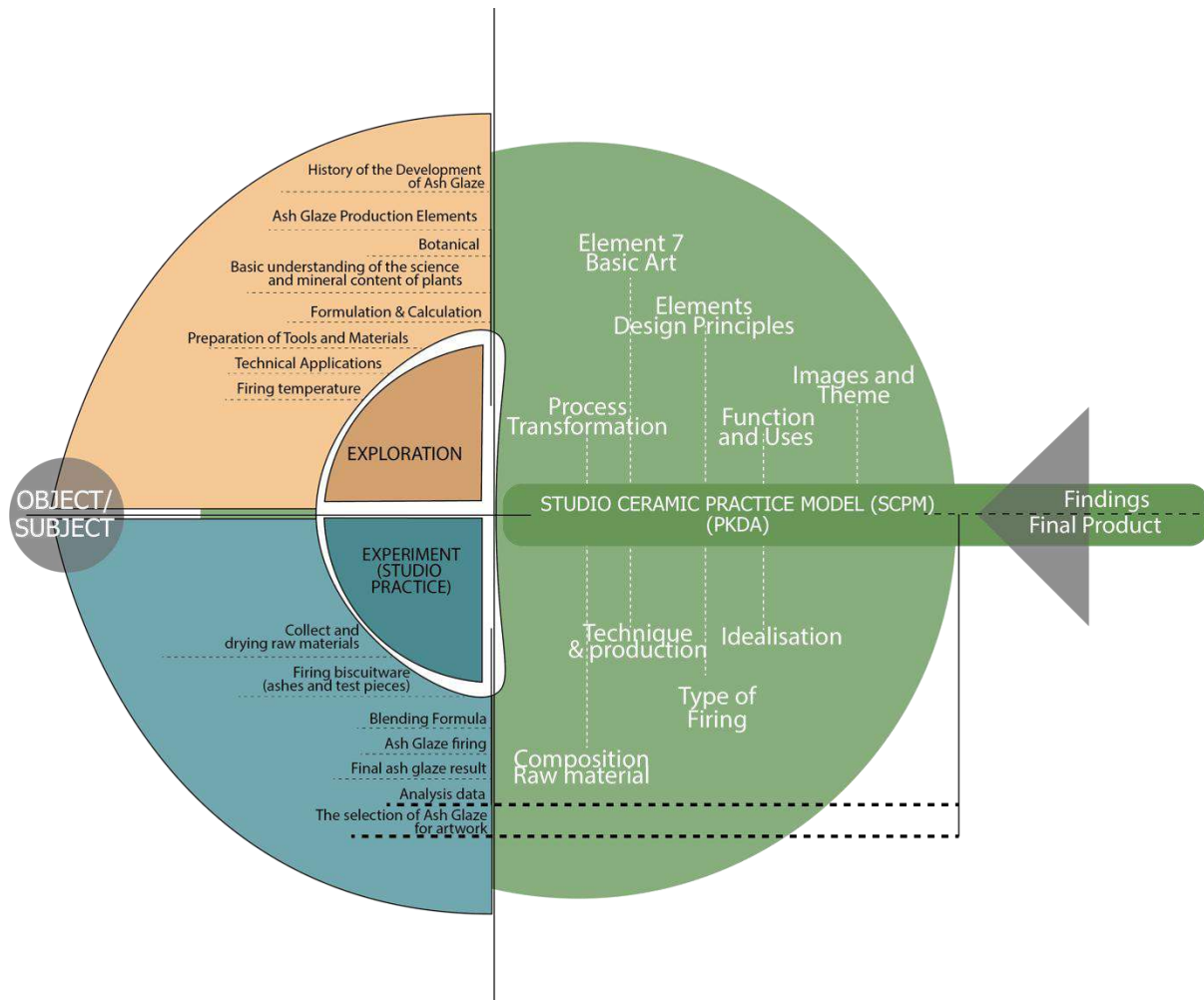


Figure 1.1 : Flowchart of ash glaze research as an alternative to creating works in ceramic art (Farah N., 2024)

Figure 1.1 refers to the combination of the results of the exploration approach, the experimental, practical approach from the point of view of the results of previous studies that can provide an explanation to the field study and the basic elements that have been implemented in the researcher's study. The process of producing ceramic works of art that involves clay as the main medium in the work. In exploring (exploration), the ever-changing availability of crops, identify practice requirements that can be used for any new ash source. Based on the elements of exploring, the first level artwork process presented is the selection of the raw materials selected, and through the processing of the raw materials to carry out the work production activities by an artist or maker. This stage has involved the mental activities and labour of the maker which involves the level of the craftsman or maker in transferring his "preconceived" mental image to the material found in the environment.

Basic principles in the context of visual art works can be produced through a combination of approaches to the basic elements of visual art and principles of design art. Basic elements of visual art such as appearance, texture, line, shape, space, and colour. Art principles represent how

artists use artistic elements to create an effect and create an interesting work. The principles of art and design are balance, contrast, emphasis, movement, pattern, rhythm, and unity/variety. The use of this principle will provide diversity in interpreting the work.

Each individual who produces will decide the art principle that they want to use in the work. Although some, not all, use elements of the design principles in one piece, the principles are interrelated and the use of one will often depend on the other. For example, when creating emphasis, the resulting work may use contrast or vice versa. It is generally agreed that a successful work is unified, while also having some variation created by areas of contrast and emphasis, balanced visually, and providing movement of the eye around the composition. Therefore, one principle of art can influence the effects of others. In the production aspect of the work, it can manipulate the seven elements by combining with design principles in shaping the production of ceramic works of art. In the production of works not every work of art contains each of these elements, but at least there are some elements used in the production of works.

This theoretical is not only intended to explain the general principles of practice. But on the other hand, the theoretical process about the production of ash glaze contributes to its development and to frame its reception. It also aims to extend the understanding of ash glaze, using the language and ideas that are collected continuously with the understanding involved in practice even though there are some practices that are based on a more scientific method and more geared towards a formulation approach. The methodology, which has developed because of this practice-led investigation, provides transferable knowledge, relevant to other practitioners involved in the development of ash pits in other locations and using other ash as the main subject of study. The following section reviews the four stages of this model which are the elements of clay production, experimentation (studio study), creative process and artistic process (SCPM/PKDA) in the development of ceramic artwork, and the result.

RESEARCH METHODS: CREATIVE AND ARTISTIC PROCESS PROCESSING (PKDA)

The artistic process is the process of producing works where according to Chapman (1992) the creativity process is related to the process of producing works (artistic process). This can also be explained by a process that is variable in terms of methods and techniques. Among the steps that need to be seen from the input aspect is idea generation (Inception of Idea). The researcher sets the objective and direction of producing the work. This depends on the idea and source of the object and subject seen.

Processing and refinement of ideas is done at the stage of refinement or purification of ideas. This is done to determine the image, theme, and purpose of obtaining the work. The creative process can, create or producing something. This means that every creative human being can create anything either internally or externally feeling. The creative results that are manifested reflect a person's effort in creating something. In the creative process, the researcher outlines the composition of raw materials, manufacturing techniques, burning techniques and the formation of ideas that include subjects/objects that have been explained. According to Wan Zarina Wan Othman and Ratna Laila Sahidin (2017) says that in the creation of something, a person's creativity always referring to the creative process he experienced. The creative process for everyone is different according to the experience that everyone goes through.

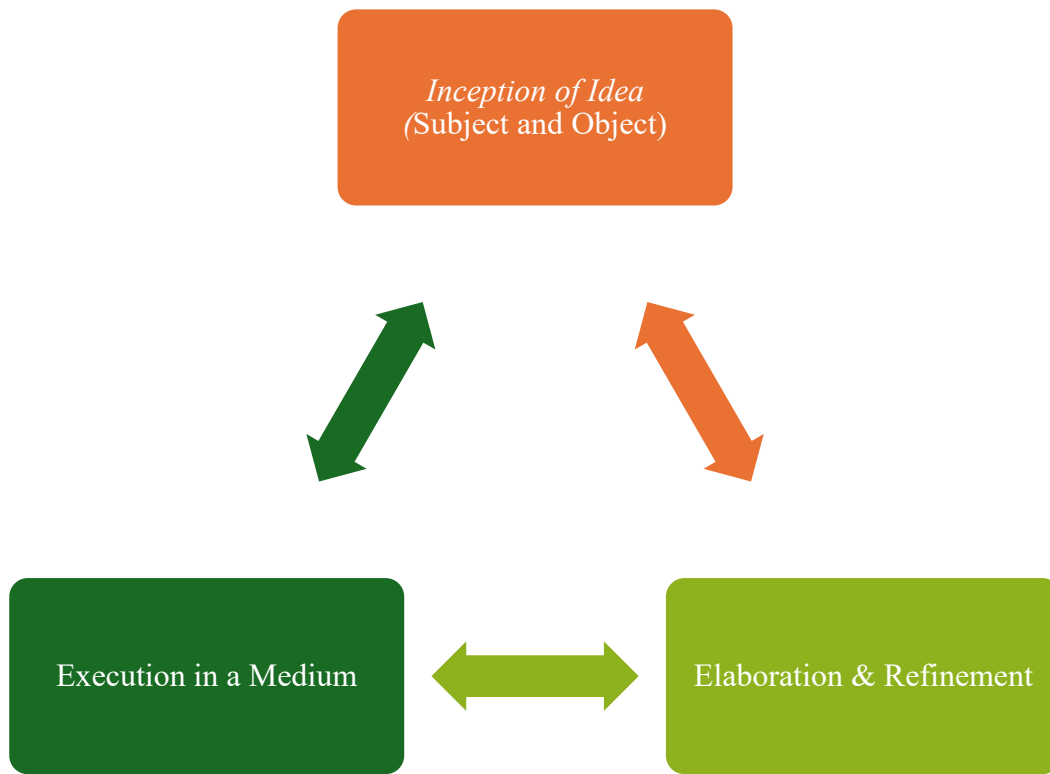


Figure 1.2: Creative and Artistic Process Processing (PKDA)

The artistic process of art to the result of the creation of ceramic art with the following characteristics which is the transformation process of design and composition art, seven (7) basic elements of ceramic art such as appearance, interweaving, line, shape, space, colour, value (value) and texture. Next, it involves elements of design principles, functions and uses as well as images and themes. These artistic processes will give the effect of tone development, movement representation, form elaboration, a strong sense of individuality and creativity. A process that involves the expressive use of line and form, originality in composition, and sensitivity to line and colour in the work. This process uses new capabilities more flexibly, widely, and deeply in the production of ceramic works of art.

Skills in using materials where the researcher emphasizes the exploration aspect, the researcher focuses on the history of ash glaze and the elements of ash glaze production. These elements are the guidelines for researchers in making ceramic artworks successful. The next part of the researcher emphasizes the aspect of experimental research (studio study). This experiment is important for the analysis carried out and has proven to be very useful in both the planning and evaluation of subsequent empirical tests. The studio studies based on the comparison of elemental constituents in the range of ash, have led to a deeper understanding of the possible behaviour of new ash in co-pigment (colour) glazes. Qualitative analysis provides a profile of the characteristics of RHA, WA and STL ash known from the highlights of previous studies and thus an overview of its possible performance as an ash glaze material. The value of this approach to research was confirmed when the relationship between analysis and behaviour was demonstrated in subsequent

experimental studies and in the final section. A selection of glazes to choose and apply to ceramic artwork.

In addition to the goals set for the research, there are further outcomes at the stage of producing the work. The various types of ash glaze that are developed make it possible to juxtapose different surface qualities and colours in works of art, this strategy and researchers are useful as an alternative to ash glaze in the production of ceramic works of art. This approach has great potential for further design development using new alternative ash glaze. The emergence of themes that connect artworks to their place of origin represents a major new dimension in art practice that will surely continue to develop through the above framework (refer to Figure 1.1).

The researcher successfully developed ash glaze with a range of X and Y ash samples and experimental test pieces of the study can be accepted by using this blending mixture involving SVLB, DVLB and TLB after examining the history and knowledge in the manufacture of ash glaze. The experimental results were designed to create artworks with various surfaces and colours depending on the work's goals and expression. Inspiration to create works of art based on the formation of ideas studying and sketching idealizations and themes. The researcher then made a round of release design to observe the development in the formation of ideas.

Production of 2D Ash Glaze Artworks (Practical Study)

Inspiration from nature forms such as plants and tree leaves have been developed into an art form for hidden aesthetic expression. Furthermore, the beauty and aesthetics that come from natural elements inspire artwork in the development of ceramic art creation. Researchers are inspired by natural forms that are realistic representations of living things such as plants, creating natural forms derived from artificial parts of organic forms. The artwork developed through this research and presented in the next section using the selected ash glaze.

Some of these explorations become fully completed designs that are then exhibited at exhibitions or innovations but nevertheless some of the ceramic pieces and artworks contribute authentic information about how new licks can be used creatively. For a wider appreciation of the results in a natural and realistic atmosphere, the researcher carried out an artistic and creative process in the making of ceramic works of art by using the idealization of elements from nature.



(i)



(ii)



(iii)

Figure 1.3 : Inspiration/Ideas from nature
Source : Noor Mustaqim bin Mohamed (2023), Penang Botanical Garden

One of the most important things in production is the formation of ideas and the exchange of information to the public. This is because everyone has a different understanding of real objects. Researchers need to express creative intent through schematic design and determine style, shape, texture, material, and layout. However, some nature forms are designed with part of the original form that clearly produces emotion in the created work. This texture effect was inspired by the pattern observed in the nearby forest, shown in Figure 1.3. This process is further developed with the use of lines themselves, adding further details and inspiring motifs.

With the application of flowchart of ash glaze (refer to Figure 1.1) the findings of the study are based on a thorough study during the process in the production of ash glaze as a creative and artistic medium. Therefore, this finding provides some aesthetic experience, creative and artistic formation, and the phenomenon of creativity at the end of the work. The result of the artwork will be evaluated based on observation, descriptive analysis.

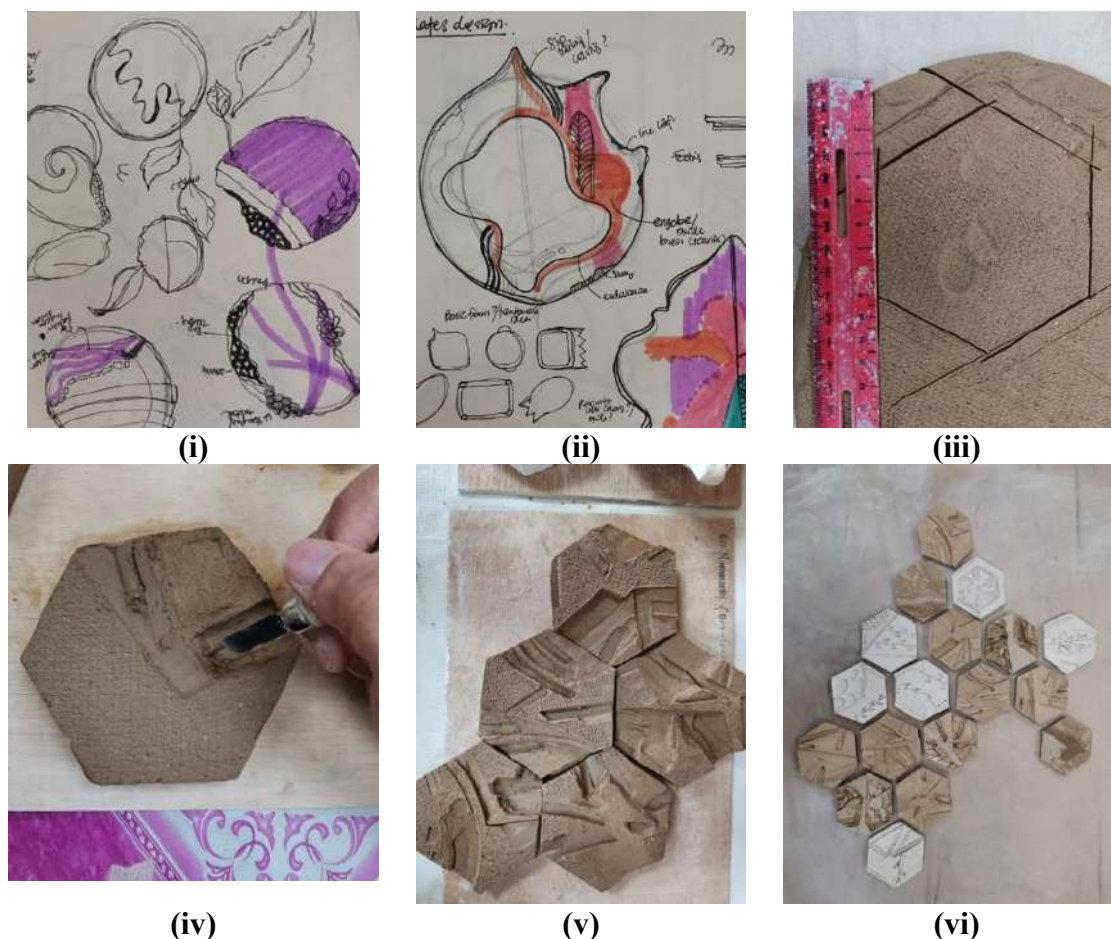


Figure 1.4 : (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi) Process making an artwork

Figure 1.4 produces the design of the pattern depicted on the selected sketch. These selected sketches are the result of the elaboration of ideas and the development of ideas from artists and reference works. Where the respondent applied the pattern design from paper to the real form by using decorative techniques and this should be explored further, as it allows the possibility of producing repeated effects. Therefore, the element of control, on pieces where each shape is

individual. As a case study of the creation of natural forms, the researcher was inspired to create a work from the upper part of the plant. These forms express the natural growth of plants by making simpler forms. The smooth and rough texture presents the elegance of a slick coating on a work of art.

The pure form represents nothing. This type of form is derived from the subtraction and addition of natural forms until the original form is completely far from the original. New forms may be created without reference to nature integrating geometric forms. Pure form emphasizes ideas more than emotions. In the case study of developing a work of art in its pure form, the researcher presents a work of art in the form of a sculpture inspired by the upper part of a plant. Researchers are interested in nature which has many unique and beautiful features. This organic ceramic artwork is inspired by these natural forms that have authenticity. Plants are the beauty that exists in form because the identity of the plant type is an art form in nature.

Experiments were also made in shaping the pieces, using various inspirations through nature. In addition, various combinations of ash glazes were used, and different application methods were used, dipping, pouring, brushing. Test pieces of local clay were used giving yellowish brown and reddish-brown colours, and white on the surface. These materials again form a link to the place where they are collected. The crusty texture is reminiscent of rusted metalwork and the selected coloured glazes give a drastic effect. The bluish colour seen on metal objects leads to the use of (CB) under the glaze on some pieces. Includes examples decorated and textured by several methods used for the pieces of work described.

The researcher presents the artwork with a groove in the interpretation of the work and the ash in the scraped part makes the artwork in its pure form by using the carving method to show the depth in the work. In addition, the researcher applied to the surface with a sample of matt gloss to emphasize the beauty that does not shine on the surface of the earth. Researchers seek a balance between the two as a guideline to create ceramic artwork in its purest form. The series is inspired by the trees and grass that surround the researcher. Things and empty spaces are always interesting to researchers. Things discussed include trees, leaves, branches, or a mixture of these elements that show the beauty of nature.

This line expresses the feeling of plant growth. Artistic influences are inspired from natural forms and created as pure forms. Researchers define this form as representative of plant growth. Its mass and shape can convey the spirit of growth. This formation also provides an inspiration in producing bark works for every type of plant available. The texture and colour used are the same as the test pieces described in the sample analysis section above. Textures are limited to surfaces to create a satisfying balance of control and randomness. Pieces of rough textured artwork are sketched to produce a textured finish consistent with the other surfaces of the artwork. Various found materials, chips and small pebbles are used to create textured surfaces.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

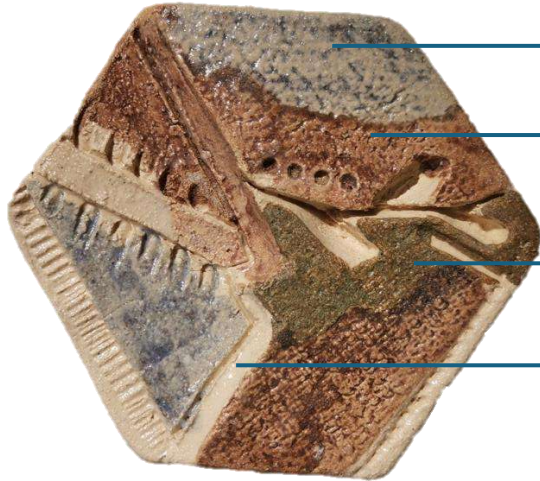
The piece of artform is formed in a smaller wooden frame, a soil combination of torn and textured strips of clay, pasted and rolled together to see the reaction of the combination of the two soils. Again, waste material from crops is used to create texture. The texture of the pieces is reminiscent

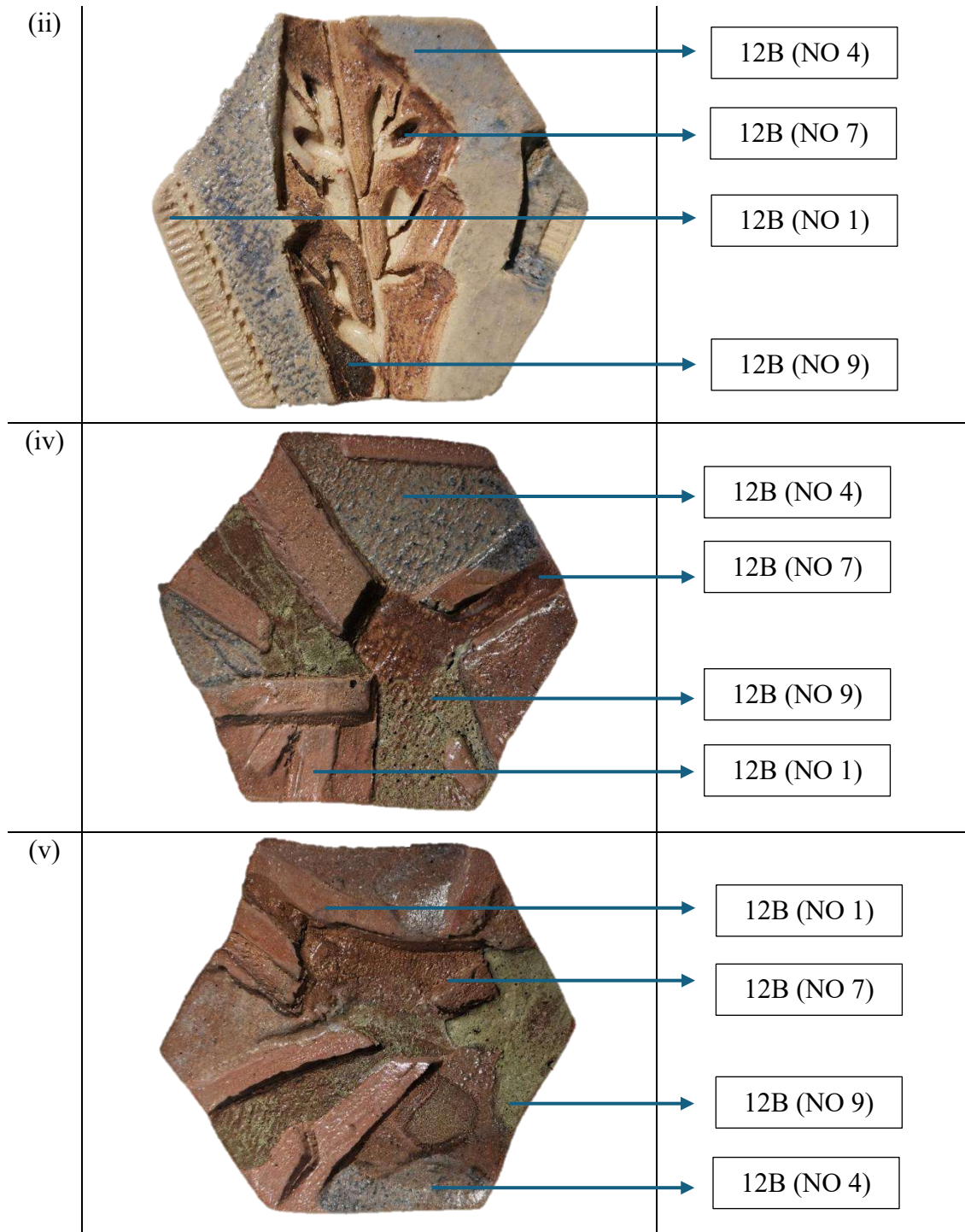
of rusted metalwork and the selected coloured glazes give the effect of textures and colours that are natural tones. The bluish colour seen on the metal objects led to the use of copper carbonate under glaze on some pieces. Table 2 shows the colour range in a selection of some pieces.

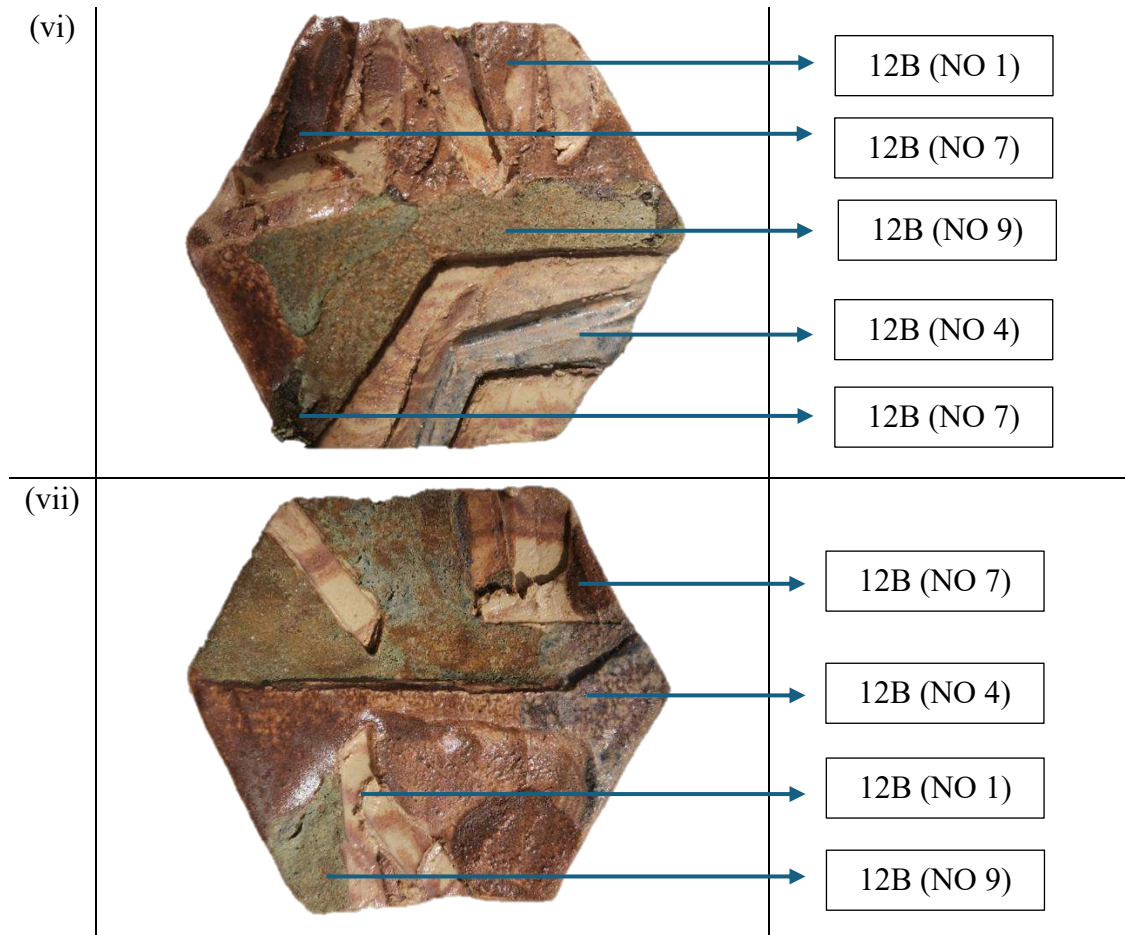
The researchers emphasize ceramic art sculptures that lead to flatware works (pieces) which are 2 Dimensional (2D). The researcher created an organic form of ceramic sculpture by using ash glaze as a case study. Basic forms such as organic ceramic sculptures in relief with inspiration from nature forms such as plants and tree leaves have been developed to become an art form for hidden aesthetic expression. Furthermore, it is the beauty and aesthetics that come from the natural elements that inspire organic ceramic sculptural artwork. In the production of ceramic art sculptures (2D), researchers get inspiration from the realistic forms of nature representing living things such as plants. Creating natural forms comes from the imitation of whole parts of organic forms. However, some nature forms are designed by rejecting or expanding part of the original form which clearly produces emotion in the created work.

As a case study of the creation of natural forms, the researcher was inspired to create a work from the upper part of the plant. These forms express the natural growth of plants by creating simpler forms. The smooth and rough texture presents the elegance of the ash glaze coating on the artwork. Free form is also known as irregular form. This is an uncertain form depending on the influence of the environment. In addition, it generates the emotion of endless mobility that affects the direction of the structure and angle of the shape. New forms may be created without reference to nature integrating geometric forms. Form emphasizes ideas more than emotions. The researcher presents a work of art in the form of a sculpture inspired by the upper part of a plant.

Table 2: The Use of Glaze on Ceramic Works After Firing

Bil	Artwork	Sample
(i)		12B (NO 4)
		12B (NO 7)
		12B (NO 9)
		12B (NO 1)





The originality of this sculpture can be shown through the form of nature. The movement and balance of plant form is the beauty inherent in form because the identity of each type of plant is an art form in nature. This line expresses feelings of movement and balance. The influence of art from the abstract, however has been clearly identified with natural forms. Researchers define this form as representative of moving and balancing. Space and shape can convey the spirit of movement and balance.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully establishes a comprehensive and structured model for producing ash glaze, demonstrating both its technical viability and its artistic value in contemporary ceramic practice. By combining theoretical foundations with practical experimentation, the research highlights the importance of understanding material origins, chemical behaviour, and historical references. The use of ash derived from organic sources such as plants and agricultural waste reveals how naturally occurring materials can be transformed into glazes that are not only durable but also visually expressive, aligning traditional knowledge with modern artistic needs.

Furthermore, the research presents ash glaze as a sustainable and innovative alternative to conventional glaze formulations. Through systematic testing, blending, and firing, the study shows

how different ash sources contribute unique colours, textures, and surface qualities. This methodological approach enhances the understanding of glaze chemistry while encouraging environmentally responsible practices in ceramic art. The blending formula introduced in the study also provides a practical framework for other artists or researchers seeking to expand their material vocabulary using locally available natural resources.

The resulting artworks created through this process embody the aesthetic potential of ash glaze, reflecting natural themes such as growth, movement, and organic texture. Inspired by the forms and structures of plants, the pieces reveal how material choice, surface treatment, and artistic intention can work together to produce expressive and meaningful artworks. The findings underscore the relevance of ash glaze as a creative medium that not only enriches surface quality but also deepens conceptual and artistic expression. By integrating sustainability, experimentation, and artistic exploration, the study contributes significantly to contemporary ceramic art and encourages continued innovation in material-based creative practices.

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EFFECTIVENESS AND BENEFITS OF SERVICE LEARNING: PERCEPTIONS OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN SARAWAK

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ABSTRACT Service learning is a pedagogical approach that has been applied in educational institutions worldwide since the 1970s. Beginning 2019, service learning has been implemented under the name ‘Service Learning Malaysia – University for Society’ (or SULAM) in the Malaysian university curriculum, including in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). However, in general, there has been lack of research regarding the effectiveness of service learning. This paper examines UNIMAS students’ perceptions of service learning projects. It describes the results of a study conducted among 83 second year Anthropology and Sociology students to investigate the effectiveness of service learning at the university level in Malaysia. The contents of the students’ reflection papers form the qualitative data of this study, which were analysed thematically using the inductive approach. The findings of this study indicate that most students perceive service learning to be effective in that their service learning projects have mainly achieved their goals. Furthermore, there were benefits gained by both students and the community through participation in service learning activities. This study adds to the growing body of knowledge on the efficacy of service learning, and the result show that service learning should continue to be implemented in the Malaysian academic curriculum. Additionally, this research helps to fill a notable void in studies examining the effectiveness and impacts of service learning in the Malaysian university context, particularly in Sarawak.

Keywords: Service learning, community engagement, qualitative research, pedagogy

INTRODUCTION

Service learning is a pedagogical approach that has been applied in educational institutions worldwide since the 1970s. Beginning 2019, service learning has been implemented under the name ‘Service Learning Malaysia – University for Society’ in the Malaysian university curriculum, including in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. However, in general, there has been lack of research regarding the effectiveness of service learning in the Malaysian university context especially in Sarawak.

The aim of this study is to explore the perceptions of the effectiveness and benefits of service learning among students particularly in the Anthropology and Sociology Programme at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, UNIMAS.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As a pedagogical approach, service learning has been implemented in educational institutions worldwide since the 1970s. As a form of experiential learning (see Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984), service learning has several main characteristics, as outlined by various authors (see Hanafiah, 2024; Kraft, 1996; McLaughlin, 2010; Md Salleh & Mokhtar, 2017; Piper et al., 2000). Firstly, service learning involves students conducting active or hands-on organised service that is integrated as part of the academic curriculum. Secondly, the service is conducted in collaboration between the students and/or educational institutions and community partners to address community needs that have been identified. This requires the students to make use of knowledge and skills gained from the classroom to solve real-world problems in real-life situations in the community. In this way, the students' learning is extended beyond the classroom and into the community, in a manner that enhances the education process. As posited by Soska et al. (2010, p. 140), service learning builds "connections between campus and community, while enriching learning for student." More than just linking educational institutions and community, through the student-community engagements, the service learning pedagogy also links theory and practice (McLaughlin, 2010). Importantly, reflection is a crucial component of service learning, "where students use higher order thinking skills to better understand and extend the formal learning from the service experience" (Kraft, 1996, p. 137), which further enables the students to reflect on their roles in addressing societal needs (Reynolds, 2009). According to Yusof et al. (2020, p. 281, citing Furco [1996]), the aim of service learning is "to produce holistically developed students who are able to think, act and reflect based on empirical evidence and human values."

In Malaysia, early forms of service learning (or more appropriately, student community engagements) have been observed in institutes of higher education since the 1970s, as pointed out by Mamat et al. (2019). Since 2015, the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia has included service learning into the university curriculum as part of the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education). Since 2019, service learning in Malaysian universities have come to be known as 'Service Learning Malaysia – University for Society' (or SULAM), with the aim of "producing Holistic, Entrepreneurial and Balanced Graduates" (Department of Higher Education Malaysia, 2019). Presently, service learning or SULAM is one of the high impact educational practices (or HIEPs) employed in Malaysian institutions of higher education (see Hanafiah, 2024; Hudin et al., 2018; Mamat et al., 2019; Mohd Naufal et al., 2024; Yusof et al., 2020), including Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, where this present study was conducted.

Despite the decades-long application of service learning in academic curriculum worldwide, Billig (2000) points out that research by service learning providers on the impacts of service learning has been lacking. However, more recent research has begun to fill in this void in showing the impacts of service learning projects among students. For example, the study conducted by McLaughlin (2010) among business graduate students demonstrates the 'real-world' experiences gained by the students through service learning. Other scholars have pointed out the benefits or improvements in terms of social growth, psychological development, moral judgements, civic responsibility and academic achievements (Billig, 2000; Kraft, 1996), as well as academic and leadership skills (Astin et al., 2000; Nurhaliza et al., 2024) among students who have participated in service learning. Furthermore, Mamat et al. (2009) observe the benefits of service learning to students in Malaysia in terms of providing self-confidence and soft skills, as well as improvements in creativity.

Nevertheless, as recently as 2020, Yusof et al. (2020) has noted the continued lack of studies that examine the impact of service learning practices in Malaysia. This is also the case in UNIMAS, where despite having provided service learning as a new pedagogical approach, there has been little research done on the impacts of service learning among its students. It is to address this existing lack that this study was conceived. The aim of this study is to explore the perceptions of the effectiveness and benefits of service learning among students particularly in the Anthropology and Sociology Programme at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, UNIMAS.

METHODOLOGY

The ‘Introduction to Borneo Archaeology’ (SSF2193) course is one of the service learning courses offered by the Anthropology and Sociology Programme at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, UNIMAS. The course is taken by all the programme’s students in their second year of study. As part of the service learning approach of the course, the students are required to design and implement service learning projects in collaboration with community partners – these could be government and non-government institutions, residential communities, student groups, or more widely, the general public (see Reynolds, 2009). In designated groups, students plan projects that are designed to address a predetermined (by the lecturer) aim or theme. The particular aim of the service learning course was to increase awareness of the field of archaeology among the general public. Due to restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic experienced by the country at the time of study, the service learning course and activities were conducted fully online, in accordance to the implementation of online teaching and learning in UNIMAS.

Prior to the planning and implementation of the service learning projects, the needs of the community were first identified. This was done through a short survey that was administered using Google Form and distributed to the general public. The survey was interested in finding out the types of knowledge related to archaeology that the public would like to receive. A total of 1024 responses were received. The result of the survey showed that members of the public were interested in receiving information on how archaeologists find archaeological sites, how to study archaeology, the benefits of studying archaeology, archaeology-related policies, the tools and methods of archaeology, and how archaeologists contribute to the study of the human past.

Based on these identified ‘needs’ of the community, the students then planned and proposed the service learning project and activities that each group will be conducting in order to provide the archaeology-related information to the general public. Like most service learning programmes, the activities were designed “to provide an educational experience and meet the needs of the community” (Piper et al., 2000, p. 159; and see also Mohd Naufal et al., 2024). The service learning activities planned included the conducting of webinars and online exhibitions, the creation of social media platforms (using Facebook and Instagram), and the designing of e-booklets and posters that provided content and information on various aspects of archaeology, which are then shared (and in some cases made) with community partners such as (higher) secondary school students, staff of local museum departments, and the general online public. As part of the documentation of the service learning, the student groups were also required to write and submit a project proposal, and following the implementation of their projects, a project report. As mentioned above, reflection is also one of the important components of service learning. As such, at various stages of their projects (before, during and after), each student was required to write reflections on their experiences of participating in

and conducting the service learning activities. These reflection papers constitute the primary source of data for this study, as described below.

In order to study the students' perceptions of the effectiveness and benefits of service learning, I examined the reflection papers submitted by the students (as part of the assessments of the course) at the end of the service learning course. According to Reynolds (2009, p. 4) "reflection activities are active learning processes that facilitate students' connection between their service in the community and instructional objectives", and as mentioned above, it is a key component of service learning. In the reflection papers, the students provided reflections on their personal experiences of conducting the service learning at various stages (before, during, and after) of their projects. Thus, multiple reflections were obtained with regard to the student's role in community engagement, the importance of service learning or community engagement, and more pertinent to this study, the effectiveness and benefits of service learning.

A total of eight (8) reflection papers were randomly selected for this study. This sample size represents roughly 10% of the total number of students (N=83) registered in the course. The contents of the students' reflections were read multiple times and analysed carefully and in detail in order to extrapolate key themes that emerged from the data using the inductive approach, which is used for "creating meaning in complex data through the development of summary themes or categories from the raw data" (Thomas, 2006, p. 239).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the service learning activities conducted by the students are largely perceived to be effective, in terms of fulfilling the goal of increasing awareness of archaeology among the general public. This perception stems from the personal opinions of the students themselves, and from feedback received by the students from the community. Examples of the personal opinions given by students are as below (all statements by the research participants have been edited by the author in terms of spelling and grammar to improve readability, without changing their contents and meanings).

"This project has achieved its goals through various activities that have been implemented during the webinar. Through the activities that been implemented, students are exposed to the knowledge and understanding about archaeology and archaeological sites." (Student 2)

"Our SULAM project has managed to succeed in all the goals...Through careful and systematic organisation and summarising of the content, combined with great graphic design - we have managed to publish 10 posts, each one exhibiting a different archaeological site. We have disseminated knowledge and archaeological information regarding those sites using a wide variety of credible sources." (Student 3)

On the other hand, students' comments on the effectiveness of the service learning activities based on the positive feedback they received are as below.

"...based on the evaluation of the webinar programme, the participants have given positive comments and have accepted the programme because they

think that the programme is interesting and can be organised again in the future.” (Student 1, original comments in Malay, translated by the author)

“A total of 30 respondents responded that through this project, they were interested in getting involved in the field of archeology. Therefore, I believe that our group has achieved the main goal albeit not comprehensively.” (Student 5)

“I can say that this e-SULAM project has succeeded in achieving its goal. More people express their interest in learning more about archaeology after reading our e-booklet.” (Student 7)

Besides the students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of service learning, the analysis of the students’ reflection papers has also highlighted the perceived benefits of service learning to both the students and the community. A total of seven (out of eight) students highlighted personal and community gains, as described below.

The personal gains of the students can be divided into several categories: knowledge/self-learning; personal or work values such as teamwork, commitment and confidence; and skills such as communication, community engagement, critical thinking and software use. In terms of the service learning activities providing benefits to the students, the findings of this study correspond to the previous findings obtained by researchers such as Hanafiah (2024) and Nurhaliza et al. (2024). The personal gains are exemplified by the statements below.

“When planning this project and implementing it, many processes are involved...to ensure that everything works well. Hence, this project also teaches me that teamwork and commitment are crucial aspects.” (Student 2)

“Therefore, this SULAM project teaches us as students to be smart in dealing with problems professionally and have effective communication with the community.” (Student 5)

“Personally, after completing the project, I think at some part of this project is not only to promote what is archeology all about to people outside there, but it also helps my self-learning on archaeology. What I learn in class has been widen more by doing this project. I realised that when I look into some information that is required for the project’s contents and the more that I search for it, the more information that I get. Plus, it also gives me a whole different level of experience because this project required us to engage with community and it is very interesting to listen to community perspectives about archaeology as it is something new to me.” (Student 6)

“The communication which I had with the viewers of the virtual museum exhibition was effective that I had to think critically and analyse before I tell something to them because I have to be correct with points. This attitude encouraged me to enhance my communication skills. I also learned to use a new software which is ‘Artstep’. I will be able to use this in the future and also recommend to others as I am already used to it. This SULAM project gave me the courage to try new things and also to be confident enough to

overcome challenges and obstacles wisely in everything in order to achieve our goals.” (Student 8)

Moreover, the findings of this study show that through their participation in the service learning activities conducted by the students, the members of the community have gained awareness, knowledge and new appreciation of archaeology, as exemplified by the statements below.

“...the SULAM project has benefitted the community through gaining knowledge, basic exposure about archaeology and archaeological sites, as well as knowing the importance of studying archaeology. They gain knowledge after listening to the talk session during the webinar and the videos on archaeology and archaeological sites. Besides, [the secondary school] students also received basic exposure about archaeology and archaeological sites that can help to change their perspective about this field. For example, our participants, Form 5 and Form 6 students, gave positive feedback to us and said that they are thankful because we held the webinar with lots of useful and knowledgeable information to them. Additionally, they also learned the importance of studying of archaeology that could be related to today’s era. Thus, it shows that this SULAM project do benefit community in many ways to enhance their awareness of archaeology in Malaysia.” (Student 2)

“I can see that from the survey we distributed to general online public in Malaysia, the community benefited from this project by gaining more information on archaeology. The feedback shows that 83.1% of 60 respondents agree that their understanding on archaeology increased after reading the e-booklet. From this project, majority of our respondents are able to increase their knowledge on what are the contributions of archaeologists in history, how archeologists find the excavation sites, and methodology in archaeology.” (Student 7)

It is also worth noting that none of the students’ reflections mentioned any concerns about possible negative impacts of their projects. However, one student (Student 4) did raise issues about conducting the service learning. Nevertheless, the student’s statement is more concerning project planning and the dynamics (or problem) of conducting group work, and rather than directly related to the effectiveness (or lack of) of the service learning activities conducted, as shown in the statement below.

Our first plan was to conduct an online meeting with the other anthropology students from different university. Our difficulty was that it is difficult to find those students... The next problem is our group members. Members in the group do not share their thoughts in group chat.” (Student 4)

CONCLUSION

Service learning is a pedagogy that enhances the learning experience, and links the university with the community. Thus, service learning is supposed to benefit both the students and community. The results of this study supports this idea. This study has shown that students who participated in service learning perceive service learning projects to be effective in addressing

the needs of the community, in this case in increasing awareness of archaeology among general public. This study has also shown the personal and community gains from service learning activities. However, this study was conducted only on students who conducted the service learning activities. In order to get a more holistic perspective, further research should also focus on the perceptions of the community members who participated or collaborated in the service learning. This study thus adds to the growing body of knowledge on the efficacy of service learning, and the overall results suggest that service learning should continue to be implemented in the Malaysian academic curriculum as an effective way of preparing students for the realities of working life and community engagement. Additionally, this research helps to fill a notable void in studies examining the effectiveness and impacts of service learning in the Malaysian university context, particularly in Sarawak.

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PAROCHIALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SERVICE

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ABSTRACT Parochialism is an important mechanism that determines the measure of loyalty and obedience of a civil servant to the government organization. Thus, the ability of the head of an organization in the public sector to instil parochial characteristics in a civil servant is the most important value in forming a certain set of thoughts in a civil servant. Basic courses in public sector services and staffing are among examples of useful tools for forming a parochial mind set. Apart from that, the emphasis on commitment and loyalty to the head of government and state is a form of aspiration that is useful in determining how a civil servant carries out his functions and at the same time obeys the head of government and the head of state. Public policies and regulations related to the way a civil servant carries out his duties are the most important channels that can be used by the head of a government agency to instil parochial values and norms in a civil servant. This will allow the head of the organization to form a big picture of the duties and responsibilities of a civil servant in the workplace environment and in making the process of service delivery to the public a success. Thus, parochial as a characteristic in a person can be identified through the way of working, the approach chosen to lead the group in the organization, the thinking and decision-making and subsequent influence in creating a work culture guided by the individual leader concerned.

Keywords: Parochial, government, public service, civil servant, public policy.

INTRODUCTION

Parochialism describes a predetermined mode of thinking and acting within organizations, shaped by authority and characterized by loyalty to leaders and strict adherence to norms (Collins, 2022). While some argue this rigidity provides stability and a strong organizational image, others contend it hinders innovation and adaptability in a dynamic environment (Grillo & Landabaso, 2021). Historically, Malaysian public sector reforms from the 1960s to the 1980s formalized this structured management, laying the groundwork for a bureaucratic culture that emphasizes compliance and uses rewards and punishments to shape employee behaviour (Bani & Mohd Hassan, 2023; Taib & Mat, 2021).

This entrenched parochial culture has led to significant integrity challenges, evidenced by a high number of corruption arrests and low transparency scores, which are directly linked to the culture's emphasis on group loyalty over public accountability (Roslan et al., 2023; Zainal, Som & Mohamed, 2021). While agencies like MAMPU (the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit) and initiatives like the National Anti-Corruption Plan have been established to facilitate reform, their effectiveness is often limited

by the very parochial culture they seek to change. These efforts risk being treated as mere procedural artifacts rather than fundamental shifts in behaviour. For these initiatives to be truly effective, a deeper understanding of parochialism is necessary to transform the organizational culture from an authoritarian instrument of control into a genuine tool for effective and accountable governance (Chin & Ramasamy, 2022; Tan & Kumar, 2024).

Building upon these historical and contemporary challenges, a path forward requires a fundamental re-evaluation of the core tenets of Malaysian public sector management. The current top-down reform efforts, while well-intentioned, often fail to address the root cause of the problem: a deeply ingrained culture that prioritizes hierarchical authority and group loyalty over individual accountability and ethical conduct. To achieve lasting change, it is crucial to move beyond superficial fixes and implement a more holistic, bottom-up approach. This involves empowering frontline employees, fostering a culture of psychological safety where dissent and new ideas are encouraged, and redesigning reward systems to recognize not just compliance, but also integrity, transparency, and innovation. By transforming the organizational climate from one of fear and control to one of trust and shared purpose, the public sector can evolve from a rigid, bureaucratic machine into a dynamic, ethical, and truly effective engine of public service, ultimately restoring public trust and fostering sustainable national development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical and Structural Roots of Parochialism

The public sector's culture of parochialism in Malaysia is deeply rooted in both its colonial past and subsequent nation-building policies. The British-influenced bureaucratic structure established a precedent for a system where conformity to national agendas is highly valued (Abd Manaf, 2023). This foundation, characterized by a top-down, command-and-control approach, set the stage for a culture where obedience takes precedence over independent thought. According to Schein's model, this can be seen as a deep-seated political basic assumption that has long shaped the entire organizational culture (Zabidi et al., 2024; Bani & Mohd Hassan, 2023). The fragmentation between local and national governments further reinforces this, as localized interests can overshadow broader national unity goals, hindering effective policy implementation (Lee et al., 2024).

Tools for Enforcing a Single Ideology

Following independence, the government employed specific policies and leadership styles to promote a single national identity, inadvertently becoming tools for enforcing parochialism. The May 13 riots served as a critical turning point, deeply influencing the government's push for national unity and a single identity. In the wake of this event, the New Economic Policy (NEP) was implemented, aiming to restructure society and eliminate poverty, particularly by uplifting the Bumiputera (Malays and other indigenous groups) community.

This focus had a significant impact on the ethnic composition of the civil service. According to a 2023 estimate, Bumiputera citizens constitute approximately 69.9% of the total population, while Chinese and Indian citizens comprise 22.8% and 6.6% respectively. The resulting cultural identity prioritized uniformity over diverse perspectives, which can be understood as a problematic simplification that stifles critical feedback (Visser, 2022). This

focus on a single identity, born out of the post-May 13 political climate, inadvertently fostered a parochial culture that struggles with genuine inclusivity.

In this environment, leaders often leverage their vision to meld employee personalities and suppress dissent, which in turn stifles the creativity required for effective administration (Liu, 2021; Ong & Tan, 2023). A narrow, parochial interpretation of moral values, as a cultural artifact of this basic assumption, can turn values like transparency and accountability into mere superficial formalities that protect the interests of a select few (Ramli et al., 2024; Ridzuan & Ismail, 2022).

Consequences and Critiques

The enduring focus on a single ideology has led to several negative consequences. The government's post-May 13 push for a singular national identity, while intended to foster unity, has contributed to a culture that struggles with genuine inclusivity (Abdul Hamid & Yusof, 2023). This can manifest as a leadership style that ignores the diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds of employees, hindering empathy and the ability to effectively serve a multi-ethnic nation (Chin & Ramasamy, 2022). Policies that prioritize a unified vision over diverse perspectives may become tools for reinforcing existing inequalities, undermining public trust (Wan Ibrahim & Harun, 2023). The most significant consequence, however, is a leadership model that consistently prioritizes loyalty and conformity over merit and expertise. This approach, a clear manifestation of a parochial basic assumption, fosters a rigid environment where innovation is stifled and can lead to a talent drain (Tan & Kumar, 2024; Ahmad & Omar, 2024). A truly excellent administrative system for a multi-ethnic society requires a diverse and open-minded leadership that is grounded in a broader range of basic assumptions (Grillo & Landabaso, 2021; Siti Nor Yaacob & Rosy, 2013).

Application of Schein's Model to Malaysia's Public Sector

Edgar Schein's three-level model of organizational culture artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions provides a robust framework for understanding the systemic parochialism within Malaysia's public sector. This model helps to move beyond surface-level observations to diagnose the deeper, often unconscious, forces at play.

Artifacts as the visible manifestations

The most visible level of culture consists of artifacts the observable structures, processes, and behaviours of the organization. Within Malaysia's public sector, a key artifact is the ethnic disproportionality in the civil service. While ethnic Malays constitute approximately 57% of the total population, they hold a significant majority of positions, comprising 78% of the federal civil service and 80% of top management roles (Zabidi et al., 2024). This visible imbalance perpetuates a monocultural work environment that can stifle innovation and exclude diverse perspectives from Chinese, Indian, and East Malaysian indigenous communities. Another artifact is the highly structured, hierarchical bureaucracy inherited from British colonial rule. This rigid system, characterized by strict adherence to rules and a clear chain of command, serves as a tangible expression of the underlying culture (Idris et al., 2021).

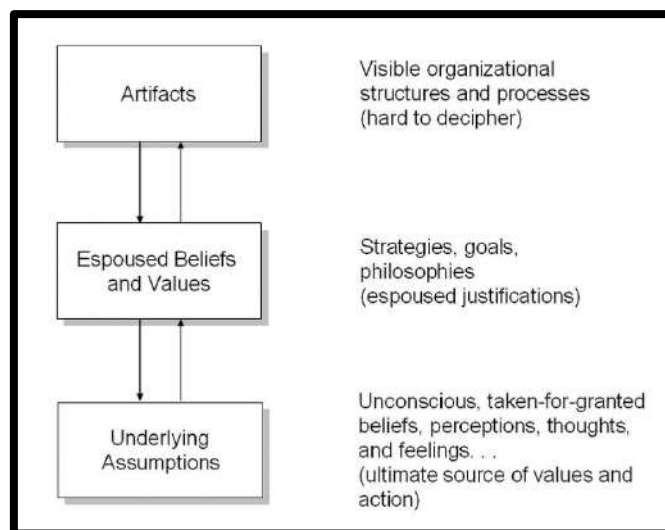
Espoused values

Espoused values are the organization's stated goals, philosophies, and mission statements. In the Malaysian public sector, these values often emphasize national unity, efficiency, and public service. However, a problematic overemphasis on obedience and conformity to a single ideology can be seen as an espoused value that, in practice, restricts critical thinking and dissent. Policies aimed at political integration and national unity, while presented as beneficial, can become mechanisms of control that discourage diverse viewpoints and individual initiative.

Basic assumptions

Schein's model posits that the most powerful level of culture consists of basic assumptions the unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs that guide behaviour. The artifacts and espoused values of Malaysia's public sector can be traced to fundamental, unexamined assumptions about hierarchy, control, and the nature of national identity. One core assumption is that a strong, unified state requires a homogenous culture and a centralized, top-down power structure. This belief, born out of historical events and post-colonial nation-building efforts, underpins the observed ethnic disproportionality and rigid bureaucracy. It is this fundamental assumption that drives the prioritization of loyalty and conformity over merit and diverse representation. Ultimately, a fundamental reassessment of these basic assumptions is necessary to move beyond a restrictive, parochial culture and foster a more inclusive and effective governance system (Grillo & Landabaso, 2011).

Figure 1: Three Level of Organizational Culture



Source: Schein (1983) Organizational Culture: A Dynamic Model.

DISCUSSION

The meta-synthesis of the literature reveals a cohesive argument that the push for an "integrated" working culture in Malaysia's public service, while ostensibly promoting a unified identity, has instead fostered systemic parochialism. This analysis moves beyond superficial observations to expose the deep-seated cultural assumptions that hinder genuine reform and innovation. A fresh perspective on this problem suggests that the very stability lauded by some is a false economy. The historical influence of British colonial bureaucracy, which prioritized rules and obedience, has created an entrenched cultural artifact that, as highlighted by Grillo

and Landabaso (2021) and Ismail et al. (2023), actively prevents the system from achieving its stated goal of effective work outcomes.

This perspective reveals that the issue of parochialism is not an abstract concept but a systemic problem with tangible, negative effects. The overrepresentation of one ethnic group (Zabidi et al., 2024) and the "deep state" bureaucracy's resistance to change (Bani & Mohd Hassan, 2023) are direct consequences of a long-standing assumption that prioritizes insular group agendas over national policy goals. Consequently, the stability of the current system, while providing a degree of control, actively hinders accountability and genuine reforms needed for a truly equitable and effective public service. True progress requires a fundamental shift from an imposed, conformist culture to a genuinely shared one that values merit, diverse perspectives, and adaptability to serve the collective good of a multi-ethnic nation.

CONCLUSION

The Malaysian public service faces a persistent challenge in moving beyond its deep-seated parochial culture to achieve genuine professionalism and accountability. Critics argue that despite governmental efforts in training and education, the system remains hampered by a rigid bureaucracy, insular thinking, and a resistance to change. This is evidenced by a focus on process over results and a disconnect from the needs of the multi-ethnic populace. Consequently, the public service struggles with fragmentation, ethnic-based favouritism, and a lack of innovation, which undermines its effectiveness and public trust. To overcome these challenges, a fundamental shift in the public service's foundational culture is required. Merely focusing on superficial changes like new training programs or administrative reforms will not suffice. The core issue lies in the deep-seated cultural assumptions that prioritize conformity and loyalty over merit and adaptability. A forward-looking approach must, therefore, involve a systemic reassessment of these values to cultivate a truly inclusive, professional, and responsive administration. This will require promoting diverse leadership, encouraging critical thinking, and embracing a culture of genuine accountability to better serve the collective needs of all Malaysians and build a modern, effective public sector.

LIMITATION

A limitation of this study is the difficulty in measuring a leader's values and attitudes. This information is important for researchers to understand the specific traits and character that lead to parochial behaviour. For future studies, we suggest including psychological and self-assessment tools to better evaluate these aspects of an organization's leadership.

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WARISAN BUSANA KIMARAGANG: KAJIAN AWAL TERHADAP SABUNG SINUDAAN HERITAGE OF KIMARAGANG ATTIRE: PRELIMINARY STUDY ON SABUNG SINUDAAN

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ABSTRAK Masyarakat etnik Kimaragang merupakan salah satu etnik dalam *Dusun* yang kaya dengan nilai budaya, adat dan tradisi. Warisan budaya yang diwarisi adalah bukti bahawa generasi terdahulu memiliki tahap kreativiti dan intelektual yang tinggi dalam setiap karya yang dihasilkan. Antara warisan budaya tersebut adalah seperti *Sabung Sinudaan* iaitu salah satu busana tradisional lelaki Kimaragang. Busana berkenaan telah menarik minat yang besar daripada para pereka fesyen tempatan Sabah dan diperagakan dalam bentuk tradisional atau kontemporari. Namun, adalah mengecewakan apabila pengamal budaya dalam etnik Kimaragang sendiri tidak menyedari ciri-ciri utama yang sepatutnya ada dalam *sabung sinudaan*. Pengetahuan masyarakat yang kurang terhadap elemen-elemen penting dalam reka bentuk, motif dan corak menyebabkan hasil karya yang tidak bernilai budaya. Fokus kajian ini adalah membincangkan berkaitan analisis awalan berkaitan dengan ciri-ciri reka bentuk, motif dan corak *Sabung sinudaan* yang bernilai budaya. Sehubungan dengan itu, kajian ini dilakukan menggunakan kaedah temubual dan perbandingan koleksi busana peribadi lebih daripada 100 tahun milik keluarga Encik Molinka Buling dan Puan Ruminting Jelin. Diharapkan, kajian seumpama ini dapat memberikan data terbaharu, penjelasan dan pencerahan berkaitan dengan reka bentuk, motif dan corak *Sabung Sinudaan* masyarakat etnik Kimaragang di Sabah.

Kata Kunci: Kimaragang, *Sinudaan*, Tradisional, Kebudayaan, Sabah.

ABSTRACT: *The Kimaragang ethnic community is one of the Dusun ethnic groups rich in cultural values, customs, and traditions. The inherited cultural heritage serves as evidence that past generations possessed a high level of creativity and intellect in every piece of work they produced. Among these cultural legacies is the Sabung Sinudaan, a traditional male attire of the Kimaragang people. This attire has garnered significant interest from local fashion designers in Sabah and has been showcased in both traditional and contemporary forms. However, it is disappointing that cultural practitioners within the Kimaragang ethnic group themselves are often unaware of the key features that should be present in the Sabung Sinudaan. The community's lack of knowledge regarding essential elements in design, motifs, and patterns has resulted in creations that lack cultural value. This study focuses on a preliminary analysis of the design features, motifs, and patterns of the Sabung Sinudaan that hold cultural significance. Accordingly, this research employs interview methods and comparisons with private collections of over 100 years old, owned by Mr. Molinka Buling and Mrs. Ruminting Jelin. It is hoped that this study will provide updated data, explanations, and*

insights related to the design, motifs, and patterns of the Sabung Sinudaan attire of the Kimaragang ethnic community in Sabah.

Keywords: *Kimaragang, Sinudaan, Traditional, Cultural, Sabah.*

PENDAHULUAN

Warisan budaya, adat dan tradisi yang diwarisi oleh sesebuah masyarakat mencerminkan kearifan lokal masyarakat terdahulu yang telah bertamadun. Daya penaakulan dalam melakukan intepretasi terhadap objek persekitaran menunjukkan generasi terdahulu adalah masyarakat bijak pandai yang belajar secara langsung daripada alam persekitaran. Masyarakat tradisional etnik Kimaragang tidak terkecuali daripada mempelajari, mengolah dan mezhahirkan pemikiran mereka melalui karya seni dan tekstil. Hasil karya mereka telah menjadi tanda pengenalan sesuatu bangsa. Antara karya warisan budaya yang menjadi kayu ukur mengenali bangsa adalah melalui busana tradisional. Busana tradisional masyarakat etnik Kimaragang adalah seperti *sabung* (baju) *sinudaan* dan *sabung kinaling*, *lapoi* dan *sinudot* (Pangayan, 2014; 2016; Molinka, 2023) serta beberapa busana lain yang masih belum didokumentasi. *Sabung sinudaan* merujuk kepada pakaian tradisional yang dipakai oleh kaum lelaki yang sangat popular dalam kalangan etnik Kimaragang di daerah Pitas. Pakaian tersebut bukan sekadar busana, tetapi lambang identiti etnik Kimaragang yang biasanya dipakai dalam pelbagai perayaan seperti Kaamatan, majlis kesyukuran, perkahwinan, dan upacara adat.

Kebelakangan ini, penghasilan busana *sabung sinudaan* telah meluas dengan melahirkan ramai pengamal budaya dalam etnik Kimaragang sendiri serta turut menarik minat para pereka fesyen luar. Impaknya, kebanyakan busana yang dihasilkan tidak memiliki ciri-ciri penting *sabung sinudaan*. Perkara sedemikian memberikan dampak negatif jika tidak ada kesedaran mengekalkan busana tradisional yang bernilai budaya dan tradisi. Jika perkara sedemikian tidak dikawal, maka tidak mustahil kebudayaan masyarakat etnik Kimaragang akan terus terhakis dan lenyap tanpa disedari. Oleh yang demikian, pengetahuan berkaitan dengan ciri-ciri *sabung sinudaan* yang bercirikan budaya dan tradisi perlu diketahui oleh seluruh masyarakat etnik Kimaragang dan para pengamal budaya di Sabah. Hal ini penting dalam memastikan setiap hasil karya mereka memenuhi kriteria sebagai busana tradisional yang dikenali sebagai *sabung sinudaan*. Selain itu, setiap pemakai busana tradisional tersebut tidak mengalami kerugian ribuan ringgit akibat daripada memiliki *sabung sinudaan* yang tidak bercirikan budaya dan tradisi masyarakat etnik Kimaragang.

SOROTAN LITERATUR

Masyarakat etnik Kimaragang tergolong dalam *Dusun* dan populasinya tinggal di kawasan daerah Pitas dan Kota Marudu. Sejarah telah memisahkan etnik Kimaragang kepada dua kumpulan utama yang diketuai oleh Aki Pamansah dan Aki Tumunda mempunyai perbezaan sedikit dari segi loghat bahasa daerah namun masih berkongsi budaya, adat dan tradisi (Shim, 2007; Damilan, 2015; Kroger, 2015; Denis *et al.*, 2019; Lee *et al.*, 2022; Ginsari, 2022; Pangayan, 2016; Pugh-Kitingan, 2015). Kedua-dua kumpulan masyarakat etnik Kimaragang tersebut mempunyai perbezaan busana tradisional iaitu *lapoi* dan *sinudot* dipakai oleh etnik Kimaragang Kota Marudu- Tandek (Pangayan, 2016) dan *sabung kinaling* dan *sinudaan* merupakan busana tradisional masyarakat etnik Kimaragang di Pitas-Koromoko. Walau bagaimanapun, seluruh masyarakat etnik Kimaragang moden mengiktiraf kesemua busana tersebut sebagai pakaian tradisional yang dimiliki bersama tanpa mengira asal dan keturunan.

Kajian berkaitan dengan busana tradisi etnik Kimaragang adalah masih kurang dan para pengkaji lebih tertumpu meneliti busana tradisi masyarakat Lotud, Rungus, Murut dan Kadazan (Jusilin & Kindoyop, 2016; Yoon, 2018; Humin Juslin, Ismail Ibrahim & Teou, 2019; Ezura *et al.*, 2022). Perbincangan sepintas lalu berkaitan busana tradisional etnik Kimaragang telah dilakukan oleh Pangayan (2014; 2017) dan Molinka (2023) yang membuat kajian berkaitan dengan *sabung kinaling*. Maka, dengan adanya dokumentasi seumpama ini diharapkan memberikan informasi penting kepada seluruh masyarakat seterusnya menjadi rujukan para penyelidik dan sarjana.

METOD KAJIAN

Kajian ini dilakukan menggunakan kaedah temu bual dan perbandingan dekorasi busana. Kaedah temu bual dilakukan terhadap beberapa individu yang berpengalaman dan aktif sebagai pengamal budaya di Kg. Salimpodon Darat, Pitas. Antaranya adalah Odu Unun Buang (96 tahun), Odu Mooh Buang (93 tahun), Puan Ayunan Pangi (76 tahun), Puan Ruminting Jelin (67 tahun), Puan Julia Inotol (66 tahun), Molinka Buling (65 tahun), Kuyin Miring (65 tahun), Makaul Inatul (64 tahun), Medal Injan (60 tahun), Jamaul Inatul (54 tahun), Puan Jurika Inotol (48 tahun) dan Puan Norlina Molinka (43 tahun). Selain terlibat sebagai penggiat kebudayaan, terdapat di antara mereka yang sangat berpengalaman dalam hutan belantara sebagai petani tradisional, pemburu dan pemungut hasil hutan serta pemotong kayu.

Perbandingan ragam hias dan motif melibatkan dua helai *sabung sinudaan* (terdapat beberapa *sabung sinudaan* yang tidak mendapat keizinan untuk didokumentasikan) iaitu Sinudaan 1 milik mendiang Aki Buling Lubayan (meninggal pada tahun 1971) kini dijaga oleh keluarga Encik Molinka Buling (65 tahun). Busana tersebut dipercayai berusia lebih kurang 100 tahun kerana diberikan oleh datuk (moyang kepada Encik Molinka) kepada Aki Buling. *Sinudaan 2* pula milik mendiang Aki Jelin Untung (meninggal akhir era 1980an) diwarisi oleh anak bongsu beliau, Puan Ruminting Jelin (67 tahun). *Sabung sinudaan* tersebut telah berusia antara 50 hingga 60 tahun merupakan hak milik Aki Jelin sendiri. Kedua-dua *sabung sinudaan* tersebut merupakan peninggalan sejarah yang sangat berharga dan perlu diketahui oleh seluruh masyarakat etnik Kimaragang. Dokumentasi perlu dilakukan supaya setiap anggota masyarakat dapat mengenali identiti bangsa sendiri. Kendati pun, kemungkinan besar masih terdapat beberapa pasang *sabung sinudaan* milik masyarakat etnik Kimaragang yang belum direkodkan untuk tatapan umum.

DAPATAN KAJIAN

Sabung sinudaan diperbuat daripada kain hitam seperti satin, kashibo dan kain kapas (Juliah Inotol, Temu bual 25 Julai 2022). Masyarakat etnik Kimaragang mempunyai kemahiran *moningkor* (membuat benang) dan *mangawol* (menenun) kain untuk dibuat pakaian tertentu (Pagayan, 2016; Juliah, Temu bual 25 Julai 2022). Bagaimana pun, masyarakat tradisional etnik Kimaragang menghasilkan *sabung sinudaan* dan *kinaling* menggunakan sejenis kain yang dikenali oleh masyarakat etnik Kimaragang sebagai kain *siyabun* iaitu sejenis kain kapas import dari negara China (Ruminting, Temu bual 17 April 2024). Busana tradisional seperti *sabung sinudaan* disulam dengan menggunakan tangan sepenuhnya agar hasil karya yang dihasilkan tidak kaku kerana setiap karya adalah bersifat individual disebabkan tidak menggunakan acuan atau mesin (Juliah, Temu bual 25 Julai 2022; Jurika, Temu bual 26 Julai 2022). Sifat individual tersebut memberikan keistimewaan dan keunikan kerana menimbulkan

perbezaan tidak ketara pada setiap corak seterusnya menyerlahkan aura pemakai (Norlina, Temu bual 27 Julai 2022).

Berdasarkan *Sinudaan 1* dan *Sinudaan 2* (Foto 1) kelihatan serupa namun masih memaparkan perbezaan dari segi bentuk setiap motif. Jenis kain yang digunakan adalah berbeza seperti ditenun pada *Sinudaan 1* dan kelihatan tebal. Bagaimanapun tidak dapat dipastikan kain yang digunakan adalah daripada kain *Siyabun* atau sebaliknya kerana kekangan data dan rujukan berkenaan jenis kain berkenaan. *Sinudaan 2* juga merupakan kain jenis tebal yang ditenun atau menggunakan mesin. Selain itu, *Sinudaan 1* telah pudar, sedikit koyak dan terdapat benang sulam yang telah tercabut di beberapa bahagian. Manakala *Sinudaan 2* masih cantik, utuh dan warna benang sulaman masih terang. Dari segi ragam hias, *Sinudaan 1* mempunyai corak yang banyak, tidak seimbang antara motif berpasangan dan kompleks berbanding *Sinudaan 2* yang setiap corak terletak cantik, seimbang dan kemas. Saiz *Sinudaan 2* adalah besar berbanding dengan *Sinudaan 1* kerana dipengaruhi oleh saiz badan pemilik busana berkenaan.



Foto 1: Koleksi *Sabung Sinudaan* Etnik Kimaragang
Sumber Gambar: Koleksi Penulis

Kedua-dua *sabung sinudaan* (*Sinudaan 1* dan *Sinudaan 2*) tersebut semestinya mampu untuk menerangkan pola busana tradisional lelaki etnik Kimaragang iaitu *sabung sinudaan* seterusnya menggambarkan tata cara pemakaian busana tersebut secara tepat di samping sumber lisan dari golongan bijak pandai. Ketika memperagakan busana tradisional seharusnya

pemakai mengekalkan tata cara pemakaian seperti yang nenek moyang lakukan untuk menunjukkan identiti budaya. Tamsilnya, *sabung sinudaan* (Foto 2), busana tersebut dipakai dengan membiarkan bahagian dada terbuka tanpa butang. Pemakai diperbolehkan memakai baju dalam seperti kemeja-T, atau baju dalam tanpa lengan yang berwarna putih atau warna kulit jika kurang selesa memakai *sabung sinudaan* secara terdedah (Ruminting, Temu bual 17 April 2024). Kemudiannya, *sabung sinudaan* dipadankan dengan *soruai kampung* iaitu seluar berpotongan longgar yang mempunyai panjang hingga ke lutut atau buku lali (Juliah Inotol, Temu bual 25 Julai 2022). Walau bagaimanapun, dokumentasi *soruai kampung* yang diwarisi turun temurun belum pernah direkodkan, namun berdasarkan gambaran cerita lisan dan pengalaman generasi tua seluar berkenaan merupakan salah satu seluar harian lelaki masyarakat etnik Kimaragang.



Foto 2: Tatacara Pemakaian *Sabung Sinudaan* Tanpa Aksesori
Sumber Gambar: Koleksi penulis

Selain dipakai bersama *soruai kampung*, *sabung sinudaan* tidak lengkap tanpa *tagkos* dan *sigar*. *Tagkos* merupakan ikat pinggang yang turut berfungsi sebagai kemas pada pinggang pemakai. *Tagkos Sinabala* terdiri daripada beberapa padanan warna kain iaitu kuning, merah dan hijau atau merah, putih dan biru adalah *tagkos* yang sering digunakan oleh golongan pemimpin atau golongan elit. Manakala penggunaan kain biasa digunakan oleh golongan orang biasa (Juliah, Temu bual 25 Julai 2022; Jamaul, Temu bual 24 Februari 2023). Seterusnya, *sigar* iaitu kain berbentuk segi empat sama dilipat dan dililit pada bahagian kepala berperanan sebagai topi atau penutup kepala masyarakat tradisional entik Kimaragang. Terdapat beberapa jenis *sigar* yang masyarakat etnik Kimaragang miliki antaranya adalah *sigar tineyan* dan *sigar linontian* (Juliah, Temu bual 25 Julai 2022); Norlina, Temu bual 27 Julai 2022). Bagaimanapun, golongan orang biasa boleh menggunakan kain biasa untuk menutup kepala mereka.

Pemakaian aksesori tambahan seperti *golong* (gelang tangan), *lungkaki* (gelang kaki) tidak direkodkan kecuali *pondikos*, *gampa* (senjata seperti parang dan pedang) dan *tandus* atau *sopuk* (lembing) (Norlina, Temu bual, 27 Julai 2022; Jamaul, Temu bual 24 Februari 2023). *Pondikos* adalah azimat yang dipakai pada bahagian lengan dan tersembunyi di dalam

baju. *Pondikos* mempunyai dua jenis iaitu *pondikos* kain warna merah untuk kekuatan dan *pondikos* berwarna hitam adalah azimat perlindungan (Ruminting, Temu bual 17 April 2024). Oleh kerana majoriti masyarakat etnik Kimaragang telah beragama Kristian dan Islam, maka pemakaian azimat tidak lagi dipraktikkan pada masa kini. Senjata dan alat tajam tidak dipraktikkan lagi untuk tujuan keselamatan awam kecuali pada acara tertentu sahaja. Pemakaian aksesori tambahan seperti *tinggol ta'aki* (rantai manik batu merah) dan aksesori bersesuaian diperbolehkan semasa majlis perkahwinan atau majlis-majlis tertentu (Unun Buang, Temu bual 12 April 2024; Mooh Buang, Temu bual 12 April 2024). Walau bagaimanapun, pemakaian *sabung sinudaan* tradisional bermotif dan bercorak bukan untuk semua golongan lelaki etnik Kimaragang tetapi hanya diperagakan oleh golongan elit dan berstatus dalam masyarakat atau seorang *wowoyo'on* (orang rujukan atau pemimpin) (Ruminting, Temu bual 17 April 2024); Jamaul, Temu bual 24 Februari 2024). Golongan masyarakat biasa mempunyai pilihan untuk mengenakan pakaian lain selain *sabung sinudaan* yang bercorak.

PERBINCANGAN

Pembuatan busana tradisional Kimaragang seperti *sabung sinudaan* adalah ringkas kerana hanya menggunakan bentuk segi empat dan segi empat trapezium. Malahan, peralatan untuk memotong kain juga adalah menggunakan *pe'es* (pisau belati serbaguna) atau *pida* (pisau pemotong daging) (Ayunan Pangi, Temu bual 23 Julai 2022) kerana alat pemotong yang lebih moden sukar didapati. Kini, pemotongan kain dapat dilakukan dengan lebih mudah menggunakan gunting kain khas dan penggunaan mesin jahit untuk menyambungkan setiap helaian kain. Walaupun, terdapat penerapan beberapa peralatan moden dalam pembuatan busana tradisional namun ciri-ciri khas *sabung sinudaan* perlu dikekalkan agar busana yang dibuat adalah bernilai budaya.

Ciri-ciri Khas *Sabung Sinudaan*

Busana bernilai budaya merujuk kepada pakaian tradisional yang mengekalkan nilai tradisi iaitu sama seperti pakaian tradisional yang diwarisi turun temurun. *Sabung sinudaan* memiliki beberapa ciri-ciri khas yang unik dan perlu dikekalkan dalam setiap busana yang dihasilkan. Kesemua ciri khas tersebut terdapat pada *Sinudaan 1* dan *Sinudaan 2*. Walau bagaimanapun, perlu diketahui bahawa perbezaan dekorasi pada kedua-dua *sabung sinudaan* tersebut adalah bergantung kepada daya kreativiti pembuat, perbezaan zaman, lingkungan serta keadaan persekitaran semasa dihasilkan. Ciri-ciri *sabung sinudaan* yang telah dikenal pasti berdasarkan busana tradisional *Sinudaan 1* dan *Sinudaan 2* adalah seperti berikut:

1. Sisipan atau “*suda*”

Nama *sinudaan* berasal daripada kata dasar ‘*suda*’ yang bererti sisip atau tambahan dalam bahasa etnik Kimaragang. Perbuatan *monuda* (menyisipkan) merujuk kepada perbuatan memasukkan objek atau elemen tambahan di antara dua objek untuk memberikan kesan luas dan longgar yang biasanya dilakukan pada pakaian atau kraftangan. *Sabung* tradisional tersebut dikenali sebagai *sinudaan* kerana mempunyai *suda* iaitu merujuk kepada kekek (*gusset*) dan pesak (*gore*) atau istilah yang mudah difahami iaitu anak baju (Norlina, Temu bual 27 Julai 2022; Asliza Aris, 2015). Oleh itu, ciri khas yang pertama *sabung sinudaan* etnik Kimaragang adalah wajib mempunyai anak baju pada kedua-dua sisi busana.

2.Potongan Kain

Ciri khas kedua *sabung sinudaan* adalah terletak pada tata cara pemotongan kain busana. *Sabung sinudaan* mempunyai tiga bahagian utama (Foto 3) iaitu *koyuan*, *suda* dan *longon* (Norlina, Temu bual 27 Julai 2022).

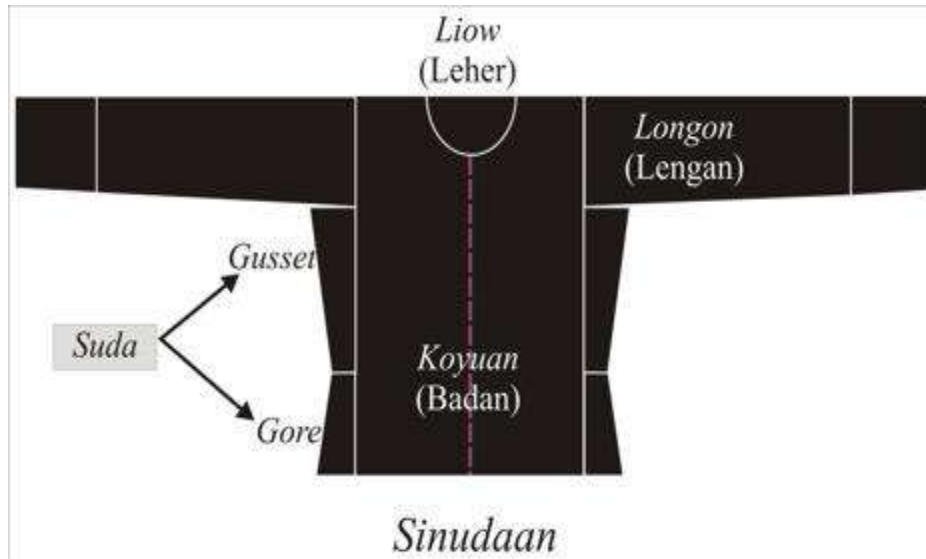


Foto 3: Teknik pemotongan Kain dan bahagian utama Sabung Sinudaan
Sumber Gambar: Koleksi Penulis

Koyuan sabung sinduaan hanya menggunakan sehelai kain berbentuk segi empat tepat (*rectangle*) yang dilipat dua membentuk bahagian hadapan dan belakang baju tanpa sebarang jahitan pada bahagian bahu (Foto 4). Kemudiannya, kain pada bahagian hadapan baju ditebuk membentuk leher kolar bulat seterusnya bahagian tengah hadapan baju dipotong kepada dua bahagian secara menegak untuk memudahkan proses pemakaian. Pada bahagian anak baju, pesak berbentuk *trapezium* dibiarkan terbuka tidak dijahit sepenuhnya untuk memberikan keselesaan kepada pemakai. Reka bentuk lengan *sabung sinudaan* juga unik kerana terdapat sambungan kain pada bahagian pergelangan tangan yang sedikit ketat. Selain itu, ukuran panjang baju adalah lebih pendek berbanding panjang lengan iaitu berada di bahagian atas paras punggung pemakai atau pada paras tiga suku lengan pemakai.



Foto 4: Perincian pada bahagian bahu, lengan, badan dan suda *Sabung Sinudaan*
Sumber Gambar: Koleksi Penulis

3. Penggunaan *Lo'op* pada Hujung Kain

Ciri seterusnya adalah berkaitan dengan penggunaan *lo'op* atau penutup pada tepi kain di bahagian kolar leher, tangan, dada dan bawah baju. *Lo'op* atau penutup pada hujung kain berfungsi untuk melindungi hujung kain daripada terurai atau jahitan koyak. Pada masa yang sama penutup hujung kain tersebut juga berfungsi sebagai hiasan atau kemasan pada tepi kain. Kain *lo'op* pada *sabung sinudaan 1* adalah menggunakan kain berwarna merah (telah pudar) dan *Sinudaan 2* menggunakan kain perca bercorak bunga berwarna warni. Kini, *lo'op* telah diseragamkan menggunakan kain berwarna merah sebagai standard kemasan (Juliah, Temu bual 25 Julai 2022; Jurika, Temu bual 26 Julai 2022).

4. Motif dan Corak Khas

Selain ketiga-tiga ciri berkenaan motif juga memainkan peranan dan merupakan ciri penting dalam busana tradisional *sabung sinudaan* etnik Kimaragang. Motif yang dipilih adalah motif khas yang menunjukkan bahawa busana tersebut merupakan *sabung sinudaan*. Corak dan motif pada *sabung sinudaan* bukan saja memperindahkan pakaian tetapi turut menyampaikan simbolisme budaya yang menyampaikan makna tersurat dan tersirat (Safrizal Shahir, 2018) berkaitan aktiviti seharian, tindakan dan cara pemikiran bangsa. Berdasarkan kedua-dua *sabung sinudaan* iaitu *Sinudaan 1* dan *Sinudaan 2* kesemua motif khas tersebut diletakkan

pada tempat-tempat tertentu menunjukkan bahawa pemilihan setiap motif dan corak adalah secara khusus. Motif yang dipilih adalah terdapat dalam lautan dan daratan serta terdiri daripada beberapa jenis fauna dan flora. Antara motif dan corak fauna adalah *unduk-unduk*, *kambang kiapu*, *linimatok* manakala motif tumbuhan adalah seperti *tolutu*, *gosing*, *lingkong* dan *kulubung*.

Motif dan Corak Sabung Sinudaan

Meskipun masyarakat etnik Kimaragang terdedah kepada pelbagai objek di persekitaran mereka, tetapi tidak semua objek dijadikan sebagai simbol perlambangan budaya mereka (Kempers, 1988; Yoon, 2018). Objek-objek yang dipilih sebagai motif utama dalam busana tradisional khususnya *sabung sinudaan*, lebih cenderung kepada elemen alam yang memiliki makna mendalam dalam kehidupan seharian mereka. Keakraban masyarakat tradisional dengan alam semulajadi sehingga diterjemahkan objek flora dan fauna menjadi motif kebanggaan yang diwariskan kepada seluruh generasi etnik Kimaragang. Teknik pengolahan dan penyampaian setiap motif dan corak adalah menunjukkan penghargaan mereka terhadap unsur-unsur alam yang signifikan dalam kehidupan mereka. Antara motif berkenaan adalah seperti berikut :

A. Fauna

Terdapat beberapa fauna (Foto 5) yang dipilih menjadi hiasan *sabung sinudaan* seperti *unduk-unduk* (*Hippocampus sp.*) iaitu sejenis spesies ikan yang dikenali sebagai kuda laut sering ditemui di pesisir laut seperti di kawasan rumpai laut, kawasan bakau dan terumbu karang (Lourie et al., 2004; Jones, 2004; Choo & Liew, 2003; 2004; 2005). Kuda laut turut dikenali sebagai *sea monster* (Shapawi et al., 2015) memberikan kelebihan kepada haiwan tersebut dalam sesebuah masyarakat yang menghargainya. Sifat yang terdapat pada *unduk-unduk* menarik perhatian masyarakat yang terlibat sehingga diabadikan dalam lambang yang bermakna pada kehidupan. Antara sifat *unduk-unduk* adalah bersikap tenang ketika berenang dengan memaut pada rumpai laut untuk bertahan dalam mengharungi arus deras air laut. Selain itu, kuda laut jantan juga bersikap bertanggungjawab kerana mengeram telur selama empat minggu dan berpuasa selama tempoh tersebut (Lourie, et al. 2004; 2005; Shapawi, et al, 2015).

Sejak dahulu kala, kuda laut memiliki makna simbolik dalam pelbagai budaya antarabangsa terutamanya para pelaut dan pengembara yang menganggap haiwan berkenaan sebagai pelindung di lautan (Scales, 2009). Demikian juga dalam kebudayaan masyarakat etnik Kimaragang, *unduk-unduk* dipilih sebagai motif utama yang terletak pada bahagian atas dada *sabung sinudaan* iaitu bermula dari bahu hingga ke bahagian pinggang baju. Masyarakat etnik Kimaragang tradisional tertarik dengan sifat positif *unduk-unduk* dan dijadikan perlambangan kepada tanggungjawab besar seorang lelaki sebagai ketua keluarga yang harus siap berkorban dan tenang dalam menjalani kehidupan. Selain itu, pemilihan imej tersebut adalah sebagai simbol perlindungan atau deklarasi kebal daripada ilmu hitam (Scales, 2009). Pada *Sinudaan 1*, motif *unduk-unduk* dihasilkan secara berbeza pada kiri dan kanan dada baju. Manakala *unduk-unduk Sinudaan 2* pula dihasilkan secara seragam dari segi bentuk dan warna. Jika dibandingkan kedua-duanya, *unduk-unduk* pada *Sinudaan 1* adalah lebih kompleks dan lebih menarik berbanding dengan *unduk-unduk* pada *Sinudaan 2* yang lebih kemas dan teratur.

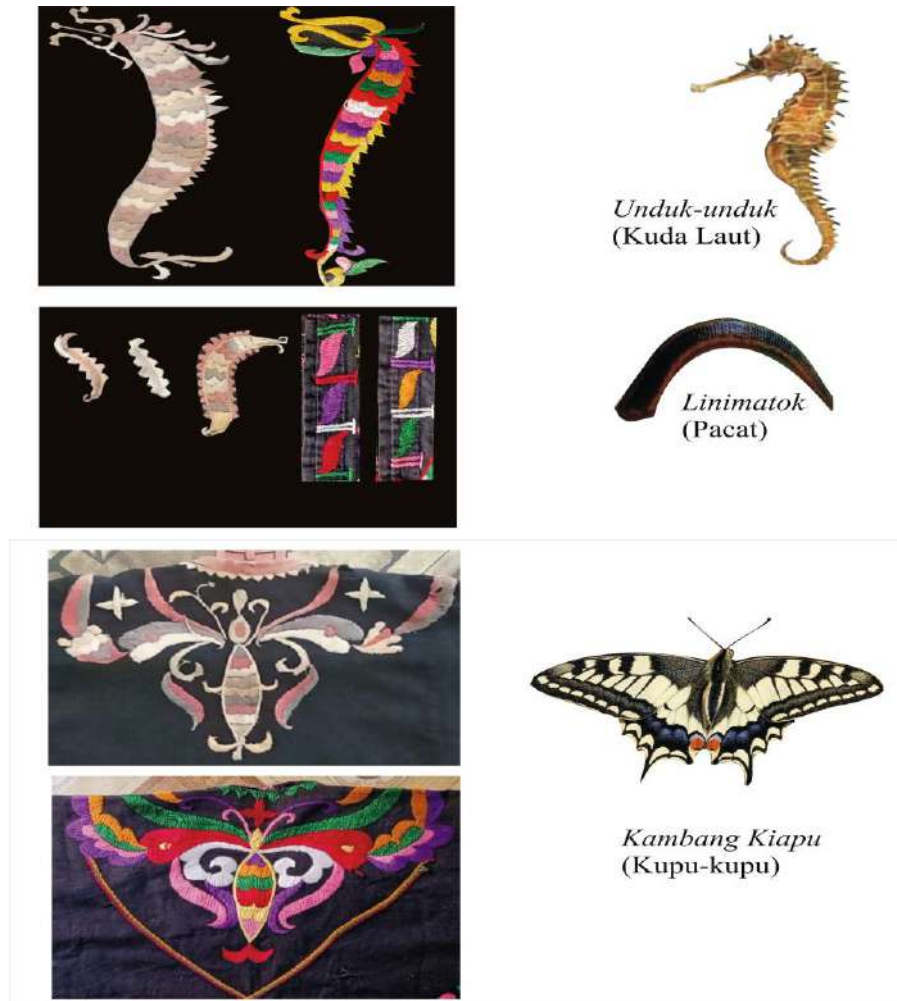


Foto 5: Motif Fauna yang terdapat pada *Sabung Sinudaan*
Sumber Gambar: Diubah suai daripada Lourie *et al.* (2004) dan Dzuhilmi (2019)

Selain *unduk-unduk*, *linimatok* yang berasal daripada perkataan *limatok* iaitu pacat (*Haemadipsa sp.*) turut menjadi pilihan sebagai motif pada *sabung sinudaan*. Pacat adalah haiwan penghisap darah yang terdapat di dalam hutan tebal yang lembab dan di kawasan lembah yang berdekatan dengan kawasan yang mempunyai sumber air seperti sungai atau tasik. Biasanya haiwan tersebut bersifat pemangsa dan mempunyai pancaindera yang peka terhadap mangsa (Mangunjaya, 1985). Masyarakat antarabangsa pula mempunyai pandangan mitologi terhadap pacat atau lintah mengaitkannya dengan unsur mistik dan menyeramkan (Falih *et al.*, 2019; Harry Tuazon *et al.*, 2024). Bagaimana pun, masyarakat etnik Kimaragang tidak melihat sisi negatif haiwan berkenaan dengan menjadikannya sebagai motif budaya.

Pada *Sinudaan 1*, *linimatok* dihasilkan dalam dua versi iaitu versi besar bersesungut dan versi kedua pula adalah tidak bersesungut. Terdapat enam ekor *linimatok* iaitu tiga ekor di bahagian dada kanan dan tiga ekor di dada kiri. Manakala *Sinudaan 2* pula meletakkan enam ekor *linimatok* pada tengah dada iaitu pada bahagian belahan kain. Motif *linimatok* pada *Sinudaan 2* adalah lebih ringkas berbanding *linimatok Sinudaan 1*. Masyarakat etnik Kimaragang tetap memilih haiwan berkenaan sebagai motif budaya bukan kerana kisah horor dan mistik (Falih *et al.*, 2019; Harry Tuazon *et al.*, 2024) yang dikaitkan tetapi sebagai perlambangan bahawa masyarakat etnik Kimaragang mampu menundukkan atau menangani

perkara-perkara yang buruk berlaku. Selain itu, sifat pacat yang tangkas dan licik mencari peluang turut menginspirasi masyarakat tradisional etnik Kimaragang untuk sentiasa peka kepada keadaan semasa dan keadaan persekitaran sehingga menjadi lambang budaya. Pacat yang suka menghisap darah manusia memberikan peringatan tentang sikap berhati-hati dan menghormati alam agar sentiasa berwaspada ketika dalam hutan.

Fauna ketiga yang menjadi motif pada *sabung sinudaan* adalah *kambang kiapu* iaitu sejenis kupu-kupu (*lepidoptera sp.*). Biasanya, kupu-kupu sering dijadikan sebagai kayu ukur diversiti alam sesuatu kawasan berada dalam lingkungan yang baik atau sebaliknya berdasarkan kepelbagaian spesies. Kedatangan spesies kupu-kupu dipengaruhi oleh spesies tumbuh-tumbuhan yang hidup di sesuatu kawasan (Dzulhemi Nasir, 2019). Kitaran hidup serangga tersebut iaitu bermula daripada telur, beluncas (*larva*) dan kepompong (*pupa*) sebelum menjadi kupu-kupu dengan kepak berwarna terang dan menarik (Liivamagi et al., 2014) menginspirasi masyarakat tradisional dalam menjalani setiap cabaran atau fasa kehidupan. Masyarakat antarabangsa menjadikan kupu-kupu sebagai perlambangan terhadap pengharapan, kesabaran, transformasi dan pembaharuan, keindahan serta kebebasan. Selain itu, kupu-kupu juga sering dilambangkan sebagai tanda peringatan semangat roh nenek moyang sentiasa bersama-sama dan memberkati kehidupan mereka yang masih hidup (Horner-Devine et al., 2003).

Motif *kambang Kiapu* atau *kolibambang* pada *sabung sinudaan* terletak pada bahagian belakang baju tradisional berkenaan. Perbezaan *kambang kiapu* pada kedua-dua *sabung sinudaan* iaitu *Sinudaan 1* dan *Sinudaan 2* tidak ketara dan dihasilkan dengan mengekalkan ciri yang sama iaitu mempunyai sesungut, kepak, kepala dan perut. Kemudiannya, dihiasi dengan motif seperti bunga dan lingkaran motif spiral. Kehidupan kupu-kupu yang mengalami fasa perubahan yang ketara sepanjang kehidupannya menunjukkan kecekalan dan kesabaran dalam pengharapan dan kupu-kupu tetap menikmati kehidupan dengan bebas menjadikan masyarakat etnik Kimaragang memilihnya sebagai motif budaya. Masyarakat etnik Kimaragang percaya bahawa setiap kesusahan itu pasti berubah menjadi kesenangan pada masa hadapan (Molinka, Temu bual 19 April 2024; Juliah, Temu bual 25 Julai 2022). Di samping itu, kehadiran motif kupu-kupu pada busana tradisional turut menggambarkan bahawa masyarakat tradisional etnik Kimaragang hidup dalam suasana alam yang cantik menghijau dan keseimbangan ekosistem yang optimum.

B. Flora

Selain fauna, terdapat beberapa tumbuhan yang dipilih sebagai motif dalam busana etnik Kimaragang. Pada *sabung sinudaan* iaitu *Sinudaan 1* dan *Sinudaan 2*, motif dan corak adalah berinspirasi tumbuhan dalam hutan tebal dan belukar seperti *tolutu*, *gosing*, *lingkong* dan *kulubung* (Foto 6). *Tolutu* (*Scaphium sp.*) merupakan sejenis pokok kayu balak di kawasan hutan hujan tropika seperti di Sabah. Kayu balak yang dihasilkan biasanya digunakan untuk pelbagai jenis perabot dan juga digunakan untuk membuat rumah (Medal, Temu bual 21 September 2024; Molinka, Temu bual 19 April 2024). Tumbuhan tersebut turut dikenali sebagai *malva nut tree* atau *kambang somangkuk* (salah satu jenis *tolutu* dalam Bahasa Kimaragang) kerana buahnya boleh dijadikan ubat penawar untuk sakit bergejala ringan seperti demam panas dan batuk serta sering dijadikan bahan dalam minuman (A. Susilowati et al., 2020). Pemilihan motif bunga dan buah pokok tersebut dalam pelbagai variasi iaitu semasa pokok balak tersebut melalui musim berbunga, berbuah dan musim buah gugur (Makaul, Temu bual 21 September 2024; Medal, Temu bual 21 September 2024; A. Susilowati et al., 2020).

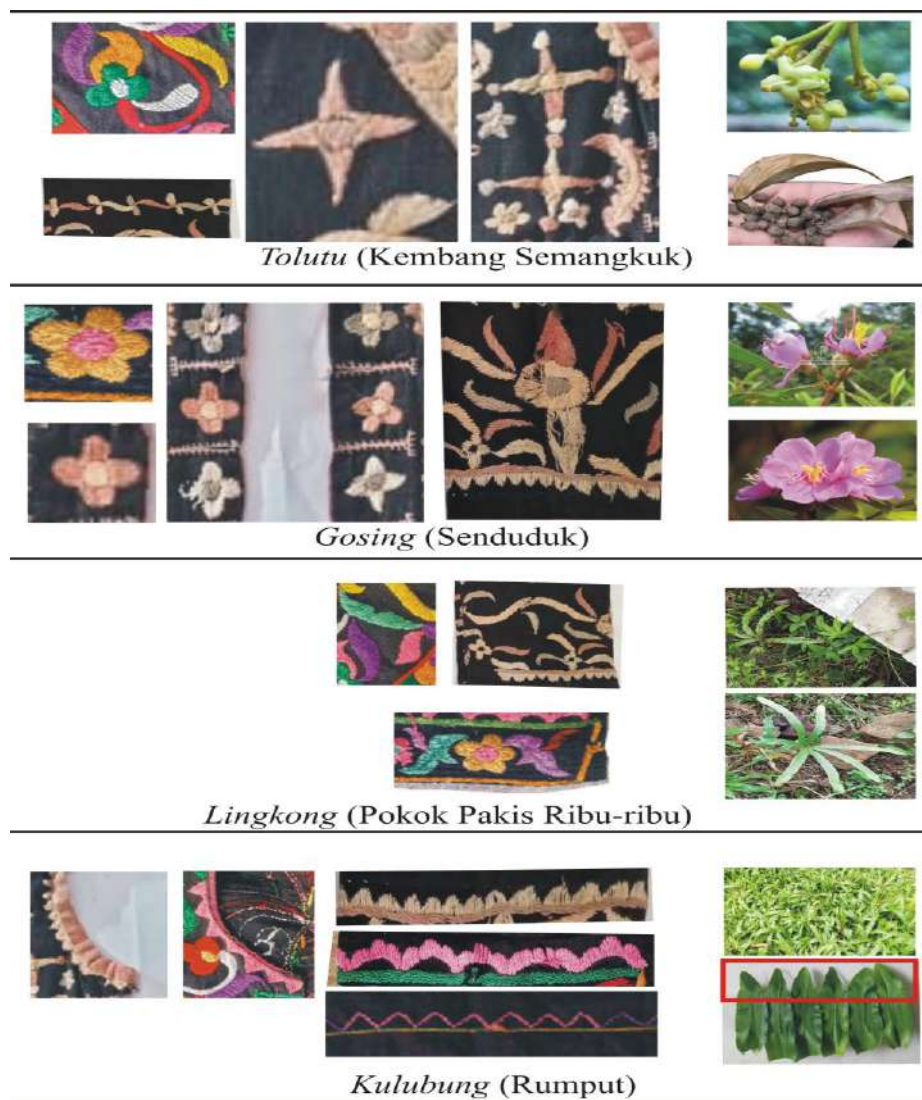


Foto 6: Motif Flora yang terdapat pada *Sabung Sinudaan*

Sumber Gambar: Diubah suai daripada Jabatan Penerangan Malaysia dan Yusuf (2021).

Motif *tolutu* terdapat pada kedua-dua *sabung sinudaan* tersebut iaitu pada bahagian dada baju dan pada bahagian tangan *Sinudaan 1*. Manakala *Sinudaan 2* pula terletak pada bahagian dada. Motif tersebut diambil daripada bunga, buah pada musim gugur dan daun pokok berkenaan. Lelaki etnik Kimaragang dikaitkan dengan pokok *tolutu* adalah kerana pokok tersebut menyerlahkan sifat maskulin pemakai *sabung sinudaan*. Kedudukan motif tersebut yang terletak pada bahagian tangan, dada dan belakang busana memberikan gambaran bahawa pemakai adalah seorang yang gagah dan berani meredah hutan tebal tanpa peduli kepada pacat atau haiwan berbisa di tengah belantara. Selain itu, motif tersebut juga menggambarkan situasi sosial dalam masyarakat tradisional kerana buah *tolutu* dijadikan bahan permainan yang menyeronokkan dan mampu merapatkan jurang sosial masyarakat tradisional (Makaul, Temu bual 21 September 2024).

Seterusnya, tumbuhan renek bercabang dan mempunyai daun bertekstur kasar serta berbulu halus iaitu pokok *gosing* atau pokok senduduk (*Melastoma sp*), menjadi pilihan. Biasanya, tumbuhan ini tumbuh meliar di tepi-tepi jalan, tanah lapang, kawasan terbiar dan belukar. Pokok Senduduk mempunyai bunga yang cantik dan banyak digunakan dalam

perubatan tradisional (Sayuti, 2019) seperti ubat mencegah parut luka, sakit gigi dan melegakan kembung perut (Yusuf, 2021). Pengolahan dekorasi tumbuhan tersebut adalah dalam pelbagai teknik iaitu menggunakan kelopak bunga dari pelbagai sudut seperti kuntum bunga, kudup bunga dan buah senduduk. Kedudukan motif tersebut adalah pada dada dan tangan *Sinudaan 1* dan *Sinudaan 2*. Faktor pemilihan tumbuhan berkenaan menjadi lambang budaya adalah disebabkan kecantikan dan keindahan bunga gosing yang banyak tumbuh meliar di sekeliling mereka.

Selanjutnya, *lingkong* (*lygodium microphyllum* R. Br. atau pokok pakis ribu-ribu) merupakan sejenis paku pakis yang mudah dijumpai dan tumbuh merambat pepohon yang lain yang terdedah kepada matahari. Batang pokok ribu-ribu digunakan dalam membuat kraftangan seperti *pata'an* (alat sikutan seperti *wakid*), beg dan bekas penyimpanan (Hafiza Ismail, 2013). Motif paku pakis tersebut didapati berperanan sebagai motif tambahan yang sering ditemui bersama-sama dengan motif pokok senduduk. Manakala *kulubung* atau dikenali sebagai *carpet grass* (*Axonopus compressus* / *paspalum conjugatum*) tumbuh di kawasan lapang dan sering menjadi makanan haiwan seperti lembu, kerbau dan kambing berperanan sebagai penutup bumi serta penting dalam mengekalkan kelembapan tanah (Chin, 2013). Motif *Kulubung* merujuk kepada motif berbentuk segitiga ditemui pada bahagian leher, hujung lengan dan hujung busana tradisional sering digunakan sebagai hiasan tepi kain seolah-olah menjadi alas (*carpet*) atau lantai yang menutupi seluruh motif dan corak yang terdapat pada *sabung sinudaan* tersebut.

Uniknya, dekorasi pada bahagian tangan baju *Sinudaan 1* dan *Sinudaan 2* terhasil daripada gabungan motif bunga *gosing*, *lingkong* dan *kulubung* (Foto 7 dan Foto 8). Jika dilihat secara teliti pada *Sinudaan 1*, gabungan motif ketiga-tiga tumbuhan tersebut disulam secara berselerak seperti menggambarkan hutan belukar yang terdapat pada persekitaran mereka pada masa itu. *Sinudaan 2* memilih ragam hias secara tersusun dengan rapi kerana dipengaruhi oleh keadaan persekitaran yang sudah moden tetapi masih mengekalkan gabungan elemen motif yang sama. Motif belukar pada pergelangan tangan dikaitkan dengan fungsi tangan untuk bekerja seperti menebas, membersihkan hutan untuk pertanian demi kelangsungan kehidupan. *Sinudaan 1* menambah motif *tolutu* pada pergelangan tangan mengukuhkan lagi interpretasi bahawa masyarakat etnik Kimaragang pada masa itu hidup dalam alam flora yang masih tebal dan menghijau.

Berdasarkan perbincangan motif pada *sabung sinudaan* menunjukkan bahawa seorang lelaki etnik Kimaragang adalah seorang yang kuat, berani serta berpengetahuan luas tentang laut dan daratan sehingga ke dalam kawasan hutan tebal. Masyarakat tradisional memahami bahawa kawasan laut kaya dengan sumber makanan seperti ikan dan kerang, manakala di dalam hutan tebal pula mereka mendapatkan makanan seperti daging buruan (rusa, kijang dan babi hutan), padi, sayur-sayuran dan sumber ubat-ubatan (Juliah, Temu bual 25 Julai 2022; Kuiyin, Temu bual 13 Mei 2023; Makaul, Temu bual 21 September 2024).

Walau bagaimanapun, motif yang dominan yang terdapat pada *sabung sinudaan* adalah dari kawasan daratan iaitu terdiri daripada *linimatok*, *kambang kiapu*, *tolutu*, *gosing*, *lingkong* dan *kulubung* menunjukkan masyarakat etnik Kimaragang adalah masyarakat yang tinggal menetap di kawasan daratan seperti kawasan kaki bukit (Pugh Kitingan, 2015) dan tidak terlalu jauh dari laut. Pendek kata, setiap motif yang tertera pada *sabung sinudaan* merupakan pengalaman kehidupan dan gambaran aktiviti seharian masyarakat tradisional etnik Kimaragang. Sehingga kini, sebahagian masyarakat etnik Kimaragang masih mengamalkan kehidupan sebagai nelayan tepi pantai dan sebagai petani.

- Wusak do Gosing*
1. (Bunga Senduduk)
Lingkong
2. (Pokok Ribu-ribu)
3. *Kulubung*
 (Rumput)
4. *Tolutu*
 (Kembang Semangkuk)



Foto 7: Corak Hutan Belukar Pada Lengan *Sinudaan 1* dan *Sinudaan 2*
 Sumber Gambar: Koleksi Penulis



Foto 8: Pokok *gosing*, *lingkong* dan *kulubung* yang Digambarkan pada Tangan *Sabung Sinudaan*

Sumber Gambar: Koleksi Penulis

Kekangan Kajian Kebudayaan Etnik Kimaragang

Kajian mengenai pakaian tradisional masyarakat etnik Kimaragang menghadapi cabaran besar kerana amalan menanam barangan peribadi bersama si mati (Ayunan, Temu bual 23 Julai 2022). Amalan tersebut menyebabkan generasi penerusi kekurangan rujukan berkaitan budaya dan adat resam bangsa sendiri. Natiujahnya, masyarakat etnik Kimaragang agak ketinggalan dalam bidang kebudayaan berbanding dengan masyarakat lain. Tidak dinafikan bahawa terdapat beberapa buah keluarga yang berjaya menyimpan objek budaya nenek moyang mereka namun bersikap tertutup untuk mengongsikan harta peninggalan tersebut kepada orang lain. Perkara tersebut merupakan satu kerugian besar kerana objek budaya tersebut tidak dapat didokumentasikan dengan segera sebelum mengalami kerosakan yang lebih teruk. Jika objek budaya berkenaan berjaya didokumentasi, walaupun artifak budaya berkenaan telah mengalami kerosakan yang teruk, namun maklumat berkaitan budaya berjaya diselamatkan. Tambahan pula, golongan generasi tua yang memahami dan mampu menceritakan suasana kehidupan berkenaan aktiviti kehidupan, adat dan istiadat, sosial masyarakat semakin kurang kerana faktor umur dan kesihatan. Kenyataan tersebut membuatkan keadaan semakin kritikal kerana kekurangan rujukan lisan yang sah.

Kajian artikel ini juga mempunyai limitasi kajian kerana hanya melibatkan dua buah *sabung sinudaan* sahaja yang dimiliki oleh ahli masyarakat etnik Kimaragang. Terdapat beberapa sabung lain namun pewaris busana berkenaan tidak membenarkan dokumentasi dijalankan kerana dikhuatiri merosakkan busana berkenaan. Kajian lebih lanjut perlu dilakukan dan penglibatan lebih banyak *sabung sinudaan* yang dimiliki oleh masyarakat etnik Kimaragang perlu didokumentasikan agar nilai budaya tidak lenyap begitu sahaja.

KESIMPULAN

Intihannya, *sabung sinudaan* merupakan busana turun temurun dalam masyarakat etnik Kimaragang yang terhasil daripada keakraban masyarakat tradisional dengan alam semulajadi. Antara *Sinudaan 1* dan *Sinudaan 2*, *Sinudaan 1* adalah lebih berusia berdasarkan kepada jenis kain, benang sulam, warna benang dan dekorasi yang ditampilkan. Pemakaian busana berkenaan adalah sederhana tetapi tetap elegan dan menonjolkan keunikan tradisi yang dimiliki oleh bangsa etnik Kimaragang. Hal ini demikian kerana busana tradisional tersebut memberi gambaran terhadap kehidupan, kepercayaan dan daya pemikiran masyarakat pada masa lalu. Oleh yang demikian, generasi muda etnik Kimaragang harus mempertahankan ciri-ciri reka bentuk busana bernilai tradisi iaitu mengekalkan ciri-ciri *sabung sinudaan* yang lama. Penyelidikan dan dokumentasi perlu dilakukan lebih terperinci berdasarkan bukti. Memartabatkan budaya bangsa etnik Kimaragang adalah tanggungjawab seluruh masyarakat tanpa mengira lapisan masyarakat kerana budaya adalah jiwa bangsa.

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TEMU BUAL

Nama Informan	Peranan	Tarikh Temu bual
Ayunan Pangi (76 tahun)	Bekas penggiat busana kebudayaan Kimaragang di Kg. Salimpodon Darat,Pitas	23 Julai 2022
Juliah Inotol (66 tahun)	Penggiat busana kebudayaan Kimaragang di Kg. Salimpodon Darat, Pitas,	25 Julai 2022
Jurika Inotol (48 tahun)	Penggiat busana kebudayaan Kimaragang di Kg. Salimpodon Darat, Pitas	26 Julai 2022
Jamaul Inotol (54 tahun)	Ahli Majlis Tertinggi Persatuan Kimaragang Sabah (PKS) dan pemimpin di Kg.Salimpodon Darat	13 Mei 2023
Kuiyin Miring (65 tahun)	Penggiat seni dan pemukul kulintangan/gong, Kg. Sinanggip	24 Februari 2024
Medal Injan	Penggiat seni dan kebudayaan sebagai pemukul	21 September 2024

(59 tahun)	gong dan seorang petani, Kg, Kambau Pitas.	
Makaul Inotol, (60 tahun)	Petani dan bijak pandai dalam hutan tebal, Kg. Salimpodon Darat, Pitas.	21 September 2024
Molinka Buling (65 tahun)	Pewaris busana Aki Buling dan bekas petani, Kg. Salimpodon Darat Pitas.	19 April 2024
Norlina Molinka, (43 tahun)	Penggiat busana kebudayaan Kimaragang di Kg. Salimpodon Darat, Pitas.	27 Julai 2022
Odu Momoooh Buang (93 tahun)	Bekas Bobolian dan bidan kampung sejak 1940an di Kg.Mempakad-Salimpodon, Pitas.	12 April 2024
Odu Unun Buang (96 tahun)	Bekas Bobolian dan bidan kampung sejak 1940an di Mempakad - Salimpodon, Pitas.	12 April 2024.
Ruminting Jelin, (67 tahun)	Pewaris busana Aki Jelin, Kg. Sinogindai Pitas.	17 April 2024

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INVOLVEMENT RISK PERCEPTION TOWARDS CONTAINING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT This paper explores the involvement of social media among Malaysians during the COVID-19 pandemic particularly in terms of risk perception. This paper aims to achieve certain objectives which are investigating the effects of social media on risk perceptions towards COVID-19 and determining the strengths of the relationships between media and people's perceptions towards COVID-19. Questionnaires were distributed to 605 people in Malaysia which according to the high severity of COVID-19 cases: red zone (EMCO). It is expected that this research will aid in identifying the personal and social risk perception towards COVID-19. The result from this paper is expected to be aligned with the cultivation theory where it states that the time spent on media impacts people's perception in a more significant effect compared to people who spend less time on media. The study suggested social media exposure affect the personal risk level than social risk level of the people who lived in the area that declared as red zone (EMCO).

Keywords: Risk Perception, Cultivation Theory, Impact Of Social Media

INTRODUCTION

The current situation of COVID-19 all over the world, including Malaysia has changed the way we live. The Movement Control Order (MCO) was enacted on March 2020 and ever since then, Malaysians have gone through multiple phases of lockdown procedures such as MCO, Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO), Enhanced Movement Control Order (EMCO) and subsequent National Recovery Plan (NRP). Since there is no validated treatment for COVID-19, Malaysians must take active precautions by preventing the virus from infecting them or, at the very least, contain the disease from spreading to others should they be infected. Hence, it comes to no surprise that the media plays a significant role in disseminating the preventive measures to lessen the number of cases daily. The existence of areas classified by the government also in other way influence the perception among the people lived in the red zones. However, media especially the social media have not only created awareness among the people, but it also actively shaping the perception towards the reality of world.

Even though the attention towards the role of social media during infectious disease outbreaks is gaining traction, not much is known about the in-depth steps and procedures of how social media use can affect the risk perception and preventive behaviours during such outbreaks (Oh, Lee & Han, 2020). This is one of the reasons why this research was initiated. Therefore, this research is expected to explore these new dimensions in the study of social media on COVID-19 issues. At the end of the day, this research is expected to provide some understanding on the involvement of media in the process of forming the risk perception. Eventually the research will be able to make important recommendations on the ways in which people behave to curtail the spread of the virus of COVID-19.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lockdown measures were preemptively taken by governments worldwide when the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak happened. In the wake of these measures, internet and social media use has reached unprecedented peaks (Marzouki, Aldossari & Veltri, 2021). Various national and global media such as CNN Health have reported the number of infected, quarantined, at critical danger and casualties. Not only that, but these media channels also serve as an outlet to broadcast policy measures and restrictions introduced and implemented by the government.

Media in its traditional sense still maintains itself as a vital role in determining risk perception. However, social media can be considered even more influential than the traditional media as it is used as a primary source for COVID-19 information (Tsoy, Tirasawasdichai & Kurpayanidi, 2021). Not only that, social media is also the most trusted information sources due to the fact that the accessibility of legitimate information released by health professionals are constantly accessible to the public (Zhong et al., 2020). Such massive amount of information that is available both online and offline may create awareness, but it also can shape their perception towards the reality of the world.

Risk perception is based on an individual ability to judge on the severity of the potential harm due to some instances that are caused by natural hazards as well as environmental and health threats subjectively (Douglas, 1986). Brewer et al. (2007) has stated that the dimensions of risk perception is a three folded one which are the likelihood of perception, sense of susceptibility and the severity of risk. Social risk perception is defined as the ability for individuals' to approximate the overall level of damage or loss to society as a whole, while personal risk perception refers to the probability for an individual to feel or at least have a sense of loss or damage felt (Tyler & Cook, 1984). The risk perception, is attributed by the way a person makes a subjective approximation and think or feel on risk; people with a tendency on perception might underestimate the risk that they are taking (Svetlova & Karl-Heinz Thielmann, 2020).

The cultivation theory states that the time used on media affects the perception of the masses when compared to others that spends a relatively less time on it. These perceptions have a profound impact towards their behavioural intentions (Tsoy, Tirasawasdichai & Kurpayanidi, 2021). On the flip side, social media has the ability to provide relevant information that is almost identical to the experience of individuals who are directly affected by pandemic or disaster. These types of information have the ability to manipulate said individuals' perception on the calamity and ultimately can aid them in terms of the aftermath of any disaster. The cultivation theory has been fleshed out throughout the years by multiple researchers that not only discussed on the exposure of media but also the type of content that is aired by said media (Schiappa et al., 2006).

Cultivation Theory states that cultivation is a lifelong process where the information from the media has a direct correlation with a person's direct experience. The cultivation theory started out as an instrumental theory to observe the effect of exposure of media on the public's risk perception (Shrum & Bischak, 2001). Proposed by Gerbner in the 1970s, the theory sought to explain the effect of television exposure on people's perception of the real world. However, this theory was also sharply criticised by other researchers where Gebner et al. proposed hypothesis is that the relationship between television viewing and cultivation could only be fake or explained by other factors. This phenomenon is called the fake relationship (Doob & McDonald, 1979).

METHODOLOGY

This paper employs a quantitative research strategy, using online questionnaires. Questionnaires were chosen for this research because they are efficient and a quick method to allow large populations to be assessed with relative ease as well as to help reduce bias. The online method of collecting data also suitable in this period where the COVID-19 is still around. The data result is analysed within a reasonable time frame.

The population (n) of this study is Sabah population. Probability sampling using stratified sampling technique employed in this study. There were 605 respondents from the red zones. The questionnaire survey has been posted to multiple platforms in social media which includes Facebook, WhatsApp and Telegram. Collected samples are sufficient enough based on the sample size formula suggested by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Due to the fact that the population of Sabah is more than 1 million which was estimated to be approximately 3.41 million in year 2021 to 2022, the total of samples for this study can be consider as a sound sample.

The data collected has been analysed using SPSS software. This paper also examines the relationship between media and risk perceptions and therefore some inferential data analyses were also performed using ANOVA and Regression to test the strength of relationships between Independent variables (Social Media) and Dependent variables (Risk Perceptions).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data was analysed through several tests which will be discussed below. N refers to the populations. The reliability analyses are used to test the reliability of the data. In order to determine the effect of social media exposure on levels of social and personal risk between-light viewers (0-2 hours), medium viewers (2-4 hours) and heavy viewers (more than 4 hours). A one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used. Regression analysis is used in order to forecast the effect of social media on risk perceptions. The correlation was used to identify the significant connection between the variables.

Table 1: Variables and Their Corresponding Reliability, Mean and Standard Deviation For Variables In The Study

Construct	N	Cronbach's	Mean	Std. Deviation
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		Alpha		
Social Risk	605	0.838	4.548	0.590
Personal Risk	605	0.780	3.655	0.758

One-Way ANOVA Between-Groups for Social Media Exposure, Social Risk Perception and Personal Risk Perception

A between group ANOVA has been conducted by dividing the respondents into three groups based on their frequencies in visiting social media (Group 1: 0 – 2 hours; Group 2: 2 to 4 hours; Group 3: More than 4 hours). Based on Table 2, it is revealed that the ANOVA resulted in a statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ in Social Risk score for three viewing time groups: $(F(3, 601) = 2.439, p = .064)$.

Table 2 also exhibits a significant difference at p level $< .05$ for Personal Risk scores for all three viewing time groups: $F(3, 601) = 2.881, p = .002$. Tukey's HSD Test, which is a test, used to find the significant difference of means between Social Media and Personal risk with the aforementioned 3 Groups for multiple comparisons.

Based on Table 2, it is found that the mean value of Social Media and Personal Risk was significantly different between Group 3 and Group 1 ($p = 0.002, 95\% \text{ C.I.} = [.0725, .4624]$).

Table 2: One-Way Between-Groups ANOVA for Social Media Exposure with Social Risk and Personal Risk

Dependent Variable: Social Risk
Tukey HSD

(I) Social Media exposure 3 groups	(J) Social Media exposure 3 groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
0-2 hours	2-4 hours	-.12275	.06303	.209	-.2851	.0396
	More than 4 hours	-.15714*	.05928	.041	-.3099	-.0044
2-4 hours	0-2 hours	.12275	.06303	.209	-.0396	.2851
	More than 4 hours	-.03439	.05664	.930	-.1803	.1115
More than 4 hours	0-2 hours	.15714*	.05928	.041	.0044	.3099
	2-4 hours	.03439	.05664	.930	-.1115	.1803

Note : *The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Dependent Variable: Personal Risk
Tukey HSD

(I) Social Media exposure 3 groups	(J) Social Media exposure 3 groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
0-2 hours	2-4 hours	-.23915*	.08044	.016	-.4464	-.0319
	More than 4 hours	-.26746*	.07566	.002	-.4624	-.0725
2-4 hours	0-2 hours	.23915*	.08044	.016	.0319	.4464
	More than 4 hours	-.02831	.07230	.980	-.2146	.1579
More than 4 hours	0-2 hours	.26746*	.07566	.002	.0725	.4624
	2-4 hours	.02831	.07230	.980	-.1579	.2146

Note: *The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Regression Analysis

Based on Table 3, it is shown that a total of 2.9% variances in social risk can be demonstrated by Exposure to Facebook, Exposure to WhatsApp, Exposure to Telegram, Exposure to Instagram, Exposure to Twitter and Exposure to WeChat ($R^2 = 0.029$, $p < 0.007$). Therefore, from this result, only one variable; namely Expose to Facebook ($\beta = .166$, $t\text{-value} = 3.367$, $p < 0.001$) was determined to have a significant effect on social risk.

Table 4 shows that the R^2 value is 0.057. This means that 5.7% of personal risk variation can be explained by Exposure to Facebook, Exposure to WhatsApp, Exposure to Telegram, Exposure to Instagram, Exposure to Twitter and Exposure to WeChat ($R^2 = 0.057$, $p < 0.001$). The results show that two variables; namely Exposure to Facebook ($\beta = .159$, $t\text{-value} = 3.280$, $p < 0.001$) and Exposure to Twitter ($\beta = .153$, $t\text{-value} = 3.480$, $p < 0.001$) has a massive influence on personal risk. Namely, the finding indicates that Expose to Facebook, Expose to Twitter, 0 to 2 hours and more than 4 hours of media exposure have a deep impact on personal risk.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Social Media with Social Risk

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Std. Beta	t-value	Sig.	VIF	Results
Social Risk	Exposure to Facebook	.166	3.367	.001	1.495	Supported
	Exposure to WhatsApp	.012	0.236	.814	1.646	Not Supported

	Exposure to Telegram	-.055	-1.178	.239	1.332	Not Supported
	Exposure to Instagram	-.020	-0.397	.691	1.494	Not Supported
	Exposure to Twitter	.062	1.386	.166	1.222	Not Supported
	Exposure to WeChat	.006	0.151	.880	1.076	Not Supported
	R	.170 .029 .019 2.96				
	R ²					
	Adjusted R ²					
	Sig. F					
Note : Significant levels: **p<0.01, *p<0.05						

Table 4: Regression Analysis of Social Media with Personal Risk

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Std. Beta	t-value	Sig.	VIF	Results
Personal Risk	Exposure to Facebook	.159	3.280	.001	1.495	Supported
	Exposure to WhatsApp	.068	1.333	.183	1.646	Not Supported
	Exposure to Telegram	-0.24	-.522	.602	1.332	Not Supported
	Exposure to Instagram	-0.43	-.890	.374	1.494	Not Supported
	Exposure to Twitter	.153	3.480	.001	1.222	Supported
	Exposure to WeChat	-.059	-1.425	.155	1.076	Not Supported
	R	.238 .057 .047 5.97				
	R ²					
	Adjusted R ²					
	Sig. F					

The Correlation Result

Based on the result in Table 5, there is a positive relationship between Exposure To Facebook ($r=.154$, $p<0.001$) and Exposure to WhatsApp ($r=.083$, $p<0.05$) in Social Risk which shows that the strength of association between the two variables is weak. Table 6 show there is positive correlation between social media and personal risk which is explained by Exposed to Facebook ($r=.181$, $p<0.001$), Exposed to WhatsApp ($r=.145$, $p<0.001$) and Exposure to Twitter ($r=.142$, $p<0.001$). the strength between the association between the variables are also weak.

Table 5: The Results of Correlation of Social Media with Social Risk

Variables		Exposure to Facebook	Exposure to WhatsApp	Exposure to Telegram	Exposure to Instagram	Exposure to Twitter	Exposure to WeChat
Social Risk	Pearson Correlation	.154**	.083*	.016	.033	.060	.032
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.041	.692	.423	.142	.430
	N	605	605	605	605	605	605
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).							

Table 6: The Results of Correlation of Social Media with Personal Risk

Variables		Exposure to Facebook	Exposure to WhatsApp	Exposure to Telegram	Exposure to Instagram	Exposure to Twitter	Exposure to WeChat
Personal Risk	Pearson Correlation	.181**	.145**	.067	.066	.142**	-.010
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001	.100	.105	.001	.806
	N	605	605	605	605	605	605
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).							

Based on the previous literature (Angawi & Albugmi, 2022), social media exposure to COVID-19 information has a positive impact on shaping an individuals' risk perception. However, this study was conducted to explore the aspect of the risk perception that was suggested by Tyler and Cook (1984), which is social and personal levels. It shown in this study has been confirmed that social media exposure as well as the media use such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter do have a positive risk perception about COVID-19 on a personal level. In the other words, social media exposure affects the personal risk level of the people who lived in the area that declared as red zone (EMCO). Detailed analysis of the social media exposures shows that no

significant effect on social level. This is also assuming that even though respondents that exposed heavily to media contents, they will not be affected by what they saw on media. Personal risk level was more significant in social media exposure because of the more feel and think the chance of loss or damage felt by individuals on themselves (Tyler & Cook, 1984).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has shown that both hypotheses were not entirely proven. These results partially support the theory proposed by Gerbner et al. (1994). This study suggests that although media effects are present when exposure is high, the effect is not applied to all situations. This study has shown that ‘heavy viewers’ perceptions about risk were only heightened when it involves other people. They seem to be afraid that people at large might be affected by the COVID-19 virus compared to themselves (personal level). However, the Cultivation Theory cannot prove the correlation between social media exposure and the social level of risk perception. The gap in this study as well as the suggestions for the reasons behind them could be an interesting topic to explore in the future.

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INDEPENDENCE OF MONETARY POLICY AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS IN TRANSITIONAL HIGHLY INDEBTED ECONOMIES

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ABSTRACT This study analyzes the role of monetary policy independence in promoting price stability in highly indebted emerging economies over the period 2000–2023. The significance of the study lies in the challenges these economies face in managing inflation amid heavy debt burdens and volatile financial environments. The central research question asks whether central bank independence can effectively reduce inflation volatility and foster macroeconomic stability. Accordingly, the study aims to examine the relationship between monetary independence and inflation fluctuations, under the hypothesis of a negative association between the two. To achieve this, panel data for a sample of emerging economies were employed, and the System GMM technique was applied to address endogeneity and serial correlation, using the Garriga (2016) index to measure the degree of monetary independence. The findings indicate that greater independence significantly reduces inflation volatility, though the strength of the effect varies across regions being more pronounced in Latin America and weaker in Sub-Saharan Africa. These results suggest that central bank independence is a fundamental condition for achieving price stability, but not sufficient on its own, as it requires support from complementary fiscal and institutional reforms. The study recommends strengthening central bank frameworks and enhancing policy coordination with fiscal authorities, while future research could extend the analysis by employing quarterly data and incorporating additional factors such as institutional quality and political stability.

Keywords: Independence of monetary policy, Inflation Volatility, Transitional Economies, Monetary Policy, Quantitative Evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

The independence of monetary policy has become a central issue in contemporary economics, especially in transitional economies that face persistent debt burdens and unstable macroeconomic conditions. Central Bank Independence (CBI) refers to the ability of monetary authorities to design and implement policies without direct political interference, ensuring that monetary decisions are guided by long-term stability rather than short-term political pressures. In contrast, monetary policy effectiveness reflects the extent to which these decisions succeed in achieving core objectives such as price stability, inflation control, and overall economic resilience. Within highly indebted economies, where fiscal imbalances and debt servicing obligations dominate the policy environment, the question of whether central bank independence can safeguard stability becomes particularly pressing.

The main problem addressed in this study is that excessive levels of public debt often constrain the effectiveness of monetary policy, limiting the ability of central banks to control

inflation and maintain credibility. In this context, the study seeks to evaluate whether granting greater independence to central banks can mitigate these challenges and enhance policy outcomes.

Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: Greater central bank independence reduces inflation volatility in highly indebted transitional economies.
- H2: Monetary policy effectiveness is weaker in heavily indebted economies with fragile institutional frameworks.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to clarify the role of institutional reforms particularly the independence of monetary authorities in supporting macroeconomic stability in transitional economies. By addressing this issue, the research contributes to both the theoretical debate and the practical design of policies aimed at safeguarding monetary credibility under conditions of high debt.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The debate on the independence of monetary policy has long been central to both theoretical and empirical economics. Classical contributions, such as those of Barro and Gordon (1983) argued that discretionary monetary policy often leads to an inflationary bias due to political pressures, while credible rules and institutional constraints improve long-term outcomes. Similarly, Cukierman (1992), Debelle and Fischer (1994) emphasized that central bank independence (CBI) enhances monetary credibility by insulating monetary authorities from short-term political considerations. These early studies, however, largely focused on developed economies and the earlier stages of emerging markets, leaving unanswered questions about the role of CBI in more fragile, highly indebted contexts.

From 2010 onward, a growing body of literature has examined the interaction between debt burdens, institutional quality, and monetary policy performance. Bodea and Hicks (2015) highlighted that independence improves price stability, but its effectiveness is conditioned by democratic institutions. Garriga (2016) advanced this research by providing a new dataset on global central bank independence, confirming wide cross-country variations. More recent evidence shows that the credibility of central banks during crises such as the Eurozone debt crisis and the COVID-19 shock has been tested, often requiring a balance between independence and fiscal coordination (Lane, 2012; Fraccaroli et al., 2020; IMF, 2021; World Bank, 2022). Romelli (2022) further documented how reforms in central bank design remain politically driven but critical for sustaining macroeconomic stability.

The specification of variables in this literature also provides the foundation for this study. The independent variable is typically central bank independence, measured by legal and operational indices (Cukierman, 1992; Garriga et al., 2016). The dependent variable is monetary policy effectiveness, most often captured by inflation volatility. Control variables frequently include GDP growth, trade openness, fiscal balance, and exchange rate volatility, reflecting broader macroeconomic determinants (Calderón & Liu, 2003; Reinhart & Rogoff, 2010).

Building on this evidence, the hypotheses of this study derive directly from the literature. First, there is strong empirical support for the expectation that greater CBI reduces inflation volatility (H1). Second, the literature also shows that in highly indebted economies

with weak institutional frameworks, monetary policy remains less effective, even when independence is legally established (H2). This research contributes to the literature by filling a key gap: it focuses specifically on transitional, highly indebted economies, a context where independence may be most constrained yet most urgently needed.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative econometric approach to examine the relationship between central bank independence and the effectiveness of monetary policy in transitional highly indebted economies. The methodology is structured to ensure clarity and robustness, in line with established empirical practice.

Research Model and Framework

The research framework builds on the theoretical foundations of monetary policy credibility, which emphasize the role of central bank independence in stabilizing inflation and reducing macroeconomic volatility. The model specifies that greater independence enhances monetary policy effectiveness, particularly in economies burdened with high levels of debt.

Formally, the model is expressed as:

$$\text{INFVOL}_{\{it\}} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{CBI}_{\{it\}} + \beta_2 \text{DEBT}_{\{it\}} + \beta_3 \text{GDPG}_{\{it\}} + \beta_4 \text{OPEN}_{\{it\}} + \beta_5 \text{FISC}_{\{it\}} + \beta_6 \text{EXVOL}_{\{it\}} + \mu_i + \varepsilon_{\{it\}}$$

Where:

- $\text{INFVOL}_{\{it\}}$: Inflation volatility (proxy for monetary policy effectiveness).
- $\text{CBI}_{\{it\}}$: Central bank independence index.
- $\text{DEBT}_{\{it\}}$: Public debt to GDP ratio.
- $\text{GDPG}_{\{it\}}$: Real GDP growth rate.
- $\text{OPEN}_{\{it\}}$: Trade openness.
- $\text{FISC}_{\{it\}}$: Fiscal balance as % of GDP.
- $\text{EXVOL}_{\{it\}}$: Exchange rate volatility.
- μ_i : Country-specific fixed effects.
- $\varepsilon_{\{it\}}$: Error term.

Variables Development

The dependent variable is inflation volatility, measured using the standard deviation of annual inflation rates. The key independent variable is central bank independence (CBI), obtained from internationally recognized indices (e.g. Garriga, 2016).

Control variables include:

- Public debt ratio (DEBT) to capture debt overhang.
- GDP growth (GDPG) to reflect macroeconomic performance.
- Trade openness (OPEN) as a measure of external exposure.
- Fiscal balance (FISC) to represent fiscal stance.
- Exchange rate volatility (EXVOL) as a proxy for external stability.

These variables are selected based on prior empirical studies that highlight their influence on monetary policy transmission.

Estimation Technique

Given the dynamic nature of the model and potential endogeneity, the Generalized Method of Moments (GMM) estimator is employed. The system GMM approach (Arellano, & Bond, 1991) is particularly suited to handling:

- Unobserved country heterogeneity.
- Potential simultaneity bias.
- Endogeneity of explanatory variables.

Data and Sample

The dataset covers 20 transitional highly indebted economies over the period 2000–2023. Countries are selected based on IMF and World Bank classifications of emerging and highly indebted economies. Data sources include:

- World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI).
- International Monetary Fund (IMF) Fiscal Monitor and International Financial Statistics.
- Bank for International Settlements (BIS) for monetary and financial indicators.

Robustness and Diagnostic Tests

To ensure reliability, several diagnostic checks are conducted:

- Hansen/Sargan tests to verify instrument validity.
- Arellano-Bond test to check for serial correlation.
- Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to assess multicollinearity.
- Alternative specifications (fixed-effects and random-effects) for robustness comparison.

Justification of the Sample

Focusing on transitional highly indebted economies provides unique insights, as these countries face dual challenges: debt sustainability pressures and the need for credible monetary policy frameworks. The chosen sample allows testing whether central bank independence can mitigate inflation volatility even under fiscal stress.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before turning to the regression results, it is useful to examine the descriptive statistics of the main variables. Table 1 reports the mean, standard deviation, and the minimum and maximum values for CBI, inflation volatility, and the control variables used in the evaluation. Before presenting the results of the econometric Evaluation, it is useful to first review the descriptive statistics of the main variables. Table 1 summarizes the mean, standard deviation, and the minimum and maximum values for independence of monetary policy inflation volatility measured as the standard deviation of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as well as the key control variables for the sample of Transitional market economies.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
independence of monetary policy	0.65	0.22	0.10	1.00
Inflation Volatility	7.84	4.23	1.25	22.18
GDP Growth Rate	3.14	2.16	-3.75	9.80
Fiscal Deficit (% of GDP)	3.18	2.47	-0.50	10.10
Exchange Rate Volatility	4.12	2.53	0.60	12.30
Trade Openness	58.27	18.40	18.50	89.20

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 provide an overview of the main variables used in the analysis. The average value of monetary policy independence is 0.65, suggesting that, on average, transitional economies maintain a moderate degree of central bank autonomy. However, the wide variation between the minimum value (0.10) and the maximum value (1.00) reflects substantial differences across countries, with some exhibiting almost complete independence and others maintaining very limited autonomy.

Inflation volatility averages 7.84, with a relatively large standard deviation (4.23), indicating that price instability is a persistent challenge in many of the sampled economies. The maximum value of 22.18 shows that in some cases, inflationary pressures are extremely severe. By contrast, the average GDP growth rate is positive at 3.14%, but the negative minimum value (-3.75) points to recessionary episodes in several countries.

Fiscal deficit as a percentage of GDP averages 3.18, again with wide dispersion across countries, suggesting that while some economies maintain fiscal discipline, others struggle with high budgetary imbalances. Exchange rate volatility (mean = 4.12) further illustrates the instability of transitional markets, where currency fluctuations may exacerbate inflationary pressures. Finally, trade openness averages 58.27, which reflects a high integration of these economies into global trade, although the range between 18.50 and 89.20 highlights differences in the degree of openness.

These descriptive statistics provide the foundation for the subsequent econometric analysis, highlighting the heterogeneity of transitional economies and underscoring the importance of testing whether monetary policy independence systematically reduces inflation volatility across diverse contexts.

Econometric Model Results

The core objective of the empirical evaluation is to assess the impact of independence of monetary policy on inflation volatility across transitional market economies. To achieve this, the panel data regression is first estimated using both fixed effects (FE) and random effects (RE) specifications. This dual estimation allows for a systematic comparison of the two approaches and helps identify the model that provides the most consistent and reliable results for the dataset. The outcomes from both estimations are presented in Table 2, which serves as the basis for selecting the preferred specification and for interpreting the subsequent findings.

Table 2: Panel Data Regression Results

Variable	Fixed Effects Model	Random Effects Model
independence of monetary policy	-2.56	-2.32
GDP Growth Rate	-0.12	-0.09
Fiscal Deficit (% of GDP)	0.23	0.18
Exchange Rate Volatility	0.18	0.21
Trade Openness	-0.02	-0.03
Constant	8.74	7.89
R-squared	0.82	0.79
Hausman Test (p-value)	0.03	-
independence of monetary policy	-2.56	-2.32
GDP Growth Rate	-0.12	-0.09
Fiscal Deficit (% of GDP)	0.23	0.18
		0.21

The regression estimates reported in Table 2 show a clear and statistically significant negative relationship between independence of monetary policy and inflation volatility. In the fixed effects model, a one-unit increase in the CBI index is associated with a reduction of about 2.56 percentage points in inflation volatility. The random effects model provides a similar estimate of 2.32 percentage points, reinforcing the robustness of the result. These findings are consistent with the theoretical expectation that greater autonomy for central banks enhances their ability to stabilize prices and reduce inflation fluctuations.

Turning to the control variables, GDP growth carries a negative coefficient under both specifications, but the effect is not statistically significant. This suggests that growth alone does not directly influence the variability of inflation in the sample. Fiscal deficits, meanwhile, are positively related to inflation volatility, yet their coefficients are also statistically insignificant, indicating a weak direct link between fiscal imbalances and inflation instability in this dataset. By contrast, exchange rate volatility shows a positive and statistically significant effect across both models, highlighting the critical role of currency fluctuations in amplifying inflation volatility in Transitional Economies. Trade openness, on the other hand, exhibits a small and insignificant effect, suggesting limited direct influence on inflation variability once other factors are accounted for.

The constant term is positive and significant, which reflects the presence of unobserved country-specific factors influencing inflation volatility. The overall explanatory power of the models is strong: the fixed effects specification explains about 82% of the variation in inflation volatility, while the random effects model accounts for approximately 79%. Taken together, these results lend strong support to the first hypothesis (H1), confirming that higher levels of central bank independence contribute to more stable inflation outcomes in Transitional Economies.

Generalized Method of Moments (GMM) Results

To further strengthen the robustness of the analysis, the study employed the Generalized Method of Moments (GMM), which is particularly suitable for addressing potential endogeneity and heteroscedasticity problems in dynamic panel data models. Table 3 presents

the estimated coefficients for the main explanatory variables, covering the period 2000–2023 across transitional highly indebted economies

Table 3: GMM Results (2000–2023)

Variable	coefficient	t-statistic	significance
independence of monetary policy	-2.41	-3.32	***
GDP Growth Rate	-0.07	-0.42	ns
Fiscal Deficit (% of GDP)	0.09	0.58	ns
Exchange Rate Volatility	1.78	2.76	**
Trade Openness	-0.14	-0.67	ns

The GMM estimation results indicate a negative and statistically significant relationship between monetary policy independence and inflation volatility in highly indebted emerging economies during the period 2000–2023. This finding supports the main hypothesis, which suggests that greater central bank independence contributes to reducing inflationary pressures and enhancing price stability in a complex economic environment.

The findings are consistent with several previous studies in the field. For example, DeBelle and Fischer (1994) emphasized that central bank independence is a key factor in reducing inflationary bias. Similarly, Cukierman (1992) and Garriga (2016) confirmed that countries with more independent monetary authorities tend to achieve lower and more stable inflation rates. The results of this study reinforce these conclusions within the specific context of highly indebted emerging economies, highlighting the crucial role of institutional frameworks in stabilizing inflation.

These findings underscore their significant political and economic implications. Strengthening central bank independence is not merely an institutional choice, but rather a fundamental requirement for ensuring macroeconomic stability in highly indebted emerging economies. The ability to reduce inflation volatility means lowering the risks associated with rising prices, which in turn protects consumers' purchasing power and reinforces investor confidence in the macroeconomic environment. Moreover, the results deliver an important message to policymakers: institutional reforms that enhance the autonomy of monetary authorities are essential to curbing the inflationary financing of fiscal deficits, a practice that often undermines monetary stability in these economies. For transparency, the original GMM estimation tables are provided in the Appendix (Appendix Table A3), where the full set of initial results is reported without modification.

Table 4: Subsample Evaluation by Region

Region	CBI Coefficient (Fixed Effects)
Latin America	-2.92
Asia	-2.41
Sub-Saharan Africa	-2.15

Source: Authors' Estimation

Despite the strength and significance of the results, this study is not without certain limitations. The analysis is restricted to a sample of highly indebted emerging economies

during the period 2000–2023, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other countries or different time periods. In addition, the use of annual data may overlook short-term fluctuations that could influence the effectiveness of monetary policy. Furthermore, the study did not account for all potential variables, such as political stability or institutional quality, which may act as mediating or moderating factors in the relationship under investigation.

The subsample evaluation by region provides additional insights into the impact of independence of monetary policy on inflation volatility. As reported in Table 4, the effect of CBI is negative and statistically significant across all regions, although the strength of the relationship varies. In Latin America, a one-unit increase in CBI reduces inflation volatility by about 2.92 percentage points, while in Asia the effect is slightly lower at 2.41 percentage points. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the impact remains significant but somewhat weaker at 2.15 percentage points.

These findings confirm that the stabilizing role of central bank independence is consistent across different regional contexts, but its magnitude is shaped by region-specific economic and institutional conditions. This evidence adds further support to the robustness of the results and emphasizes the importance of institutional quality in strengthening the effectiveness of monetary policy.

Taken together, the subsample results reinforce the study's main conclusion that central bank independence significantly contributes to reducing inflation volatility in Transitional economies. However, the variation in the size of the effect across regions suggests that autonomy alone is not sufficient; it must be complemented by strong fiscal frameworks, credible institutions, and effective exchange rate management policies to maximize its impact.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that independence of monetary policy plays a pivotal role in reducing inflation volatility and promoting macroeconomic stability in highly indebted transitional economies. The empirical evidence shows that greater independence enhances the credibility of monetary policy and helps mitigate inflationary fluctuations, particularly in contexts facing significant fiscal and political pressures. From a policy perspective, these results underscore the importance of strengthening the legal and institutional frameworks that safeguard central bank autonomy, alongside sound fiscal management, to ensure long-term economic stability. Nevertheless, certain limitations call for further exploration in future research. Reliance on legal measures of independence may not fully capture the realities of de facto independence and the political constraints that central banks face. Additionally, the use of annual data may overlook short-term dynamics and high-frequency shocks that shape inflation volatility. Future studies should therefore incorporate alternative measures of independence, employ higher-frequency datasets, and extend the evaluation to different regional contexts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the stabilizing role of CBI in transitional economies.

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APPENDIX

Appendix Table A3: Original GMM Estimation Results (2000–2023)

Variable	GMM Estimator (Arellano-Bond)
independence of monetary policy	-2.43
GDP Growth Rate	-0.08
Fiscal Deficit (% of GDP)	0.15
Exchange Rate Volatility	0.20
Trade Openness	-0.01
Lagged Inflation Volatility	0.45
Constant	7.56
Sargan Test (p-value)	0.41
AR(1) Test: p-value	0.02
AR(2) Test p-value	0.15

Source: Author’s calculations based on data from the World Bank (World Development Indicators – WDI) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2000–2023.

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL DYNAMICS OF CHINA-MALAYSIA RELATIONS: REALISM AND LIBERALISM PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT This study examines the historical and geographical dynamics of China-Malaysia relations through the theoretical lenses of Realism and Liberalism. Historically, interactions between China and the Malay world date back to early trade networks and diplomatic missions, reflecting deep cultural and economic exchanges. In the modern era, the relationship has evolved within the shifting geographical landscape of Southeast Asia, marked by colonial legacies, Cold War tensions, and contemporary strategic partnerships. While Malaysia holds a strategic position along critical maritime routes in the South China Sea, this underscores its significance in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), while simultaneously exposing the relationship to challenges over territorial disputes and regional security concerns. This article adopts a qualitative methodological framework, integrating historical-analytical and comparative approaches to examine the evolution of China-Malaysia relations. Primary and secondary sources, including archival materials, government policy documents, treaties, and scholarly works, are systematically reviewed to trace the historical trajectories and geographical underpinnings of bilateral interaction. From the suggested perspective, this study highlights how national interest, security dilemmas, and power asymmetry continue to shape bilateral ties. Malaysia navigates between cooperation and cautious balancing, ensuring its sovereignty while accommodating China's rising influence. The perspective also underscores the role of interdependence, economic integration, and institutional cooperation, particularly through ASEAN in fostering stability and mutual benefits. By analysing both dimensions, this research argues that China-Malaysia relations cannot be understood solely through a single theoretical framework. Instead, the interplay of Realist competition and Liberalist cooperation provides a more comprehensive understanding of their historical continuity and contemporary relevance.

Keywords: China-Malaysia Relations, Dynamics, South China Sea, Liberalism, Realism.

INTRODUCTION

Bilateral relations between China and Malaysia are rooted in a history of trade and cultural exchange, tracing back to the era of the Malacca Sultanate and British colonial rule, developing significantly following Malaysia's independence in 1957 and formal diplomatic relations with China in 1974 (Mingjiang, 2017). Historically, Malaysia has shifted from strategic alignment towards pragmatic engagement, particularly under Mahathir's leadership, marking a shift from ideological alignment to multi-vector diplomacy to navigate great power dynamics (Lee, 2015).

Malaysia is situated in a strategically significant location along the Strait of Malacca, a critical shipping lane that plays a key role in global energy security and trade movements. This enhances its significance in China's geopolitical strategy, especially the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Pantucci & Lain, 2016). This geographical advantage presents Malaysia with both potential benefits and challenges as it navigates the advantages of infrastructure development alongside the strategic risks associated with Chinese investments. Theoretical interpretations of the relationship between China and Malaysia often draw upon conflicting frameworks. From a Realist viewpoint, this interaction is marked by differences in power, national priorities, and security concerns, leading Malaysia to adopt a cautious approach while safeguarding its sovereignty (Yusof, 2019). On the other hand, Liberalism focuses on the economic ties, institutional connections, and collaborative efforts within ASEAN and the regional trade framework, underscoring the potential for stabilizing shared economic and diplomatic goals (Shahar, 2021).

Beyond bilateral ties, the relationship between China and Malaysia is increasingly integrated into larger regional and global contexts. The emergence of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the escalation of disputes in the South China Sea, and Malaysia's involvement in multilateral organizations like ASEAN and RCEP illustrate the complex landscape within which their bilateral connection functions (Doshi, 2021; Zhang, 2021). This development emphasizes Malaysia's dual position as a middle power managing unequal relations with China while also acting as a regional actor influencing collective responses in Southeast Asia. Thus, exploring this relationship offers a valuable opportunity to assess the relevance of Realist theories like hedging and balance-of-power strategies, along with Liberal ideas of interdependence and institutional collaboration. By placing Malaysia within these overlapping theoretical and empirical discussions, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of how historical influences, geographic vulnerabilities, and domestic political decisions converge to create a uniquely flexible foreign policy approach.

This article examines the historical development of relations between China and Malaysia, starting with the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1974 and continuing through recent changes under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with a specific focus on how geography and strategic positioning have influenced their bilateral interactions. Using a qualitative methodology, it applies the theories of Realism and Liberalism to assess both the conflicting and cooperative aspects of their relationship. This paper is organized into several sections: the initial section explores the historical and geographical bases of relations between China and Malaysia; the second section utilizes Realist theory to evaluate security concerns, issues of sovereignty, and power imbalances; the third section applies Liberalist views to examine aspects of interdependence, diplomatic relationships, and institutional participation; and the concluding section integrates the findings, emphasizing the interaction of Realist and Liberalist elements in shaping the changing strategic environment of Southeast Asia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on China–Malaysia relations has expanded significantly since Malaysia became the first ASEAN nation to establish formal diplomatic ties with Beijing in 1974. Earlier studies emphasize the historical and geographical roots of this relationship, noting how Malaysia's non-aligned stance gradually evolved toward practical engagement with China (Balakrishnan, 2006; Baginda, 2016). Malaysia's strategic position along the Strait of Malacca heightens its relevance in China's regional strategy, especially in addressing the "Malacca dilemma," where

dependence on maritime trade routes motivates China to diversify its regional logistics and investment initiatives (Yeoh et al., 2018; Lim, 2019).

A large segment of the literature interprets Malaysia's foreign policy towards China through a Realist lens, focusing particularly on the concept of hedging. Kuik (2008) defines hedging as a calibrated strategy that blends engagement, selective bandwagoning, and risk management, enabling smaller states to pursue cooperation without compromising autonomy. In Malaysia's case, hedging represents a deliberate attempt to navigate the structural asymmetry between a rising China and a middle-power state seeking to safeguard sovereignty. Subsequent studies (Kuik, 2012; Lai & Kuik, 2023) refine this idea by introducing the notion of "low-profile hedging," where Malaysia subtly balances its deep economic cooperation with China against underlying security apprehensions. This approach minimizes overt confrontation while maintaining strategic flexibility, reflecting Malaysia's effort to extract economic benefits without becoming politically beholden to Beijing.

Empirical analyses of Malaysia's foreign policy under the Mahathir administration (2018–2020) further illustrate this duality. While economic pragmatism drove Malaysia to embrace Chinese investments and Belt and Road projects, the government simultaneously exercised caution through policy recalibrations, such as renegotiating the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) and reviewing large-scale infrastructure deals (Jeshurun, 2007; Ngeow, 2019). These actions reveal that Malaysia's foreign posture is not merely reactive to external pressure but also informed by domestic political calculations and public sentiment. In this sense, hedging operates not only as a Realist mechanism of external balancing but also as a domestic governance tool for legitimizing foreign policy decisions in a politically plural environment. This synthesis of internal and external factors demonstrates how Malaysia strategically aligns Realist security concerns with pragmatic engagement to preserve both economic opportunity and national autonomy.

In contrast, Liberal-oriented scholarship focuses on interdependence and the stabilizing effects of trade and institutions. The establishment of the ASEAN–China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) and later the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) strengthened economic connectivity between the two nations, with China becoming Malaysia's top trading partner (Yean, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c). Despite political frictions, trade resilience supports the Liberal argument that interdependence discourages conflict. Studies examining the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) view projects such as the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) and the Kuantan Port expansion as double-edged: they foster growth while sparking debate over sovereignty, transparency, and debt exposure (Chin, 2020; Alden et al., 2021).

Other research explores the evolving maritime security tensions in the South China Sea, particularly around Malaysia's Luconia Shoals where's repeated activities by China's Coast Guard have challenged Malaysia's resource claims and offshore energy exploration rights (Liang et al., 2021b). These incidents, though often conducted in a restrained manner, reflect China's attempt to assert its strategic influence and gradually normalize control over disputed maritime zones. In response, Malaysia has adopted what scholars describe as a strategy of quiet resistance. This approach allows Malaysia to continue diplomatic and economic cooperation with Beijing while progressively strengthening its naval surveillance and defence preparedness to protect national interests (Kuik, 2022). Such a measured response demonstrates Malaysia's awareness that direct confrontation could jeopardize trade and investment relations, yet passivity might erode its sovereignty and maritime rights. The policy therefore illustrates the Realist emphasis on safeguarding territorial integrity and strategic autonomy through

deterrence and prudent defense diplomacy. At the same time, it reflects the Liberal belief in dialogue and institutional cooperation, as Malaysia relies on ASEAN mechanisms, joint maritime initiatives, and regional confidence-building measures to prevent escalation. The coexistence of restraint and resistance in Malaysia's maritime conduct reveals how the state combines Realist principles of power preservation with Liberal ideals of engagement to manage asymmetrical relations with China while maintaining regional stability and economic continuity.

However, scholars also highlight several research gaps. There is limited integration between economic, political, and security dimensions, and few studies employ interdisciplinary or geospatial analysis to examine Malaysia's maritime vulnerabilities or the domestic impact of BRI projects (Saravanamuttu, 2021b; Lai, De Silva & Wang, 2023). Addressing these gaps requires a comparative and cross-disciplinary framework that synthesizes Realist and Liberal perspectives to capture how Malaysia manages both structural pressures and domestic imperatives within an evolving regional order.

METHODOLOGY

This article adopts a qualitative methodological framework that combines historical-analytical and comparative approaches to examine the evolution of China–Malaysia relations. Primary and secondary sources are not only used as background materials but are systematically applied to different levels of analysis. Archival documents, government policy papers, and official treaties are examined to trace the transformation of diplomatic interactions from the establishment of formal relations in 1974 to contemporary developments under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). These materials are analysed to identify the continuity and change in Malaysia's strategic priorities, reflecting the influence of shifting regional and global contexts.

In addition, policy speeches, white papers, and official statements by both governments are assessed to interpret Malaysia's foreign policy behaviour through the theoretical lenses of Realism and Liberalism. Realist dimensions are explored through sources related to defence, maritime security, and national sovereignty, such as Malaysia's responses to the South China Sea disputes and China's strategic initiatives. Liberal dimensions are evaluated through economic data, trade reports, and ASEAN documents that highlight interdependence and institutional cooperation. Scholarly works including those by Kuik (2008, 2012) and Lai & Kuik (2023) are integrated to frame Malaysia's hedging strategy within both structural and domestic political contexts.

Comparative analysis is employed to juxtapose historical and contemporary cases, demonstrating how earlier diplomatic engagements inform Malaysia's current strategy toward China. The use of diverse sources allows triangulation between historical narratives, policy evidence, and theoretical interpretation. This approach ensures that the study does not merely describe events but analytically connects documentary evidence to theoretical claims, revealing how national interest, power asymmetry, and institutional cooperation intersect across different historical periods. In doing so, the methodology links empirical evidence with conceptual analysis, offering a holistic understanding of how Malaysia navigates its evolving relationship with China.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Malaysia and China have historically been seen as a model for relationships in Southeast Asia, marked by a generally positive and stable course in fields such as trade, economics, national security, politics, and regional economic collaboration (Baginda, 2016). The launch of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road further highlights Malaysia's key role, with its participation anticipated to significantly influence the sustainability and stability of their bilateral relationship. In this framework, most academic discussions emphasize the advantages and prospects of Malaysia's involvement in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), especially regarding economic growth, trade enhancement, and infrastructure development (Lim, 2019; Yuen, 2017; Yean, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c). These studies indicate that Malaysia's strategic location and proactive involvement enable it to effectively capitalize on the benefits of China's global projects.

Nevertheless, other areas of research take a more reserved view, highlighting the dangers tied to Malaysia's geopolitical position amidst escalating competition among major powers in the Asia-Pacific region (Chin, 2020; Kuik, 2012; Lai & Kuik, 2023). In this view, the unequal power dynamics between Malaysia and an ascending China could leave Malaysia vulnerable in aspects beyond just the economic sphere. Detractors have also associated rising nationalist feelings with an increasing scepticism toward the BRI, raising fears that deeper engagement might result in forms of "neo-colonialism" or create unsustainable financial dependency, often referred to as falling into a "debt trap" (Alden et al., 2021). These discussions reflect the contrasting sentiments of hope and concern that continue to influence the academic and policy dialogues regarding Malaysia-China relations.

The conversation around Malaysia's participation in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has increasingly been framed by worries about "neo-colonialism" and the potential dangers of falling into a debt trap. These discussions resonate significantly with the area studies perspective, which highlights the importance of historical contexts, geopolitical locations, and socio-cultural factors in influencing foreign policy and domestic reactions to external projects. Critics (Ashraf, 2022; Chin, 2020; Mishra & Wang, 2021) contend that numerous BRI initiatives lack economic viability, leading to vulnerabilities through unmanageable debt and the possible forfeiture of strategic assets to China. Similar apprehensions have been expressed about issues such as transparency, corruption, environmental harm, and the likelihood of social unrest related to BRI projects (Akbar, 2019; Chakma, 2019b; Lai, De Silva, & Wang, 2023; Saputro et al., 2019).

In Malaysia, these concerns became especially heightened after the political shift in 2018, which prompted the re-evaluation of expensive projects like the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) and Bandar Malaysia amid widespread scepticism about their long-term viability. Nevertheless, supporters argue that the BRI presents real advantages such as infrastructure improvements, job creation, and increased trade and investment prospects. From this viewpoint, the initiative is seen as a strategic path to mitigate Malaysia's infrastructure shortfall and foster sustainable economic development. Thus, the area studies framework serves as a vital tool to analyse Malaysia's mixed response to the BRI, placing it within broader regional and global power relationships.

The territorial and maritime disputes between Malaysia and China, in addition to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), continue to be a sensitive issue that could provoke renewed tensions if regional geopolitical dynamics escalate (Alatas, 2021; Liang et al., 2021a). However, multilateral institutions and regional frameworks play a crucial role in stabilizing the bilateral

relationship. ASEAN has historically been a fundamental element of Malaysia's diplomatic approach in the Asia-Pacific, at times even functioning as a structural dependency (Narine, 2008; Yeoh et al., 2018). Initiatives like ASEAN+3, which includes China, Japan, and South Korea, as well as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) that officially began in early 2022, offer further layers of institutional protection in managing Malaysia–China relations (Chong, 2012; Liow, 2000). Collectively, these factors indicate that the future direction of Malaysia–China relations will be shaped by the interaction of economic ties, geopolitical rivalries, and the advancing role of regional collaboration.

THE HISTORICAL-GEOGRAPHICAL DIMENSION

The historical development of Malaysia–China relations is divided into three distinct phases to aid in the gathering and summarization of pertinent literature. The initial phase explores the early interactions between the Malacca Sultanate and imperial China, focusing specifically on the historical foundations of their bilateral relationship. The origins of Sino-Malaysian relations can be traced back to the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), during which political and economic exchanges began to take shape through the tributary system (Balakrishnan, 2006, 2014). This longstanding historical connection highlights the deep-rooted nature of Malaysia–China relations within the broader regional context and establishes a basis for comprehending their further development. Furthermore, these early relationships not only exhibit a pragmatic approach to economic and political goals but also contribute to the establishment of lasting cultural ties and diplomatic practices that continue to influence Malaysia's current foreign policy behavior. Placing these historical interactions within a wider analytical context underscores the persistence of trade, diplomacy, and maritime collaboration patterns while also illustrating how historical narratives are frequently referenced to validate contemporary strategic endeavors such as the Belt and Road Initiative.

The creation of the Malacca Sultanate Factory (Guanchang) exemplifies the early formalization of these connections, representing one of the earliest indications of Sino-Malaysian relations and emphasizing Malacca's significance as a crucial hub for East–West maritime trade (Shicun, 2013). The journeys of Zheng He (Cheng Ho) during the Yongle period of the Ming Dynasty further enriched these exchanges, establishing foundations for lasting socio-cultural and commercial ties that continue to draw scholarly interest. (Lim, 2018) In modern times, the growth of Malaysia–China trade relations and the revitalization of maritime links through the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road have brought new relevance to historical area studies on these connections. These studies not only underscore the global importance of maritime capabilities but also place Malaysia–China interactions within the context of regional strategic and geopolitical dynamics.

During the colonial and early post-colonial era, the relationship between Malaysia and China faced significant disruptions, particularly following the 16th century, due to structural changes in China, the colonization of Malacca and various Malay sultanates by European powers, as well as the broader spread of European influence throughout East Asia which hindered previous connections. Although interactions between the two cultures were mainly interrupted, some scholars contend that shared political experiences and limited avenues for trade, commerce, and targeted political dialogue maintained a semblance of continuity in their bilateral exchanges (Alatas, 2021; Marrison, 1951; Mishra & Wang, 2021). Beginning in the 18th century, relations were reformulated in a new manner, not through direct diplomatic engagement but rather via large-scale migration. The influx of Chinese labourers, driven by the

economic demands of colonialism, saw many working in tin mines while others entered into business. Blythe (1947) pointed out that by 1850, migration from mainland China to Peninsular Malaysia had increased significantly. McGee (1964) noted that between 1880 and 1914, Chinese migration reached its peak, whereas Tregonning (1962) indicated that the Chinese population grew from 50,000 in 1880 to 200,000 in 1890, eventually exceeding 360,000 by 1927. By the dawn of the 20th century, over six million Chinese individuals had been recorded in the British colonial territories of the peninsula, significantly altering the socio-economic fabric of Malaya.

As noted by Lee (2010), the difficulties in enhancing the relationship between Malaysia and China during this time were shaped by the dynamics of Chinese political influence within Malaysia, as well as the country's consociational political system and electoral factors prevalent in the 1970s. Numerous scholars observe that Malaysia-China relations have progressed through various distinct stages, shifting from "engagement" to "disengagement," then to "moderation," and eventually leading to the "establishment of diplomatic relations." This evolution demonstrates the intricate interaction of both domestic and international factors that have impacted the bilateral ties over the years. Among these factors, the relationship between international and national security considerations has played a significant role in the growth of Sino-Malaysian relations (Jeshurun, 2007; Lai, De Silva & Wang, 2023; Ngeow, 2015, 2019a, 2019b; Ngeow & Jamil, 2022; Saravanamuttu, 2021b).

The social aspects of Malaysia-China relations represent a vast and intricate area of research that goes far beyond government-level diplomacy and economic interactions, involving academics from various fields such as religion, sociology, anthropology, and Asian studies (Idris & Abdullah, 2022; NAN, 2018; Nan et al., 2019; Ngeow et al., 2017; Yeoh, 2019; Yow, 2016). This body of research emphasizes the complex interaction of cultural, religious, and social dynamics that influence bilateral relations through individual interactions, cross-border networks, and cultural exchanges that either support or contest official perspectives. Among the various elements, Islam assumes a particularly crucial role, not only functioning as Malaysia's official religion but also significantly shaping its cultural identity, political authority, and foreign policy direction. The historical practice of Islamic governance in the Malay region, which dates back to the 15th century monarchy, established the legitimacy of the sultans and laid the groundwork for the integration of religion into Malaysia's political and social systems (Esposito & Voll, 1996). This historical influence continues to be evident in modern policymaking, where the interests of Islamic factions often influence Malaysia's domestic and international priorities (Nair, 2013). Domestically, Islamic policies lend political authority and moral justification, while on the international stage, religion drives the government's strategic use of diplomacy to assert religious orthodoxy, counterbalance internal opposition, and bolster Malaysia's international standing. (Liow & Pasuni, 2014, 2015)

Despite this, Chia (2013) notes that Muslims in China have not yet been organized to enhance the relationship between China and Malaysia or China and ASEAN. Several scholars suggest that by setting aside perceived ethnic and religious differences and viewing matters from a cultural standpoint, including Chinese Muslims in delegations to Malaysia could help alleviate mutual anxieties, thereby fostering a compatibility of values that may positively impact decision-making (Balakrishnan, 2010; Mak, 1985). However, the situation concerning Xinjiang and the Uyghurs has intermittently strained Malaysia-China relations, albeit to a limited extent. As a country with a majority Muslim population, Malaysia is especially attentive to the treatment of the Uyghur minority in Xinjiang, where ongoing concerns regarding cultural and religious repression have emerged. Although Malaysia enjoys significant economic

relations with China, these ties have often led to moderated official reactions to claims of maltreatment, resulting in a conflict between economic interests and religious unity.

Malaysia's diplomatic relations with China exhibit a combination of both submission and opposition. This approach is crucial for navigating unequal international dynamics, as Malaysia tailors its strategy to align with domestic objectives like security, economic growth, and independence. While there is public backing for China's Belt and Road Initiative, this is tempered by a degree of resistance, evident in the suspension of certain projects and the assertion of territorial rights in the South China Sea. Over time, Malaysia's stance towards China has evolved from opposition (1957-1969) to greater submission (1990-2018), a change influenced by internal political shifts and the requirement for elite validation (Kuik & Lai, 2023).

A salient feature of the social dimension in Malaysia-China relations lies in the historical and ongoing connection between the Malaysian Chinese community and China, where the presence of a significant ethnic Chinese demographic in Malaysia that maintains cultural traditions and, at times, family linkages with China, introduces further complexity into bilateral relations (Lai, De Silva & Wang, 2023). Scholars have examined how these ties influence mutual perceptions, policy orientations, and modes of interaction, particularly when considered through the lenses of identity, diaspora politics, and transnational linkages. At the same time, societal entities and public sentiment are increasingly recognized as influential in shaping the trajectory of Malaysia-China relations, with these interactions rendered more intricate by the multifaceted nature of the bilateral dynamic.

Economic engagement, particularly through China's large-scale investments in Malaysia under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has provided new opportunities but also generated domestic contestation, as civil society groups and NGOs have mobilized around issues of environmental degradation, land rights, and economic sovereignty. Such concerns have, at times, triggered public demonstrations and grassroots campaigns, which in turn exert pressure on the government and feed back into the policymaking process, underscoring the role of societal voices in mediating Malaysia's engagement with China.

MALAYSIA-CHINA RELATIONSHIP BASED ON REALISM AND LIBERALISM PERSPECTIVE

The dynamics of Malaysia-China relations have been influenced by various economic, political, and strategic elements, which can be explored through the frameworks of realism and liberalism (Akhir et al., 2018; Baginda, 2013; Fa, 2018; Lai & Kuik, 2020; Rommel, 2008). While realism interprets Malaysia-China relations as a struggle for power and influence especially evident in the South China Sea disputes, thus liberalism provides a contrasting explanation that emphasizes cooperation through interdependence and institutions. Realism and liberalism are among the leading theories in international relations (IR), each presenting unique viewpoints on state behaviour and inter-state interactions. Realism thus explains why Malaysia adopts a cautious, hedging stance toward China, but Liberalism clarifies how this caution is balanced by efforts to preserve economic ties and diplomatic engagement. Realist theorists contend that states act out of self-interest and focus on increasing their relative power, which in the case of Malaysia, is reflected in the tensions arising from China's growing military presence and assertive approach to its maritime claims in the SCS, creating friction with neighbouring states, including Malaysia (Cha, 2014; Kuik, 2022; Lai, 2017b; Lai & Kuik, 2020; Liu, 2020; Ngeow,

2019; Ngeow & Jamil, 2022; Thayer, 2011). This conflict, when interpreted through a realist lens, is seen as a natural result of a changing balance of power in East and Southeast Asia, where China aims to strengthen its regional pre-eminence and establish greater territorial and strategic security (Mearsheimer, 2007, 2017).

This analytical juxtaposition highlights that Malaysia's foreign policy is neither purely defensive nor cooperative, but rather a strategic synthesis shaped by both theories. Liberalism stresses the idea that nations can collaborate to achieve common goals and enhance mutual benefits through interdependence and institutional cooperation (Mowle, 2003; Pohl & Willigen, 2015). In this context, China has emerged as Malaysia's biggest trading partner, with their bilateral relationship supported by deep economic integration, trade exchanges, and investment initiatives. Analyzing this through a liberal lens, such interdependence indicates a strategic assessment of national interests where mutual benefits take precedence: Malaysia gains from China's swift economic growth and influx of capital, while China gains access to Malaysia's vital resources and markets (Keohane & Nye, 1973). However, this cooperation is not absolute but rather conditional, as both nations continue to protect their fundamental interests and might take unilateral measures when conflicts occur. Therefore, liberal theory demonstrates how economic institutions and interdependence can reduce the likelihood of conflict, but it does not eliminate the underlying strategic frictions that realism highlights.

Mearsheimer (2007, 2017) contends that the increasing power and influence of China will inevitably incite strategic rivalry in the region, as countries, including Malaysia, strive to counterbalance Beijing's ascent. Similarly, Mahbubani (1995) argues that Malaysia and other Southeast Asian nations must maneuver through a complex landscape of strategic alliances, highlighting Malaysia's economic reliance on China while also emphasizing the necessity of maintaining security links with the United States. In addition, Goh (2005, 2008) points out that China's assertive actions in the South China Sea (SCS) have escalated tensions, placing Malaysia in a precarious situation where it must protect its territorial integrity while fostering economic cooperation, further complicated by domestic concerns regarding China's approach to its Muslim minority population. Supporting these viewpoints, Narine (2004, 2008) emphasizes that Malaysia confronts a dual challenge of reaping the benefits of closer economic relations with China while safeguarding its sovereignty and maritime rights, thereby reinforcing the realist perspective that Malaysia-China relations are influenced by an ongoing balancing act rooted in power dynamics and structural vulnerabilities.

The literature on Malaysia-China relations from a realist perspective (Liu & Lim, 2018; Liu & Dongen, 2016; Noor & Qistina, 2017; Zhou & Esteban, 2018) underscores the significance of power dynamics and strategic interests in influencing the bilateral relationship. Realist scholars contend that Malaysia is required to navigate a complicated network of strategic partnerships in order to handle the implications of China's growing power, balancing its economic connections with China against its security concerns and relations with other regional nations. Although realist theorists acknowledge the possibility for collaboration and interdependence within the relationship, they also emphasize the risks of conflict and rivalry as China's influence continues to expand. In subsequent analyses of the evolution and structure of power dynamics, the realist perspective has seldom focused on the unitary level, and when it has, it has primarily aimed to delineate the confines of that level in the context of international relations.

From a realist viewpoint, Malaysia's foreign policy decisions regarding China during the Cold War were primarily influenced by survival needs and the security of the regime. The

backing of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) by China was seen as a fundamental threat to Malaysia's sovereignty and internal stability (Kuik, 2022). In this context, Malaysia's cautious approach illustrated the realist argument that the international landscape is anarchic, and nations must prioritize self-preservation over idealistic interactions (Mearsheimer, 2001). The eventual establishment of diplomatic relations in 1974 under Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, however, signified a practical adjustment of Malaysia's foreign strategy. From a realist perspective, this decision was driven less by trust and more by considerations of balance-of-power dynamics: acknowledging China's growing influence in Southeast Asia while simultaneously avoiding excessive reliance on Western security assurances. This accommodation, motivated by realist principles, demonstrates how smaller nations often adapt and strategize in response to the pressures of great power rivalry.

As Waltz (2000) posits, reductionism is a framework that interprets international relations based on variations in individual traits at the unitary level. Although it can elucidate various international phenomena, the origins of these phenomena are frequently complex and varied, resulting in inherent unpredictability. Consequently, reductionism alone does not fully account for international politics. However, certain realist viewpoints, such as defensive realism and neoliberal constructivism (NCR), do take domestic politics into account in their assessments. Nonetheless, opinions differ on the extent to which domestic politics can meaningfully influence international relations, with the defensive and offensive branches of structural realism holding opposing stances. To prevent misunderstandings, it is crucial to define "domestic politics," which pertains to the political dynamics and frameworks within a nation that inform its foreign policy choices. In contrast, defensive realism does not contend that anarchy leads to a lack of security; rather, it suggests that states can rationally decide to adopt either a defensive posture or a status quo approach. For states that engage in expansionist policies, defensive realism attributes this behaviour to domestic political factors. Walt (1987; 1988), for instance, in his examination of European security dynamics before and after the Cold War, asserts that factors such as democracy, social hierarchies, and elite governance play pivotal roles in sustaining peace in Europe.

In contrast to realism, liberalism represents a theoretical perspective that highlights the significance of internal political factors in the realm of international relations, both in basic tenets and theoretical frameworks. The central premise of liberalism is that individuals and groups serve as primary actors whose actions are shaped by their perceptions and contexts. The concept of rationality expands beyond merely the pursuit of self-interest, thereby paving the way for new opportunities and directions for research (Owen, 1994). When it comes to the state, liberals contend that the government is a political entity formed by individuals or groups, and it is influenced by the identities, power dynamics, and interests of people both domestically and internationally. As a result, factors at the unitary and individual levels inherently affect and can even dictate the state's preferences and policies. These liberal perspectives align more closely with international relations viewed through a domestic political lens, with many theoretical branches incorporating domestic political variables, often manifested through the lens of democratic pacifism (Ungerer, 2012).

Liberalism emphasizes collaboration, interdependence, and the advancement of common values, alongside establishing institutions that can aid in achieving these objectives. Liberals contend that international organizations and regimes play a crucial role in fostering cooperation and collective action among nations. The liberal institutionalist viewpoint posits that nations can attain mutual benefits through the establishment of international institutions that offer advantages to all participants, potentially resulting in lasting stability and

collaboration (Keohane & Nye, 2008). Furthermore, proponents of liberal theory suggest that democracy can foster peace, and the promotion of democratic institutions can enhance stability and tranquility within the global system (Doyle, 1986). As articulated by democratic peace theory, democratic nations are less inclined to resort to war against one another, as the shared principles and institutional frameworks inherent in democracy offer a means for peacefully resolving disputes (Kant, 2015).

Liberalism offers a different perspective on the diplomatic breakthrough of 1974. Rather than just balancing interests, Tun Razak's initiative aimed to establish bilateral cooperation through diplomacy and trade, based on the liberal notion that shared interests can transcend ideological differences (Keohane & Nye, 1977). The quick establishment of formal diplomatic relations soon led to an increase in trade, cultural exchanges, and the creation of embassies, which fostered ongoing dialogue. In the subsequent decades, the liberal aspects became progressively apparent as Malaysia and China deepened their economic ties, with China becoming Malaysia's biggest trading partner by the early 21st century (Ngeow, 2017). According to the liberal theory of complex interdependence, such economic integration reduces the likelihood of conflict, as the disadvantages of disruption surpass the advantages. Thus, Malaysia's policy decisions exemplify the liberal belief that cooperative structures can mitigate insecurity, even when they are rooted in a history of ideological mistrust.

From a liberal viewpoint, the relationship between Malaysia and China is marked by interdependence and collaboration, especially in the economic domain. Liberals argue that such cooperation and interdependence can lead to increased stability and peace, as nations recognize their mutual reliance. Malaysia and China have engaged in economic collaboration through initiatives like the BRI, which has afforded Malaysia opportunities for infrastructure improvement and investments. Liberal theorists maintain that this collaboration may yield broader political advantages, as it fosters enhanced understanding and trust between the two nations. Scholars who adopt a liberal perspective regard international relations as a cooperative endeavor and assert that countries can secure mutual benefits through collaboration and dialogue. The potential for economic collaboration and interdependence is a key concept in the liberal discourse surrounding Malaysia-China relations. According to researchers at the University of Malaya, Hutchinson & Yean (2021); Yean (2018a, 2018c), the economic ties between Malaysia and China can serve as a driving force for regional economic advancement and growth. They highlight that China's BRI offers Malaysia opportunities to strengthen its trade and investment connections with China, which can assist in fostering trust and collaboration between the two nations.

Numerous studies have been conducted from a liberal standpoint regarding Malaysia-China relations, concentrating on particular issues like human rights and environmental collaboration (Blanchard, 2017; Li, 2013; Yu, 2016; Zhao, 2020). Academics such as Rahim (2008) from the University of Sydney have noted Malaysia's potential to advocate for human rights in China, owing to its strong Muslim identity and dedication to human rights. The liberal discourse on Malaysia-China relations underscores the potential for collaboration and mutual advantage between the two nations through economic connections and dialogue, as they can foster trust and enhance regional stability. Nonetheless, liberal theorists also recognize the likelihood of conflict and rivalry, especially concerning territorial disputes, and understand that mere economic interdependence cannot settle all disagreements. They may also critique China's human rights record and its impact on Malaysian domestic affairs, particularly in light of concerns regarding China's expanding global influence.

The post-Cold War period introduced new complexities into Malaysia–China relations. China's economic reforms and subsequent emergence as a global power generated both opportunities and concerns. Realist scholars contend that China's increasing assertiveness, especially in the South China Sea (SCS), poses a direct challenge to Malaysia's maritime sovereignty and security (Mearsheimer, 2017; Narine, 2004). Malaysia's careful yet ongoing naval modernization, along with its defense diplomacy efforts, can be seen as methods of soft balancing against Chinese influence (Kuik, 2016). Unlike Vietnam or the Philippines, Malaysia has opted for a more subdued approach regarding SCS disputes, choosing not to provoke Beijing while still upholding its territorial positions. This behaviour aligns with realist theory as a smaller nation, Malaysia, seeks to enhance its autonomy by steering clear of confrontation while simultaneously bolstering its defensive capabilities. Consequently, the historical experience of vulnerability continues to shape a realist interpretation of Malaysia's security strategy with China.

Simultaneously, liberal dynamics have also influenced the course of Malaysia-China relations following the Cold War. The creation of ASEAN–China dialogue frameworks, the ratification of the ASEAN–China Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA), and Malaysia's active involvement in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) exemplify how institutional structures and common economic objectives can foster cooperation (Pohl & Van der Willigen, 2015; Ngeow, 2019). While these liberal frameworks do not resolve conflicts, such as the disputes in the South China Sea, they offer venues to address tensions through discussion rather than conflict. Malaysia's approach to foreign policy shows how smaller nations can use multilateralism to enhance their influence and lessen power imbalances. For example, Malaysia's proactive engagement in ASEAN–China collaboration demonstrates a liberal tactic of integrating bilateral relations within regional frameworks, thus reducing risks through interdependence and diplomacy based on rules. This illustrates the liberal perspective that institutions and economic collaboration can lessen the anarchic tendencies highlighted by realism.

Democratic pacifism is a key principle of republican liberalism, adding an important new factor to the analysis of foreign policy. Prior to its emergence, the "polity" variable had received limited attention, but the introduction of democratic pacifism established it as a common interest hypothesis in both disciplines. It aims to investigate the conditions necessary for international peace through the "polity" characteristic, which posits that democratic nations rarely, if ever, go to war (McDonald, 2015). Liberalism has significantly influenced the understanding of domestic political factors, not only by generating interest in the examination of institutional variables in domestic politics but also by reinforcing the significance of domestic actors, exploring the relevant variables of these actors, constructing a system of international relations shaped by their interactions, and offering a new viewpoint on the nature of international relations (Moravcsik & Legro, 1999).

While Realism captures the structural vulnerabilities and security dilemmas driving Malaysia's cautious engagement with China, Liberalism offers a corrective by showing how interdependence and institutional cooperation soften these tensions. In other words, Realism explains the persistence of strategic anxiety, whereas Liberalism explains the persistence of dialogue. The interaction between both theories suggests that Malaysia's engagement strategy is best understood as adaptive pragmatism that balancing survival within an asymmetric power structure while capitalising on economic opportunities. While liberal theorists highlight the significance of economic interdependence, trade, and institutional frameworks in promoting cooperation, realists warn that such interdependence may not be enough to resolve disputes primarily driven by security issues, strategic goals, and the quest for power (Mearsheimer,

2007; Keohane & Nye, 1973). The South China Sea conflicts illustrate how geopolitical tensions and sovereignty concerns can overshadow the advantages of economic connections, resulting in a nuanced relationship where cooperation and rivalry coalesce. As a result, Malaysia and China must navigate a precarious balancing act, weighing the pursuit of economic growth and stability against the necessity of protecting national sovereignty, addressing regional security challenges, and reacting to domestic political demands. In this context, the interaction between realism and liberalism not only underscores the multifaceted nature of bilateral relations but also strengthens the notion that Malaysia's foreign policy towards China will continue to be influenced by the need to align power dynamics with the requirements of regional cooperation and stability.

The evolution of Malaysia–China relations reveal the limits of each theory when viewed in isolation. While Realism explains Malaysia's vigilance toward China's strategic expansion, Liberalism demonstrates the channels through which cooperation persists despite asymmetry. This interplay indicates that Malaysia's policy behaviour cannot be fully captured by power calculations alone and instead, it reflects a continuous negotiation between Realist imperatives of security and Liberal aspirations of prosperity and institutional order. Realism emphasizes Malaysia's ongoing concern for sovereignty, regime stability, and disparities in power, showcasing how structural factors influence its cautious diplomatic maneuvers and hedging tactics. Conversely, liberalism highlights the importance of institutional collaboration, economic interdependence, and social connections in shifting the relationship from one marked by scepticism to a more pragmatic partnership. Collectively, these viewpoints indicate that Malaysia's strategy towards China has developed through adaptive pragmatism, balancing security needs with the prospects for economic advancement. The historical path reveals that Malaysia's foreign policy regarding China is not straightforward but is constantly adjusted in response to changes in the regional landscape, domestic needs, and global shifts. This dual perspective on history provides deeper insights into the intricacies of managing relationships with an ascending China, where the dynamics of conflict and cooperation exist together within an ever-evolving context.

The coexistence of Malaysia's hedging behaviour and its active participation in ASEAN institutionalism reflects the country's dual strategic identity as both a security-conscious realist actor and a cooperative regional partner. Hedging embodies the Realist logic of survival under uncertainty, allowing Malaysia to mitigate risks from China's growing influence without explicit alignment. In contrast, ASEAN institutionalism represents a Liberal mechanism that provides smaller states with diplomatic space and collective leverage through multilateralism. The interaction between these two logics reveals that Malaysia's foreign policy does not strictly conform to either theoretical paradigm. Instead, hedging operates within and alongside institutional frameworks, suggesting that Realist self-help strategies can coexist with Liberal rule-based cooperation when national interest and regime legitimacy require both. This intersection underscores the theoretical limits of viewing state behaviour through a single lens and highlights the need for hybrid or context-sensitive interpretations in International Relations theory.

CONCLUSION

The historical and geographical factors influencing China–Malaysia relations highlight the intricate nature of dealing with asymmetry in international relations. Malaysia's pragmatic foreign policy can be better understood through the interaction and not the coexistence of Realist and Liberal forces. Realism explains Malaysia's persistent concern for sovereignty and

strategic autonomy, whereas Liberalism clarifies its simultaneous pursuit of economic integration and regional cooperation. The tension between these two logics produces a dynamic foreign policy that oscillates between cautious restraint and cooperative engagement, reflecting Malaysia's ongoing effort to reconcile power politics with developmental goals. Realist theory addresses Malaysia's ongoing security apprehensions, especially concerning the South China Sea and strategic weaknesses associated with great-power rivalries, while Liberal theory sheds light on the significant economic interdependence, involvement in institutions, and multilateral cooperation that have strengthened bilateral relations. This combined approach illustrates that neither theoretical framework alone adequately captures the complex realities of China–Malaysia interactions; rather their integration offers a richer perspective on how historical contexts and geographical factors shape current policy decisions.

Looking ahead, the future of China-Malaysia relations will hinge on Malaysia's capability to balance its national interests with its regional obligations while adapting to China's changing role on the global stage. Growth opportunities exist within initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative; however, they also pose risks of dependency, necessitating Malaysia to carefully navigate the line between engagement and strategic independence. The interaction of Realist caution and Liberal optimism implies that Malaysia's foreign policy will continue to be dynamic, influenced by geographic considerations and the requirements for economic and institutional collaboration. Consequently, this situation not only enhances the theoretical discussion between Realism and Liberalism but also provides broader insights into how middle powers in Southeast Asia address asymmetrical relationships amid a transforming global landscape.

Beyond the empirical case of Malaysia–China relations, this study contributes to broader International Relations theory by illustrating how small and middle powers navigate asymmetrical relationships through hybrid strategic logics. Malaysia's experience demonstrates that survival under asymmetry does not solely depend on balancing or bandwagoning as Realism suggests nor on institutional harmony, as Liberalism assumes. Instead, it relies on an adaptive synthesis that merges pragmatic hedging with institutional participation. This combination allows smaller states to offset vulnerability while preserving autonomy and legitimacy. The Malaysian case therefore extends theoretical discussions on the behaviour of secondary powers, offering an empirical foundation for understanding how agency, regionalism, and institutional flexibility function within an unequal global order.

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MALAYSIA'S EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY FROM THE WESTERN PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT A state has the autonomy to implement educational practices appropriate to their economic, social, and political requirements. The paper reviews Malaysia's education philosophy exclusively from the Western perspective (the other source being theological). Tracing the definition from the classical to modern thinkers, it uses the conceptual framework of international law as defined by Article 38(1) of the Statute of International Court of Justice (ICJ, 1945), one of the principal organs of the United Nations (UN), and the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties 1969. It assesses the education philosophy derived from the Child Rights Treaty (CRC 1989) which Malaysia adopted in 1995 and the provisions of which have been domestically legislated. In addition, empirical data from the *travaux préparatoires* (legislative history) of the CRC 1989, the UN system, various monographs and journal articles will form the backbone of the materials for the discussion. Among others, John Dewey's concept of growth will form the basis of the analysis while discussing the concept of education as laid out by long-established thinkers. Critical thinking, an essential element of quality education and one of the key attributes Malaysian students need to possess, will also be highlighted. The paper will conclude, albeit, rather positively, that Malaysia's education philosophy, like that of other developing countries takes into account the contemporary provisions of international law and the principles laid out by the UN system and its specialised agencies.

Keywords: UN Child Rights Convention, Malaysia, Article 29, Education Act 1996, Western Education Philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

Philosophy of education or education philosophy is about the aims or purposes of education. All countries in the world, including Malaysia, have their own philosophies of education, reflecting the inherent exercise of their sovereignty. The United Nations (UN) General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 35/56 of 1980 on the "International Development Strategy for the Third UN Development Decade" declared that "...countries (are) to implement education policies appropriate to their economic and social (cultural, and political, my emphasis) requirement (UNGA, 1980)" which are in line with states' sovereignty or independence to determine their own institutions of government and these institutions are largely established

under domestic legislation (Krasner, 2004). Lile (2021) posits rightly that education is the most important function of the State and local governments.

In this regard, Malaysia's philosophy of education is now entrenched in the fifth preambular paragraph of the Malaysia's Education Act 1996 which provides that:

Education in Malaysia is an ongoing effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and of achieving a high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large (MoE, 1996a).

This now becomes the National Education Policy (NEP) (MoE, 1996a), which was promulgated following Malaysia's ratification of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereafter, 'CRC / Treaty') (UNCRC, 1989). Developed or developing countries, like Malaysia, have their own intellectual traditions and their specific ways of institutionalizing the concept in the academic area and the resulting structures for the implementation of the system: the institution; the policy; teacher training and development; the curriculum; pedagogy; public assessment, research and planning, etc. While Malaysia's management of the education system is highly centralized at the Federal level, with each level of education (pre-school, primary, secondary, vocational, and tertiary) having its own public examinations (Siegel et al., 2018; Hussin, 2009), there has been some anticipation that some degree of decentralization to school-based management would take place as a critical strategy given the possible advantages it would generate (Bajunid, 2008). However, the end of primary school (Year 6) examination known by its acronym *UPSR (Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah)* and the end of Year 9 (*Sijil Rendah Pelajaran - SRP*) have both been abolished in 2020 and 2021, respectively, thus effectively allowing students who remain in school to move on without any obstacle to complete eleven years of education, that is, until the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM – Form 5)* level. In October 2025, the first group of more than 29,000 Yr. 6 students from Sarawak sat their first *UP-DLP* examinations since the teaching of Science and Mathematics resumed six years ago in its primary schools.

By exploring key western philosophical perspective on education, this paper argues that the aims of education in Malaysia should encourage, among other things, on the acquisition and understanding of knowledge, focus on the development of critical and creative thinking skills, promote personal growth and autonomy, cultivate an ethical, respectful and social responsibility for an individual's personal well-being, his or her family, society, and nation at large – these are among the attributes Malaysian students should have as envisaged in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025 (MoE, 2012; Ibrahim, 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework: International Law and States

The conceptual framework of this paper is depicted by the intertwined institutions of International Law, States as international community or community of States, and State's sovereignty, which are inseparable: Buzan (2004) considers international law as the "bedrock

institution on which the idea of international society stands or falls”. Kaczorowska (2010) defines international law as a “body of rules and principles binding upon ... states in their relations with one another” (Kawi et al., 2022) and they include “rules relating to the functioning of international organisations...” and those “relating to individuals and non-states ...” (Kawi et al, 2022, p. 7). They are generally called public international law as they have been created through interactions between States (Klabbers, 2021; Woosley, 2017). Article 38 (1) of the Statute of the International Court of Justice, one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, defines international law that includes conventions or treaties (ICJ Statute, 1945). The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT 1969) of which Malaysia is a State Party since 1994, defines *treaty* as “an international agreement concluded between States in written form and governed by international law, whether embodied in a single instrument or in two or more related instruments and whatever its particular designation” (Article 2 (1) (a), VCLT, 1969; Aust, 2000). The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly (Res. 44/25), now sets the global standards for the protection of the human rights of the child (a person below 18 years of age) and its 2000 Protocols fall under this definition. The Treaty which was ratified by Malaysia in 1995, supplants Malaysia’s philosophy of education and this will be discussed in greater details below (Kawi et al., 2022).

The core word embedded within the aforesaid conceptual framework is the ‘State’ (Brown, 2019). According to Crawford (2006), the criteria for statehood are fulfilled by an entity having: a defined territory; a permanent population; a stable government, and a substantial degree of independence of other States. This definition corresponds with that provided by Article 1 (1) of the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States. On 31 August 1957, the Federation of Malaya (succeeded by Malaysia in 1963) fulfilled these criteria when it achieved independence from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the former colonial administration.

Closely associated with the word ‘State’ is the word ‘sovereignty’ which means a State’s right to do as it wishes, particularly within its own territory, free of external constraint or interference – they can agree to be bound by a treaty or wish not to accept it (Brown, 2019; Beaulac, 2003; VCLT, 1969). The existence of States arises from shared agreements and understanding about the concept of sovereignty that establishes via mutual recognition, the central defining features of statehood: territoriality, domestic supremacy and international autonomy (Navaro & Green, 2013): they posit that the norm of sovereignty is thus constitutive of the central actors of international community – the States (Navaro & Green, 2013).

In his article entitled *Transnational Diffusion: Norms, Ideas and Politics*, Giraldi (2013) posits that international interdependence is at the core of international relations and that States interact with one another and explore the nature, causes and consequences of their collaboration. This collaboration resulted from the realisation that problems faced by States and their population can only be resolved through international cooperation which often needs to be multilateral, as well as permanent in nature (Evans 2010, p. 281; UNGA Res. 2625 (XXV), 1970). Often, States face similar problems: it is about poverty, economic and social development, unemployment, poor standard of education, etc. (UNESCO, 1990, 2000, 2014 & 2015; UNGA A/RES/66/288, 2012). The creation of the Global Partnership for Education (formerly ‘Education for All’) in 2002 is a succinct example in how developed countries (global North) come together to assist developing countries (global South) in improving the performance of their education systems. Menashy (2019) defines ‘partnership’ as a positive, cooperative, collaborative and inclusive relationship among the actors.

As members of the international community, States are bound by common interests, common values, the common set of rules and the working of the common institutions of which they are members – the English School Theory as professed by Hedley Bull in his first monograph, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*. New York (Bull, 2012). For Bull, Buzan says, the word *institution* does not necessarily imply an organisation or administrative machinery; it is about a “set of habits and practices shaped towards the realisation of common goals” – which underpins collaboration and a means of maintaining that collaboration among States (Buzan, 2004). According to Buzan, Bull places ‘institutions’ at the centre of his English School Theory; they are: diplomacy, international law, the balance of power, war, and the role of the great powers (Buzan, 2004). What does the Charter of the United Nations (UN) say on the issue of collaboration among States?

The UN Charter and various declarations of the UNGA make this clear: they require member States to cooperate in matters relating to social, economic, cultural development (one of the four pillars of the UN: the others: human rights, rule of law, and peace and security). Malaysia, as a Member State of the United Nations, UNESCO, the World Bank, and so on, is bound by the principle of *pacta sunt servanda* (agreement must be kept) in international law (Davison-Vecchione, 2019). The duty of States to cooperate with one another, among others, is laid out in the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation Among States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, especially in the economic, science and technology in order to advance educational development, particularly in developing countries (UNGA, 1970).

In its 2021 publication, *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A new social contract for education*, UNESCO asserts that education systems inculcate a belief that transient advantages are preferable instead of understanding States’ interdependence, togetherness, and caring for one another and the planet (UNESCO, 2021). In view of this, UNESCO, as the UN specialised agency that promotes cooperation and solidarity, among other things, in education, has called for a new *social contract* for education that is underpinned by complementary elements, namely, the right to education (quality education and lifelong learning) and a commitment to education as a public societal endeavour and a common good (see its definition below) (UNESCO, 2021). In his monograph, *Of the Social Contract and Other Political Writings*, Rousseau defines *social contract* as the ‘general will’ in two ways: firstly, “... what the people, voting as a body of sovereign legislators in their assembly, decides the law to be” - that is, a collective democratic process, and secondly, the ‘general will’ *corresponds to a fact of the matter where the common interest lies*, - that is, the law derives from the citizens and it applies to all so that each person is a maker of the law as well as being subject to it. UNESCO (2021) posits that as a “... shared societal endeavour, education builds common purposes and enables individuals and communities to flourish together”. Grayling (2019) posits that the ‘general will’ is about the consensus of the people in the democratic sense. He also suggests that it is about a ‘common purpose or interest’ (p.254). Articles 28 and 29 on the right to and aims of education of the Treaty (which will be discussed below), are the *shared societal endeavour* that bind all State Parties (a total of 196), including Malaysia.

Although Malaysia as a State has the sovereign right to act in accordance with its own wishes internally, in the areas of education, Malaysia as a member of the international community is bound to follow the standards or norms established by the United Nations and its specialised agencies (UN Charter, 1945; UNESCO Constitution, 1945; WB Articles of Agreement, 1944; Art. 28(3) of the CRC Treaty).

During 2022-2023, the researcher undertook research in the libraries of the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG, IBE-UNESCO) and Paris, UNESCO'S Headquarters. UNESCO, the UN specialised agency that promotes cooperation and solidarity in education, science, culture and communication, provides a rich repertoire of historical as well as standards and norms on quality education (UNESCO, 1945); in addition, the IBE-UNESCO documentation centre in Geneva provides contemporary information on each Member State's education systems (in the form of papers submitted to the International Conference on Education (ICE) which describe the applicable constitutional and legislative provisions, the current policies and reforms that have been undertaken or proposed, and the implementing institutions within each education system. The researcher also obtained a copy of monograph on education philosophy from the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning in Hamburg. In addition, the Library of the United Nations Office of Geneva (UNOG), among others, keeps the legislative history of the Treaty which is also an important reference for this article.

Although there is relevant literature on education generally in Malaysia, there is, however, a dearth of information relating to the aims of education, particularly, relating to Article 29 of the Treaty. In Nordin's and Othman's 2003 monograph entitled *Falsafah Pendidikan dan Kurikulum* (Education Philosophy and Curriculum), the authors briefly discussed the education philosophy both from the western and Islamic perspective, naming among others, the classic philosophers (Socrates, Plato and Aristotle) as well as the western well-known personalities such as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Karl Marx (1818-1883), John Dewey (1852-1959), among a few (Nordin & Othman, 2003, p. 3-5). Nordin and Othman discussed at length the national philosophy of education which historically built upon the policies set by the Razak Report 1956 and later the Rahman Talib Report, 1960, that established the concept of education for all (but not yet made compulsory at that time), a curriculum with common content syllabuses, and Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction to replace the English language (MoE, 1985). In 2003, primary education was made compulsory for 6-12 year old Malaysian citizens following the amendment to the Education Act 1996 in 2002 (see Education (Amendment) Act 2002). More recent materials include the MEB (MoE, 2012) and the English Language Reforms in Malaysia (The Roadmap) 2015-2025 (MoE, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

The researcher visited the United Nations institutions in Geneva, Switzerland and Paris, France to look for the relevant literature. In Geneva, the main library at the UN Office (Palais des nations) and the Centre for Documentation at the International Bureau of Education (IBE) provide access both to the hardcopy material and digital collections and likewise the UNESCO's library in Paris. Through the staff of the IBE, the author was also able to obtain some information from the UNESCO's Institute of Lifelong Learning, based in Hamburg, Germany. The UMS repository also provided information used in this article.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The literature reveals the origin of the word philosophy, defines as *love of wisdom* and has its root in ancient Greece from the presocratic period to the latter classical philosophers. The word *educate* has its origin in '*educāre*' (Latin) and the literature also provides the discussion on its meaning as defined by various authors. The right to or aims of education have its formal origin in the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and later repeated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966): these legislative provisions were later included in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (as articles 28 and

29) which has been ratified by Malaysia – they are universal norms which have been adopted by 196 developed and developing countries, including Malaysia.

Philosophy and Education

Understanding the meaning and scope of these two words is imperative before analysing the contents of the New Education Policy (NEP). The word philosophy derives from the Greek word *philosophia*; love of knowledge or wisdom in Latin (O'Connor, 2017; Bailey, 2014; Shand, 1993; Ewing, 1985). According to Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), philosophy is an activity or process that seeks to clarify an idea or suggestion (Ayer, 1973; Fann, 2015; Allen & Goddard, 2017). The process uses reasoning to understand what knowledge and moral judgment are and that of reality (Bailey, 2014). When philosophising, two questions are directed at the proposer of the idea or suggestion, firstly, by asking what do you mean and secondly, by asking the person how does he know it (White & White, 2022). According to Professor Robinson (2004), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), a German philosopher, devoted most of his entire life to three questions: “what can I know, what ought I to do, what can I hope?” Although Ulich (1961) posits the word ‘why’ is ‘little’, it, however, stimulates and prompts the mind to think deeper in exploring into subjects. Philosophy is about clarifying thoughts: for example, Socrates was concerned to answer questions such as “What is justice?” or “What is knowledge (Ayer, 1973)?” Without reasoning, thoughts will not be clear and distinct (Fann, 2015; Bailey, 2014). A few words on the origin of philosophy that appeared about 2000 years ago in Greece.

Weeks (2019) claims that the origin of Western Philosophy is based on the ideas of a group, he calls, the “Milesian school” – thinkers led by Thales of Miletus (c.624-546 BCE), a Presocratic philosopher, from the Greek province called Ionia, which is part of the present day Turkey (Garvey & Stangroom, 2012). The Presocratics were the predecessors and contemporaries of Socrates: Thales, a presocratic was often referred to as the “first philosopher” because of his reliance on “observation and reason” (Grayling, 2019, p. 13); he was an astronomer, engineer and statesman. The other key figures of the Presocratics, include Anaximander (c.610-546BCE), Anaximanes (c.585-528BCE), who were said to be looking to nature itself “using reason and observation to fathom the natural world” (Weeks, 2019, p. 15). Weeks (2019) also mentions Pythagoras (c.570-495 BCE) as being another famous Presocratics, a mathematician known for his theorem of the right-angled triangles – that the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides. The other well-known Greek philosophers were Socrates, Plato and Aristotle: Socrates (469-399 B.C.) was famous for his dialogue and questioning; Plato (427-347 BC), an accomplished mathematician and was acknowledged for his topics such as ethics, politics, and epistemology - his writings revealed Socrates’ ideas (Waterfield, 2023; Seaford, 2020; Weeks, 2019; Garvey & Stangroom, 2012; Shand, 1993), and Aristotle (384-322 BC) who was known for a broad range of disciplines, including politics, biology, and ethics; the study of the latter helps to improve human lives and their awareness of emotional and social skills enables human being to put their general understanding of well-being into practice (Zalta & Nodelman, 2024; Noddings, 2018; Law, 2013; Garvey & Stangroom, 2012).

Schofield (2012) in his monograph “*The Philosophy of Education: An Introduction*” describes the concept of “education” at length (see pages 29-41), claiming the root word ‘educate’ originates from the Latin word ‘*educāre*’, meaning to ‘rear’ or ‘bring up’ (Lile, 2021). Schofield also refers to the thoughts of various philosophers on the topic, among them, Plato and Milton – the latter posits that a comprehensive education prepares a person to act fairly,

competently, and with generosity; Lodge thinks education as an experience of a living organism in a usual surrounding; Ducasse uses the phrases '*to lead out*' or '*to bring out*' through training instruction and indoctrination. Teaching and indoctrination are among the methods used to transmit education: teaching is about inculcating insight, while the latter, devoid of insight, is unacceptable based on moral standard (Schofield, 2012, p.177). The researcher would agree with Schofield in that the word 'indoctrination' was used during late 1949 and in 1950s to describe the infiltration by the Clandestine Communist Organisation (CCO – with affiliation to the Communist Party of China) to develop the CCO cells or sympathisers among the youths for its cause in Chinese schools, unions, politics, and the print media in Sarawak which was worrying to the British Colonial Administration at the time (Porritt, 1997). To indoctrinate is to repeat an idea to someone until they accept it (McIntosh, 2013). Elechi (2014) argues that learners must be treated with respect, not forced but are permitted to make a choice in order for teaching to be acceptable (p. 143). International standard has declared this to be the case.

It is recalled that Article 12 of the Treaty confers the right to the child to express or form his or her own views in matters affecting them (Tobin, 2019; Hodgkin & Newell, 2007). Providing the opportunity to children to express their own views can help improve their capacity for critical thinking (see explanation below) (Tobin, 2018). The Committee on the Rights of the Child asserts that Article 12 is a general principle of fundamental importance as it applies to the interpretation of all other articles as well as all aspects of the implementation of the Treaty (Hodgkin & Newell, 2007).

In addition, Ulich (1890-1977), the former James Bryant Conant Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Harvard University, describes 'education' as the continuous interaction among people in the real world (Ulich, 1961, p. 7). Stating that education can occur in a formal or non-formal setting, UNESCO (1974/2024) posits that education is a right that cannot be relinquished; it is a lifelong society-wide journey in which individuals achieve their fullest potential in personality, dignity, mental and physical capacities, and it is a process that benefit, not only the local and national, but also the regional and global communities and ecosystems. What more is there on the meaning of education?

While claiming that man is the only being who needs education, Kant (1724-1804), a German philosopher, states that it is about the caring, raising, protecting, and educating the child who has the ability to do different things in life. According to Kant, man is also equipped with the discretion which is required to conduct himself in society. Elsewhere, the courts in the Global North have contributed to the interpretation of the word 'education': on the one hand, the European Court of Human Rights states that education is the entire process of passing on the beliefs, culture and other values by the adults to their children (Lile, 2021). On the other hand, the US Supreme Court, while stating that education is the most important function of the State and local governments, determines that education is the primary means of, firstly, instilling the child with cultural values; secondly, equipping him for subsequent professional training, and thirdly, enabling him to adapt to his environment (Lile, 2021).

To widen the discussion on the meaning of the word 'education', Schofield (2012) refers to Peters' three-criteria proposal (1919-2011): (i) education should include knowledge and understanding together with an active cognitive perspective that is not passive; (ii) it rules out some procedures of transmission on the ground that they lack voluntariness on the part of the learner, and (iii) it also excludes certain methods of teaching because they do not involve the awareness and willingness of the learner (Schofield, 2012, p. 36).

Schofield (2012) explains that the first criterion is about passing on something that is of value. He says, the phrase ‘education implies’ is different from the phrase ‘education is...’, the latter is a descriptive definition; the former suggests one characteristic of education that excludes others. As to the second criterion, the ‘cognitive perspective’ requires one to see “all aspects of the situations”: it must involve ‘knowledge and understanding’ otherwise, it cannot qualify to be called ‘education’. As regards the third criterion, some kind of ‘methods’ are used to transmit or pass on knowledge, and Schofield refers to the words ‘instruction’, ‘training’, and ‘indoctrination’ (for the latter, see above) (Schofield, 2012, p. 37): he argues that it does not limit to only one method of transmitting the knowledge.

In addition, Peters (1973) introduces the concept of an “educated” person. Among the criteria such a person possesses include, having a body of knowledge and understanding not just merely of knowing ‘disjointed’ facts, and less still by being called merely a “well-informed” person; being educated is more than just being highly skilled; an educated person must understand the “reason why” of things. He is of the view that being educated is not about reaching a final destination but continuing the journey with a new perspective (Peters, 1965).

Education has also been associated with the word “growth”. John Locke (1632-1704) deemed an individual a *tabula rasa* or a ‘blank sheet’ and that he or she, ‘nine parts of ten’, is created, whether good or bad, by his or her education (Palmer et al., 2001). According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, to ‘grow’ is to increase in size or to become more advanced or developed (McIntosh, 2013). The ‘growth’ of a human being is his/her process of developing (McIntosh, 2013). Professor Boisvert, as quoted by Blum (2017), posits that ‘growth’ is an ongoing process of realising developing potential, and it is a tangible and significant journey. Blum calls it the ‘end’ that becomes a “... part of the process, one stage in the continuum of growth (Blum, 2017).” Blum further explains that ‘growth’ signifies, not only about the individual, but also about his / her relationship with others (Blum, 2017). John Dewey (1859-1952), who was the dominant American philosopher through the two World Wars and the Great Depression, spoke of education as synonymous with ‘growth’ (Dewey, 1915; Noddings, 2016; Fesmire, 2015). Despite being criticised for stating ‘growth’ as the aim of education, Dewey insisted that ‘growth’ is its own end (Noddings, 2016). Noddings (2016) describes Dewey’s word ‘growth’ in his most important biological metaphor to the effect that growth encourages further growth, and each phase of growth has its own purpose - it evolves with time and is never ending (Blum, 2017). Peters (1973) agreed with the dynamic nature of the concept of growth but argued that ‘growth’ itself is an empty ideal – for growth to be educational it must be directed towards worthwhile knowledge which Dewey’s term alone does not guarantee. The creation of the right environment, one that is synonymous with a ‘home’ where one ‘feels safe, secure, loved, at ease’, as emphasised by Maria Montessori (1872-1952), underpins the child’s proper growth (Palmer et al., 2001).

The National Education Policy (NEP) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Treaty

Let us look at the NEP and the Treaty, particularly, Article 29 on the “Aims of Education”. But first, some explanation on the applicability of International Law in Malaysia: Treaty provisions do not apply directly without an enabling legislation, that is, a law passed by Parliament and duly assented to by the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong (JAC, 1963; Chapter 4, article 44 of the Federal Constitution) (Kawi et al., 2022). Kawi et al. (2022) further state that this dualist doctrine considers international law and municipal law as two separate and independent systems – international law is applicable between sovereign States, whereas municipal law is

applicable within a State to regulate the activities of its citizens (Shuaib, 2012; Kaczorowska, 2010, p. 146-147; Aust, 2000). This principle has been adequately stated by the Malaysia Court of Appeal in *Air Asia Berhad v Rafidah Shima Mohammed Aris* (2015), where it ruled that although the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified by Malaysia on 5 July 1995, it could not apply directly because the provisions of the treaty have not yet been incorporated into domestic law by an Act of Parliament at the time of the judgment (Fong, 2016, p. 203; Kawi et al., 2022). Malaysia's accession to the Treaty in 1995, which entered into force on 19 March 1995, six years after its adoption by the United Nations, ushers the beginning of a new era for its children – for their care, protection rehabilitation, participation and development based on binding norms that are now universally applicable (Kawi, et al., 2022). Although the Federal Constitution does not specify on the supremacy of either international law or municipal law, however, in the event of any conflict between them, the national statute will prevail (*PP v Wah Ah Jee*). This does not mean that international law is devoid of any use nationally - principles laid out in a treaty of which Malaysia is not a State Party, can still be used in interpreting Malaysian law (Fong, 2016, p. 202).

It would be necessary to discuss the principles laid out in the NEP (see above) and Article 29 on the “Aims of Education” of the Treaty which Malaysia has ratified. The fundamental principles and goals of the NEP have been translated into educational programmes and activities to achieve the below objectives by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MoE, 1996b): firstly, to equip students who are skilled, knowledgeable, literate, and balanced in physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects; secondly, to cultivate national values and shared ideals that promote unity and loyalty towards the nation; thirdly, to produce skilled human capital that is necessary for economic and national development, and fourthly, to instil moral values in students so that they can actively participate in nation-building (Bajunid, 2008).

The MoE has translated these objectives into its Vision and Mission Statement: “Quality begets learned individuals for a prosperous nation; Upholding a quality education system that develops individuals to their full potentials and fulfills the aspiration of the nation” which has cascaded to the district and school level which now have their own vision and mission statements. Let us now look at Article 29 of the Treaty.

Article 29 on the aims of education, provides in sub-section (1) that States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of: (a) the child's personality, talents, mental and physical abilities to their maximum potential; (b) the child's respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations; (c) the child's respect for his parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, or the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own; (d) the child's personality and talents for responsible living in a free society, emphasising understanding, peace, tolerance, gender equality, national, and religious groups, as well as individuals of indigenous origin, and (e) the child's respect for the natural environment.

The Article reflects the consensus among States of the world about the fundamental purposes of education as can be vouched from the *Legislative History of the Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN, 1989; Hodgkin & Newell, 2007). According to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the aims as set out in Article 29 promote, support, and protect the core value of the Treaty (UNCRC, 2001; UN, 1989). The Article is founded on the merger of Article 26 (2) UDHR and Article 13(1) of the ICESCR, the predecessor provisions to that of the Treaty

(Lile, 2021; Moeckli et al., 2010). The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights notes that these educational objectives reflect the fundamental purposes of the UN as enshrined in Articles 1 and 2 of the Charter (UNCESCR, 1999).

It is noticed that the word “development” appears four times and the word “preparation”, once in Article 29. However, the Education Act 1996 uses the words “develop” and “developed” once, the word “development” three times in its preambles and whereas the NEP uses the word “developing” only once. While the significance is apparent, these words have neither been defined in the Treaty nor by the Education Act. To obtain the clarification on the meanings of the words, the researcher would refer to his earlier writing in which he refers to Mercer’s (2018) definition and is quoted verbatim below:

“...neither the Convention nor the 2001 Act defines the word ‘development’. According to Mercer (2018), the word ‘development’ derives from French word (*développer / développement*) meaning ‘unwrapping’, unfolding or ‘unfurling’. He says, it suggests a process that takes place over time. When used to refer to human beings, development is about a series of physical, mental, emotional and behavioural changes that take place as human being grows older (*ibid.*). In this regard, a strong system of education helps nurture and mould the child to enable it “to participate in and contribute positively towards the attainment of the ideals of a civil Malaysian society” (the third preamble of the 2001 Act). (Kawi et al., 2022)

The Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines ‘develop’ as “to (cause something) to grow or change into a more advanced, larger, or stronger form, thus, ‘development’ is the process in which someone or something grows or changes and becomes more advanced (McIntosh, 2013).”

While the main thrust of the two (NEP and Treaty) is similar the education of the individuals to be knowledgeable, competent and skilled human beings in order to contribute to their own well-being, family, society and nation, there are marked differences between the NEP and Article 29 of the Treaty, especially its sub-provisions in 1(b), 1(d) and 1(e). How do these aims compare to those of other developed or developing countries?

Norway’s first point is “to prepare the population for work” (Royal Ministry of Education, Research & Church Affairs – RME-RCA, 1996) and so does South Africa (Dept. of Education, 2004), Japan (MoE, 2001), South Korea (MoHERD, 2004), and Senegal (Law No. 91-22 of 1991). In order to face the challenges of the 21st century, Japan, for instance, has laid down two principles: ‘going back to basics’ and undertaking actual reforms, by creating, among other things, an education system that fosters and improves, in the Japanese people, a well-rounded character and ability to become future leaders, as well as develops school that is suitable for the new age (MoE, 2004). In Sweden, reforms that were introduced at the beginning of the 21st century, *inter alia*, aim to ensure that its education system provides knowledge and development opportunity for all and that everyone has the right and opportunity to make progress (MoES, 2004). Obtaining good qualification is a passport to a good job (Bailey, 2014). Quoting Norman, Bailey argues that work is central to people’s lives; it shapes how they are perceived by others and that essentially your identity is determined by what you actually do. More importantly, it is one’s contribution to the economic, social, cultural and political development of one’s country (MoE, 2001; MoHERD, 2004). These countries speak about their national values, which Malaysia also emphasises.

This illustrates that economic development – the production of skilled labour force and the fulfilment of the social and cultural aspirations of the citizens – occupies the top priority in the governments’ education philosophy (Gonzalez & Lee, 2024; Don-Hee Lee et al. 2022; Ryan, 2019; Tanaka, et al. 2017; Mason & Caiger, 2011). All these countries, including Malaysia, are State Parties of the Treaty and all want to ensure that their peoples are knowledgeable, competent and skilled which will, not only, benefit their citizens, but also their families, societies and nations at large. These objectives, in fact, fulfil the general aims of education that include: helping individual learners to develop; serving the needs of society, passing on from generation to generation knowledge, skills and aptitude (my emphasis) and developing ways of knowing and understanding as the common heritage (MoE, 2012; Marples, 1999). The 1985 Cabinet Committee Report also stressed on the manpower needs of Malaysia (MoE, 1985, p. 140).

The Right to Quality Education and Critical Thinking

It has been the aim of the Malaysian Government to ensure that all its children or learners are provided with and benefitted from quality education (MoE, 2012). Quality education has been envisaged by international norms that have been agreed to by States during the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) (UNESCO, 1990), the World Education Forum – The Dakar Framework for Action on EFA (UNESCO, 2000); The Global EFA Meeting – The Muscat Agreement (UNESCO, 2014), and the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 or Education 2030 (UNESCO, 2015). This fundamental aim has been underpinned by the various reforms that have been made in the past, including the publication of the MEB (MoE, 2012), and The Roadmap (MoE, 2015). Quality is one of the five system aspirations of the MEB (the others being: access, unity, equity, and efficiency), aiming to achieve educational excellence. These reforms have adopted Western standards, including the application of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): teaching, learning, assessment* (CoE, 2001, 2020) in the teaching and learning of languages, especially English as a second language since 2015 - countries in the region, including China, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, and Thailand have adopted the CEFR. But what is ‘quality in education’?

In their comparative study of Brazil, China and Russia, entitled “Politics of Quality in Education”, Kauko, *et. al.* (2018) are of the view that the “question of quality in education has become one of the most important framing factors in education and has been of growing interest to international organisations and policy makers for decades”. The phrase *quality in education* remains abstract (Kauko, *et. al.*, 2018). There is no consensus as to what the word *quality* actually means. Although international treaties often touched on *educational quality*, they were generally silent on how well the education system should perform in meeting the objectives (UNESCO EFA, 2005). As a lead agency in education, does UNESCO provide any hint on this important issue?

As a specialised institution that promotes international cooperation in education, science, culture and communication, UNESCO has laid some guiding principles as regards education quality. The evolution of the *concept of quality* within UNESCO first appeared in 1972 in the report of the International Commission on the Development of Education (ICDE), entitled *Learning to be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow* (Faure, *et. al.*, 1972) (hereafter Faure Report). To improve the quality of education, it is imperative to have systems in which the principles of scientific development and modernisation could be learned with due

regard to the socio-cultural contexts of the learners (Faure, *et. al.*, 1972); the word ‘science’ implies normative and interpretive perspective (Cohen *et. al.*, 2018).

More than two decades later, in another ICDE Report to UNESCO, *Learning: The Treasure Within* (Delors, *et. al.* 1996) (hereafter Delors Report), the Commission saw *education through life* has been founded on four pillars: (i) *learning to know* – being knowledgeable on a wide variety of subjects that will be useful for lifelong learning; (ii) *learning to do* – the acquisition of competence and skills that are useful in life; (iii) *learning to live together* – having the knowledge on each other’s ethnic background, including culture, beliefs and values, that is essential for working together and managing conflict, and (iv) *learning to be* - knowing about one’s responsibility and independence, and that each individual has talent, aptitude to communicate with others, and leadership potential, that have to be tapped (Delors *et al.*, 1996; UNESCO, 1972). The Delors Report (1996) concludes that these four pillars are the foundation of an integrated and comprehensive view of learning, and therefore, constitutes *education quality*.

Since the formulation of the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000 (DFA), quality education has taken a fresh international discourse (Tawil, *et. al.*, 2012). In contrast to the global approach in the 1990s, which was to achieve universal enrolment for primary education, the DFA was aiming to “improving all aspects of the quality of education” in order to achieve measurable learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and life skills that are essential (Tawil, *et. al.*, 2012). Does critical thinking contribute to or enhance the quality of education? The answer should be in the affirmative given the aim to develop high order thinking skills among learners in Malaysia (Moe, 2012; MoE, 2015).

Both the MEB and the Roadmap seek to improve students thinking skills through the introduction of new curricula for primary and secondary schools, the levels where critical thinking skills could develop. It has been stated that the focus in higher education is on subject matter teaching rather than in critical thinking (Pithers & Soden, 2000). At an international conference, a keynote speaker stated that a research conducted in Southeast Asia found that critical thinking ability among students is “very low” (APCERSSH 2023; Rozalan & Saat, 2015; Chee Choy & Phaik Kin Cheah, 2009). The aim of education is to produce “good thinking” skills which will help students to “think well” and “think for themselves” (Pithers & Soden, 2000). But what is the meaning of the word “think”?

It has been stated that the word “think” is one of the most used words in English language and it has several meanings, such as: to have ideas; to reason; to judge; to conclude; to imagine, etc. (Grigg & Lewis, 2019). On the one hand, Edward de Bono (1976) describes “thinking” as the *deliberate exploration of experience for a purpose*. On the other, Pithers and Soden (2000) are of the view that thinking is the ability of an individual to identify, among others, what questions are worth pursuing or whether to use a particular question or the other during a self-directed search for knowledge. It is about the “generic competencies” (in the case of Australia) which includes problem solving, communicating information, working with others, and using technology - which are at the core of lifelong learning in order to improve students’ flexibility and adaptability when entering the workforce; or it is also known as “generic abilities” or “key skills” (in the United Kingdom / by its Higher Education Quality Council)(Pithers & Soden, 2000).

A critical person is one who has the ability to accurately comprehend academic texts, write independently, construct a coherent argument, and engage in logical reasoned thinking

(Hills, 2011). ‘Good thinking’ and ‘thinking well’ are both bound together with the idea of ‘critical thinking’ (Pithers & Soden, 2010). In addition, the individual has the ability to analyse and evaluate information and understand issues from different points of views other than one’s own (Hill, 2011). Hill posits that thinking skills can be taught. He suggests several methods that can be used to teach thinking skills in schools: i) *General* approach – this involves teaching thinking skill in abstract free from any subject matter; ii) *Immersion* approach – this occurs where teachers design their lessons so that critical thinking is included; iii) *Infusion* approach – this method embeds critical thinking in a normal lesson, and iv) *Mixed* approach – the combination of the *general* approach with the *immersion* approach (Hill, 2011). Should students first have a strong foundation of knowledge before being able to learn and engage in critical thinking?

Critical thinking and a strong foundation of knowledge are among the key attributes for Malaysian students to possess according to the MEB (MoE, 2012) - this is consistent with the views that students should first acquire or be exposed to a critical mass of knowledge (of different subjects: art, science, history, geography, English, etc.) as these different types of knowledge would help students develop their ability to inquire deeper using different forms of questioning, including: “why”, “why not”, “So what”, and by being able to make inferences, deduction and induction from the different subjects’ texts (Clayton, 2021). Clayton envisages three different types of learning are taking place at the same time in a classroom, comparing them as the three layers of flow in a ‘river’: at the top is the knowledge transfer from the teacher to the students who are learning to know about the different subjects as stated above. This process of acquisition by the learners of the different knowledge through teaching, explaining, and testing, the process of which he says, is ‘visible’ and ‘fast moving’ - is about knowledge and comprehension; the second layer below is also visible and he calls this ‘skills and literacies’ where activities, practicing, and feedbacks take place, though somewhat slower than the top layer - the students develop various skills that enable them to access and manipulate the knowledge they are receiving, and at layer three at the bottom of the river, Claxton says that these ‘habits and attitudes’ are being created towards learning – raising questions about multiple issues such as about one’s ability to do something quickly or asking what to do when being faced by difficult questions in a lesson, and so on. In addition to this attribute, the MEB also aspires Malaysian students to possess skills in problem-solving, leadership, in languages, and communication (Harari, 2018; MoE, 2012). This is also about “intelligence” which has been defined as “...the sum total of mental capacities such as abstract thinking, understanding, reasoning, learning and memory formation, action planning and problem solving (Editors, 2023)”. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968), America’s famous civil rights leader had famously stated that: “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically... intelligence (alone, my emphasis) is not enough. Intelligence plus character... is the goal of true education” (Grigg & Lewis, 2019). It would be fair, therefore, to conclude that the existence of a good level of critical thinking among students would reflect the quality of education that has been given – the standard of teaching and the learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The paper discusses the National Education Philosophy of Malaysia, which was promulgated in the Fifth Preamble paragraph of the 1996 Education Act, following Malaysia’s ratification of the Treaty in 1995. It then provides the conceptual framework of the paper based on the intertwined relations between International Law, States and (territorial) Sovereignty that are inseparable. The origin and meaning of (the Western) philosophy was traced, featuring the important classical and the modern philosophers and their views on the terms ‘philosophy’, and

‘education’ which is defined as a *lifelong societal process*. The NEP is about the aims of education in Malaysia – among others, that seek to develop and produce knowledgeable, competent, and skilled individuals who are imbued with moral character; individuals who fully understand their own personal responsibility, towards their families, societies and nation. Article 29 – Aims of Education - of the Treaty which supplants the NEP, further provides for the development of individuals that respect the UN Charter, their parents, culture, country of origin or residence and the civilisations at large, and the natural environment to ensure sustainability which successive generations can enjoy. The words “education”, “being educated”, “growth”, “develop”, “development” were analysed, providing the different views of famous authors, philosophers, and institutions in the Global North. The article also underscores the importance of critical thinking in fostering quality education in Malaysia in order to equip Malaysians towards problem-solving, decision-making, and quality lifelong learning as envisaged in the Sustainable Development Goal 4. Having a strong foundation of knowledge, critical thinking also helps nurture individuals towards independence and informed persons, fostering social and cultural understanding. Incorporating critical thinking into the curriculum is in harmony with international standards and prepares individuals for the complex unforeseen challenges of the twenty-first century. To conclude, Malaysia NEP is supplanted by the Treaty and is largely similar to many developed or developing countries in the region and elsewhere in the world.

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SISTEM PENGETAHUAN PRIBUMI (IKS): KEPAKARAN PRAKTIKAL DAN KAITAN DALAM ANTROPOLOGI PERUBATAN

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (IKS): PRACTICAL EXPERTISE AND RELATIONS IN MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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ABSTRAK Kajian ini membincangkan Sistem Pengetahuan Pribumi (*Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, IKS) sebagai kerangka pengetahuan yang relevan dalam bidang antropologi perubatan. Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk menghuraikan kepakaran praktikal dalam IKS, menilai hubungannya dengan kesihatan komuniti, dan membincangkan implikasinya terhadap kelestarian. Kaedah kajian menggunakan analisis dokumen sekunder dengan meneliti literatur utama mengenai IKS dan menggabungkannya dengan sintesis lapan domain kepakaran praktikal. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa IKS merangkumi pengetahuan yang luas, termasuk perubatan tradisional, pengurusan alam sekitar, sistem pertanian, etnobotani, ramalan iklim, seni bina, adat, serta amalan spiritual. Dapatan ini membuktikan bahawa IKS berfungsi sebagai sistem holistik yang menyatukan aspek fizikal, sosial, spiritual, dan ekologi dalam menjaga kesejahteraan komuniti. Implikasi kajian ini menegaskan bahawa IKS bukan sahaja berperanan sebagai warisan budaya, tetapi juga mempunyai potensi untuk menyumbang kepada model kesihatan global yang lebih inklusif dan berteraskan komuniti. Oleh itu, pemeliharaan dan integrasi IKS dalam dasar pembangunan kesihatan dan kelestarian amat diperlukan untuk menghadapi cabaran kontemporari.

Kata kunci: Sistem Pengetahuan Pribumi, Perubatan Tradisional, Antropologi Perubatan, Kelestarian, Warisan Budaya

ABSTRACT This study discusses *Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)* as a relevant knowledge framework in the field of medical anthropology. The main objectives are to outline the practical expertise embedded within IKS, to assess its relationship with community health, and to examine its implications for sustainability. The study employed secondary document analysis by reviewing key literature on IKS and synthesising eight domains of practical expertise. The findings reveal that IKS encompasses diverse knowledge, including traditional medicine, environmental management, agricultural systems, ethnobotany, climate forecasting, vernacular architecture, customary law, and spiritual practices. These findings demonstrate that IKS functions as a holistic system integrating physical, social, spiritual, and ecological dimensions in maintaining community well-being. The study highlights that IKS is not only a cultural heritage but also holds potential to contribute to more inclusive and community-based models of global health. Thus, the preservation and integration of IKS into health and sustainability policies are crucial to address contemporary challenges.

Keywords: *Indigenous Knowledge System, Traditional Medicine, Medical Anthropology, Sustainability, Cultural Heritage*

PENDAHULUAN

Sistem Pengetahuan Pribumi (IKS) merujuk kepada himpunan pengetahuan, kemahiran, dan amalan yang diwarisi secara turun-temurun dalam kalangan masyarakat pribumi. Menurut Slikkerveer (1993; 2019), IKS berfungsi sebagai sebuah *expert system* yang bukan sahaja membekalkan jawapan terhadap cabaran survival dan pengurusan sumber, malah berperanan dalam mengekalkan kesejahteraan kesihatan komuniti. Hal ini kerana IKS terbina daripada pengalaman berabad-abad lamanya yang disalurkan melalui penceritaan lisan, ritual, dan amalan harian yang membentuk sistem pengetahuan bersifat holistik. Dalam konteks globalisasi, IKS semakin diiktiraf kerana potensinya dalam melestarikan warisan budaya, mengekalkan keseimbangan ekologi, serta menyumbang kepada pembangunan lestari (Majhi, 2024).

Ciri utama IKS adalah sifatnya yang lokal, kontekstual, dan holistik, berbeza dengan sains moden yang lebih bersifat universal dan kuantitatif. Pengetahuan ini berkembang melalui pemerhatian langsung terhadap alam sekitar, pengalaman praktikal, dan proses pembelajaran kolektif dalam komuniti. Ia juga bersifat dinamik dan adaptif, sentiasa berubah mengikut keperluan serta cabaran persekitaran yang dihadapi masyarakat (BA Notes, 2023; PubAdmin Institute, 2023). Oleh itu, IKS bukan sekadar warisan pengetahuan, tetapi sebuah kerangka dinamik yang terus hidup dan relevan dalam menangani isu kontemporari.

Dalam bidang antropologi perubatan, IKS memainkan peranan penting dalam memahami perspektif komuniti tentang kesihatan, penyakit, dan penyembuhan. Ia merangkumi pelbagai aspek seperti perubatan tradisional, pantang larang, upacara ritual, serta penggunaan tumbuhan ubatan (Kulip, 2003; Vun-Sang & Iqbal, 2023). Selain sebagai medium rawatan, IKS turut berfungsi sebagai sistem pencegahan kesihatan melalui pengetahuan tentang iklim, pertanian, dan alam sekitar yang membantu mengawal wabak serta menjamin keselamatan makanan (PubAdmin Institute, 2023). Konsep kesihatan dalam IKS juga bersifat holistik kerana ia menggabungkan dimensi fizikal, psikologi, sosial, dan spiritual (BA Notes, 2023).

Kajian ini dilaksanakan kerana ia mempunyai beberapa kepentingan yang signifikan. Dari segi akademik, ia menyumbang kepada pembangunan kerangka konseptual yang menghubungkan IKS dengan antropologi perubatan, sekaligus memperluas pemahaman mengenai kesihatan dalam bentuk yang menyeluruh. Dari sudut praktikal, ia dapat membantu pengamal kesihatan, penggubal dasar, serta komuniti untuk mengintegrasikan IKS ke dalam strategi pembangunan kesihatan dan kelestarian. Dari perspektif sosio-budaya, ia menyokong usaha pemeliharaan warisan pengetahuan tradisional agar tidak pupus, sekaligus memperkuat identiti komuniti pribumi. Selain itu, dari sudut global, integrasi IKS dengan sains moden mampu menyokong agenda kesihatan inklusif dalam menghadapi cabaran semasa seperti perubahan iklim, kemunculan penyakit baharu, dan isu keselamatan makanan (BA Notes, 2023; PubAdmin Institute, 2023).

SOROTAN LITERATUR

Kajian-kajian teori mengenai Sistem Pengetahuan Pribumi (*Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, IKS) menegaskan bahawa IKS bukan sekadar himpunan amalan tradisi tetapi satu *expert system* yang sistematik dan berfungsi dalam konteks pembangunan dan kelestarian. Slikkerveer menerangkan evolusi pendekatan *ethnoscience* kepada apa yang beliau panggil '*neo-ethnoscience*', menekankan keperluan perspektif *emic* (*insider*) dan gabungan kaedah

kualitatif-kuantitatif untuk mengobjektifkan dan mendokumentasikan IKS dalam konteks perubahan sosial dan globalisasi. Beliau juga menunjukkan bahawa sub-bidang seperti etnobotani, etnofarmasi dan TEK (*Traditional Ecological Knowledge*) telah menjadi medan penting di mana IKS menyumbang kepada kesihatan awam dan pengurusan sumber.

Dalam bidang perubatan tradisional, bukti empirikal dari pelbagai kajian menunjukkan bahawa majoriti penduduk di negara membangun masih bergantung kepada perubatan tradisional sebagai sumber utama penjagaan kesihatan. Ini membuka ruang bagi pengiktirafan IKS sebagai pelengkap kepada sistem kesihatan moden (WHO, 2019). Kajian etnobotani, contohnya yang mendokumentasikan *pharmacope* tradisional di kawasan Sabah dan Borneo, menonjolkan kepelbagaian tumbuhan perubatan dan potensi farmakologi mereka (Julius Kulip, 2003; Vun-Sang & Iqbal, 2023). Penemuan-penemuan ini mengukuhkan hujah bahawa IKS mengandungi pengetahuan empirikal bernilai untuk etnofarmakologi dan intervensi kesihatan komuniti (Albuquerque et al., 2019; Bodeker & Ong, 2020).

Dari perspektif kelestarian dan pengurusan sumber, literatur menunjukkan bahawa amalan tradisional seperti pantang larang, kawasan keramat, sistem pertanian berbilang spesies dan agroforestri menyumbang kepada pemeliharaan biodiversiti dan kestabilan ekosistem. Slikkerveer dan pengarang lain menekankan bahawa integrasi IKS dalam pembangunan berasaskan komuniti *bottom-up* terbukti lebih mampan berbanding pendekatan *top-down* yang mengabaikan nilai budaya setempat (Slikkerveer, 1993:2019; Berkes, 2018). Pendekatan ini bukan sahaja memberi manfaat ekologi tetapi juga memberi kesan langsung kepada kesihatan melalui pemeliharaan makanan, bekalan air bersih dan habitat yang mengurangkan risiko penyakit (Mistry & Berardi, 2016).

Walaupun terdapat banyak kajian yang mengiktiraf peranan IKS, beberapa jurang pengetahuan jelas muncul dalam literatur. Pertama, dokumentasi sistematik IKS masih tidak mencukupi banyak pengetahuan disimpan secara lisan dan berisiko hilang apabila generasi tua meninggal dunia (Majhi, 2024). Kedua, wujud kekangan metodologi dalam objektiviti IKS: bagaimana membuat kajian yang menghormati perspektif *emic* namun menghasilkan data yang boleh digabungkan dengan sains moden (Slikkerveer, 2019). Ketiga, walaupun terdapat dasar dan inisiatif (contoh: pengiktirafan TM/TCM dalam PHC oleh WHO), model operasional yang jelas untuk mengintegrasikan IKS ke dalam sistem kesihatan kebangsaan dengan cara etikal dan berkesan masih perlu dibangunkan (WHO, 2019; Agrawal, 2020).

Akhirnya, beberapa kajian mencadangkan arah penyelidikan lanjut yang praktikal: (1) dokumentasi etnobotani/etnofarmasi berstruktur dan ujian farmakologi untuk spesies-spesies terpilih; (2) kajian intervensi komuniti berasaskan IKS yang mengukur hasil kesihatan; dan (3) pembangunan rangka dasar yang memudahkan pemindahan pengetahuan secara etika. Cadangan-cadangan ini disokong oleh kajian semasa yang memautkan pemeliharaan warisan budaya dengan ketahanan komuniti serta kelestarian alam sekitar (Majhi, 2024; Nakashima et al., 2018).

METODOLOGI

Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan kaedah analisis dokumen sekunder, iaitu meneliti karya-karya utama berkaitan Sistem Pengetahuan Pribumi (IKS) yang ditulis oleh sarjana seperti Slikkerveer (1993; 2019), Majhi (2024), serta kajian lain yang relevan dalam bidang antropologi perubatan, etnobotani, dan kelestarian. Pemilihan pendekatan ini adalah

bertepatan dengan objektif kajian yang bertujuan menghuraikan kepakaran praktikal dalam IKS dan menilai hubungannya dengan antropologi perubatan.

Dari segi reka bentuk penyelidikan, kajian ini berlandaskan analisis kualitatif interpretatif yang memberi penekanan kepada penafsiran makna berdasarkan teks akademik dan laporan penyelidikan terdahulu. Responden secara langsung tidak terlibat, sebaliknya data diperoleh daripada sumber sekunder iaitu artikel jurnal, buku ilmiah, laporan WHO, dan dokumen UNESCO. Prosedur kajian melibatkan tiga fasa: (i) pengumpulan dokumen sekunder berdasarkan tema IKS, perubatan tradisional, dan antropologi perubatan; (ii) pengekstrakan data penting berkaitan amalan perubatan tradisional, pengurusan alam sekitar, dan pengetahuan ekologi; dan (iii) sintesis data mengikut domain kepakaran praktikal IKS yang telah dikenal pasti.

Seterusnya, analisis data dilakukan menggunakan kaedah tematik dengan menstrukturkan dapatan ke dalam lapan domain kepakaran praktikal IKS. Proses analisis ini membolehkan pengkaji mengenal pasti korelevan IKS terhadap antropologi perubatan secara sistematik dan holistik. Hasil analisis ditunjukkan melalui ringkasan metodologi (Jadual 1) bagi memberikan gambaran yang lebih jelas.

Jadual 1: Ringkasan Metodologi Kajian

Aspek	Perincian
Pendekatan Kajian	Kualitatif melalui analisis dokumen sekunder
Sumber Data	Artikel jurnal, buku akademik, laporan WHO, UNESCO, kajian etnobotani
Reka Bentuk Penyelidikan	Analisis kualitatif interpretatif (Literatur sekunder, bukan lapangan)
Prosedur	(i) Pengumpulan Literatur (ii) Pengekstrakan tema (iii) Sintesis tematik
Analisis Data	Analisis Tematik; dikategorikan kepada 8 domain kepakaran IKS
Dapatan	Domain kepakaran IKS (Jadual 2), dan Perbincangan implikasi dalam antropologi perubatan

DAPATAN KAJIAN

Berdasarkan analisis, lapan bidang kepakaran utama dalam IKS dikenal pasti. Bidang kepakaran yang dikenal pasti dikaitkan dengan korelevanannya dengan bidang antropologi perubatan.

Jadual 2: Kepakaran Praktikal dalam Sistem Pengetahuan Pribumi (IKS) dan Kaitan terhadap Antropologi Perubatan.

Bidang Kepakaran	Contoh	Kaitan dalam Antropologi Perubatan	Rujukan Utama
Perubatan Tradisional dan Rawatan	Tumbuhan ubatan, herba, ubatan berasaskan haiwan, rawatan ritual (contoh: amalan <i>bobolian</i> Dusun Tobilung di Sabah).	Menunjukkan sistem kesihatan komuniti yang menggabungkan dimensi bioperubatan, spiritual, dan budaya.	Slikkerveer (1993); WHO (2019); Vun-Sang & Iqbal (2023)
Pertanian dan Sistem Makanan	Pertanian pindah (<i>shifting cultivation</i>), pemuliharaan benih, kawalan perosak organik, ritual makanan.	Keselamatan makanan dan pemakanan berkait langsung dengan kesihatan; ritual pertanian mengekalkan keseimbangan ekologi–kesihatan.	Altieri & Nicholls (2020); Nyong et al. (2021)
Pengurusan Alam Sekitar dan Sumber	Hutan keramat, pantang larang, penuaian berputar (<i>rotational harvesting</i>), perlindungan tadahan air.	Etika ekologi komuniti mempengaruhi kesihatan awam (air bersih, biodiversiti, pencegahan penyakit).	Berkes (2018); Mistry & Berardi (2016)
Etnobotani dan Etnozoologi	Pengelasan tumbuhan untuk perubatan/makanan, ubatan berasaskan haiwan, pengetahuan musim.	Menyumbang kepada farmakope masyarakat pribumi serta makna simbolik tumbuhan/haiwan dalam penyembuhan.	Julius Kulip (2003); Albuquerque et al. (2019)
Pengetahuan Cuaca dan Iklim	Ramalan cuaca berdasarkan bintang, angin, tingkah laku haiwan, kalendar musim.	Membantu dalam pencegahan penyakit bermusim dan kekurangan makanan.	Hiwasaki et al. (2014); Nakashima et al. (2018)
Seni Bina dan Teknologi	Rumah tradisional (tiang rumah), sistem pengairan, anyaman, peralatan tradisional.	Memberi kesan terhadap sanitasi, pengudaraan, serta daya tahan terhadap penyakit bawaan persekitaran.	Oliver (2019); Anchieta et al. (2022)
Organisasi Sosial dan Tadbir Urus	Undang-undang adat, pengurusan tanah/sumber secara komuniti, sistem kekerabatan.	Menentukan akses kepada pengamal perubatan, amalan rawatan, dan norma budaya mengenai penyakit.	Slikkerveer (1993); Agrawal (2020)
Seni, Ritual dan Amalan Spiritual	Penceritaan lisan, upacara, nyanyian, tarian, ukiran simbolik.	Medium penyebaran ilmu kesihatan, pengukuhan penyembuhan spiritual, dan kesejahteraan kolektif.	Ellen (2022); Bodeker & Ong (2020)

Sumber: Adaptasi dari Sistem Pengetahuan Pribumi (Slikkerveer, 1993).

Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa Sistem Pengetahuan Pribumi (IKS) merupakan satu kerangka pengetahuan yang menyeluruh, merangkumi lapan bidang utama yang saling melengkapi antara satu sama lain dalam memastikan kesejahteraan hidup komuniti. Penemuan ini selari dengan pandangan Slikkerveer bahawa IKS berperanan sebagai sebuah *expert system* yang menggabungkan aspek ekologi, sosial, budaya dan kesihatan dalam satu rangka kerja yang dinamik. Huraian berikut menjelaskan kepentingan setiap bidang tersebut serta kaitannya dengan antropologi perubatan.

Perubatan Tradisional dan Rawatan

Perubatan tradisional merupakan asas terpenting dalam IKS kerana ia berkaitan secara langsung dengan penjagaan kesihatan masyarakat peribumi. Amalan ini melibatkan penggunaan tumbuhan ubatan, ritual penyembuhan, jampi, serta peranan pengamal tradisional seperti *bobolian* dalam komuniti Dusun Tobilung. Pengetahuan ini bukan sahaja terbukti berkesan dalam merawat pelbagai penyakit ringan dan kronik, tetapi juga mengandungi nilai simbolik yang berkait rapat dengan kepercayaan spiritual masyarakat. *World Health Organization* (2019) menunjukkan bahawa lebih 80% penduduk di negara membangun masih bergantung kepada perubatan tradisional sebagai sumber utama penjagaan kesihatan. Implikasi penemuan ini ialah perlunya pendekatan integratif antara sistem kesihatan moden dan pengetahuan tradisional agar rawatan dapat diberikan secara holistik.

Pertanian dan Sistem Makanan

Pertanian tradisional dalam IKS tidak hanya tertumpu kepada penghasilan makanan, tetapi juga berfungsi sebagai strategi kesihatan komuniti. Amalan seperti pertanian pindah (*shifting cultivation*), penanaman pelbagai tanaman dan pemeliharaan benih asli memainkan peranan penting dalam memastikan kestabilan sumber makanan dan mencegah penyakit berkaitan kekurangan zat. Altieri dan Nicholls (2020) menyatakan bahawa agroekologi tradisional menyokong biodiversiti dan meningkatkan keselamatan makanan, sekaligus memberi kesan positif terhadap kesihatan awam. Perbincangan ini menunjukkan bahawa sistem pertanian tempatan adalah sebahagian daripada strategi kesihatan yang tidak boleh dipisahkan daripada antropologi perubatan.

Pengurusan Alam Sekitar

Pengurusan sumber alam secara lestari merupakan komponen penting dalam IKS kerana ia memastikan ketersediaan sumber semula jadi untuk keperluan kesihatan, seperti air bersih, tumbuhan ubatan, dan habitat biodiversiti. Amalan seperti pantang larang, pemuliharaan kawasan hutan keramat dan teknik penuaian berputar mencerminkan pengetahuan ekologi mendalam yang dimiliki oleh masyarakat peribumi. Berkes (2018) menegaskan bahawa pengurusan sumber berdasarkan pengetahuan tempatan membantu mengekalkan ekosistem yang menyokong kesejahteraan manusia. Implikasinya ialah dasar kesihatan awam perlu mengambil kira aspek ekologi kerana persekitaran yang sihat secara langsung mempengaruhi tahap kesihatan manusia.

Etnobotani dan Etnozoologi

Bidang ini memberi tumpuan kepada pengelasan dan penggunaan tumbuhan serta haiwan dalam kehidupan seharian, khususnya dalam perubatan. Ia merangkumi pemahaman mendalam terhadap spesies yang mempunyai nilai terapeutik dan pemakanan. Kajian Julius Kulip (2003) mendokumentasikan lebih daripada 200 spesies tumbuhan ubatan yang digunakan oleh masyarakat Murut di Sabah, membuktikan kepentingan etnobotani sebagai asas kepada penemuan ubat-ubatan moden. Dalam konteks antropologi perubatan, bidang ini menunjukkan bahawa pengetahuan tradisional adalah sumber penting bagi penyelidikan farmakologi moden.

Pengetahuan Cuaca dan Iklim

Pengetahuan tradisional tentang perubahan cuaca dan iklim membolehkan masyarakat merancang aktiviti pertanian, menangani wabak penyakit bermusim, dan memastikan keselamatan makanan. Ramalan berdasarkan tingkah laku haiwan, perubahan angin, atau corak hujan menjadi panduan penting dalam kehidupan harian. Menurut Hiwasaki et al. (2014), integrasi pengetahuan iklim tempatan ke dalam strategi adaptasi dapat meningkatkan daya tahan komuniti terhadap perubahan iklim dan risiko kesihatan yang berkaitan. Hal ini menunjukkan bahawa pengetahuan tradisional bukan sahaja berperanan dalam penyembuhan penyakit tetapi juga dalam pencegahan awal.

Seni Bina dan Teknologi

Aspek seni bina dalam IKS menunjukkan bagaimana struktur rumah, sistem pengairan, dan teknologi tempatan dibangunkan dengan mengambil kira faktor kesihatan dan kelestarian. Contohnya, sistem pengudaraan semula jadi dalam rumah tradisional membantu mengurangkan risiko penyakit pernafasan, manakala sistem pengairan buluh memastikan akses kepada air bersih. Oliver (2019) menyatakan bahawa seni bina vernakular merupakan refleksi langsung adaptasi manusia terhadap persekitaran mereka. Penemuan ini membuktikan bahawa teknologi tradisional boleh menyumbang kepada kesihatan awam melalui reka bentuk ruang hidup yang sesuai dan selamat.

Organisasi Sosial dan Adat

IKS juga merangkumi struktur sosial dan undang-undang adat yang mengawal tingkah laku masyarakat, termasuk dalam aspek kesihatan dan rawatan. Peraturan mengenai pantang larang, penjagaan ibu bersalin, dan pengagihan sumber mencerminkan sistem sokongan sosial yang kukuh. Agrawal (2020) menegaskan bahawa struktur sosial tradisional menyediakan rangka kerja untuk penyebaran pengetahuan dan akses kepada perkhidmatan kesihatan. Hal ini menunjukkan bahawa penyelesaian masalah kesihatan tidak hanya bergantung kepada ubat-ubatan, tetapi juga kepada dinamika sosial dan norma budaya.

Seni, Ritual dan Spiritual

Dimensi spiritual merupakan elemen yang tidak dapat dipisahkan daripada IKS kerana ia memberi makna mendalam kepada proses penyembuhan. Ritual, nyanyian, tarian dan doa berperanan dalam menyokong kesejahteraan psikososial pesakit serta memperkukuh semangat komuniti. Ellen (2022) menekankan bahawa aspek simbolik dalam penyembuhan adalah penting kerana ia mempengaruhi persepsi pesakit terhadap penyakit dan proses pemulihan. Dalam konteks antropologi perubatan, ini menunjukkan bahawa kesihatan harus dilihat secara menyeluruh melibatkan aspek fizikal, emosi, sosial, dan spiritual.

Secara keseluruhannya, dapatan ini membuktikan bahawa IKS merupakan sistem pengetahuan yang komprehensif dan relevan dalam menangani persoalan kesihatan komuniti. Kelapan-lapan bidang ini bukan sahaja mencerminkan adaptasi manusia terhadap persekitaran mereka tetapi juga menyediakan asas penting untuk integrasi dengan sistem kesihatan moden. Implikasi daripada penemuan ini ialah keperluan untuk mengiktiraf, mendokumentasikan, dan menggabungkan IKS ke dalam dasar kesihatan awam bagi mewujudkan sistem penjagaan kesihatan yang lebih holistik, berteraskan komuniti, dan lestari.

PERBINCANGAN

Dalam konteks antropologi perubatan, IKS berperanan sebagai satu kerangka konseptual yang menerangkan bagaimana budaya mempengaruhi amalan penjagaan kesihatan. Oleh itu, dalam bidang antropologi perubatan sendiri, perubatan tradisional dan rawatan dianggap sebagai kepakaran utama kerana ia menjadi wahana untuk memahami hubungan antara tubuh, minda, budaya, dan spiritualiti masyarakat pribumi. Ia memperlihatkan bagaimana aspek budaya dan simbolisme membentuk sistem penjagaan kesihatan yang bersifat holistik dan berasaskan komuniti.

Pemilihan bidang perubatan tradisional dan rawatan sebagai fokus utama daripada lapar kepakaran Sistem Pengetahuan Pribumi (IKS) dibuat kerana bidang ini mempunyai hubungan langsung dengan kesejahteraan fizikal, mental, sosial dan spiritual komuniti. IKS berfungsi sebagai sistem pengetahuan masyarakat yang membantu memahami cara komuniti mentafsirkan kesihatan, penyakit, dan penyembuhan berdasarkan pengalaman, kepercayaan, serta interaksi mereka dengan alam sekitar.

Bidang perubatan tradisional dan rawatan ini dipilih kerana ia menjadi teras utama dalam sistem IKS, yang mana ia menggabungkan pengetahuan daripada bidang lain seperti etnobotani, pertanian, dan amalan ritual. Pengetahuan tumbuhan ubatan, pantang larang kesihatan, serta peranan pengamal seperti *bobolian* dalam komuniti Dusun Tobilung misalnya, memperlihatkan kesinambungan pengetahuan turun-temurun yang bukan sahaja berfungsi sebagai rawatan fizikal, tetapi juga pengukuhan identiti dan keseimbangan spiritual masyarakat. Hal ini menunjukkan bahawa amalan perubatan tradisional bukan sekadar warisan budaya, tetapi juga mekanisme sosial yang menyatukan komuniti dalam menghadapi cabaran kesihatan.

Dari segi akademik, bidang ini menarik kerana ia membuka ruang penyelidikan antara disiplin antara antropologi, farmakologi, ekologi dan kesihatan awam. Kajian terhadap perubatan tradisional dapat memberikan sumbangan besar kepada pembangunan model kesihatan yang lebih inklusif dan lestari. Seiring dengan laporan World Health Organization (2019) bahawa lebih 80% penduduk dunia masih menggunakan perubatan tradisional, bidang ini menjadi relevan untuk diteroka dalam konteks Malaysia, khususnya di Sabah yang kaya dengan biodiversiti dan amalan penyembuhan etnik. Kepelbagaian ini menjadikan perubatan tradisional bukan sahaja penting dari segi saintifik, tetapi juga dari sudut pemeliharaan identiti budaya dan warisan pengetahuan tempatan.

KESIMPULAN

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menghuraikan kepakaran praktikal dalam Sistem Pengetahuan Pribumi (IKS) dan menilai hubungannya dengan bidang antropologi perubatan. Berdasarkan analisis dokumen sekunder, lapang domain utama telah dikenal pasti iaitu perubatan tradisional, pertanian dan sistem makanan, pengurusan alam sekitar, etnobotani dan etnozooologi, pengetahuan cuaca dan iklim, seni bina dan teknologi, organisasi sosial dan adat, serta seni, ritual dan spiritual. Penemuan ini menunjukkan bahawa IKS berfungsi sebagai sistem pengetahuan holistik yang menyatukan dimensi fizikal, sosial, ekologi, dan spiritual dalam memastikan kesejahteraan komuniti. Hal ini menjawab persoalan kajian bahawa kepakaran praktikal IKS bukan sekadar warisan budaya, tetapi juga kerangka penting dalam memahami, mencegah, dan merawat penyakit dalam konteks antropologi perubatan.

Implikasi kajian ini menegaskan bahawa IKS perlu diberikan pengiktirafan yang sewajarnya dalam dasar kesihatan dan pembangunan lestari. Pengetahuan tradisional yang diwarisi komuniti peribumi berpotensi besar untuk digabungkan dengan sains moden dalam mewujudkan model kesihatan yang lebih inklusif, berteraskan komuniti, dan mampan. Ia juga memperkukuh identiti budaya serta menyediakan daya tahan sosial dalam menghadapi cabaran global seperti perubahan iklim, kemunculan penyakit baharu, dan krisis keselamatan makanan.

Namun begitu, kajian ini mempunyai beberapa batasan. Pertama, ia bergantung kepada analisis dokumen sekunder dan tidak melibatkan kajian lapangan secara langsung dengan responden komuniti peribumi. Kedua, keterbatasan akses kepada data primer menyebabkan hasil kajian terhad kepada analisis konsep dan literatur yang sedia ada. Oleh itu, penyelidikan akan datang perlu memberi tumpuan kepada kerja lapangan etnografi yang mendalam, dokumentasi langsung bersama pengamal tradisional, serta analisis farmakologi moden terhadap tumbuhan ubatan yang digunakan dalam IKS. Kajian lanjutan juga wajar meneliti strategi praktikal untuk mengintegrasikan IKS ke dalam sistem kesihatan kebangsaan dengan cara yang beretika dan berkesan.

Secara keseluruhannya, kajian ini menegaskan bahawa IKS bukan sahaja penting sebagai warisan budaya, tetapi juga merupakan sumber pengetahuan yang signifikan dalam pembangunan kesihatan global. Pengiktirafan, dokumentasi, dan integrasi IKS adalah langkah penting untuk memastikan ia terus relevan dalam menghadapi cabaran kontemporari serta memberikan sumbangan bermakna kepada antropologi perubatan dan kelestarian sejagat.

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MULTICULTURAL AND TOLERANT COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA: THE CASES OF THE SALO KARAJAE FESTIVAL IN PAREPARE AND THE KALUPPINI ENREKANG CULTURAL FESTIVAL, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT This study examines the role of social media in constructing and promoting multicultural and tolerant communication through two cultural festivals in South Sulawesi, Indonesia: the Salo Karajae Festival in Parepare and the Kaluppini Cultural Festival in Enrekang. Amid growing concerns about declining cultural literacy and increasing intolerance, particularly in Parepare ranked lowest in Indonesia's 2024 Tolerant City Index this research explores how digital platforms can serve as symbolic arenas for preserving local wisdom and fostering social cohesion. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach with a media ethnography design, the study draws on in-depth interviews, participatory and non-participatory observations, digital documentation, and netnographic analysis. Data were collected from festival organisers, government officials, local content creators, micro-entrepreneurs, and online community members across platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. Findings reveal that social media significantly contributes to the social construction of cultural identity by enabling participatory narratives, user-generated content, and visual storytelling. Digital campaigns and inclusive communication strategies effectively mobilise community engagement, shape cultural perception among youth, and extend the festivals' reach beyond their geographic boundaries. Furthermore, social media functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a discursive space where traditional values are renegotiated, performed, and recontextualised in contemporary digital culture. The study concludes that strategic digital communication can foster inclusive cultural representation, strengthen local identity, and promote tolerance in diverse societies. It underscores the need for sustainable, community-driven cultural communication practices that integrate traditional values with digital innovation in the era of globalisation.

Keywords: cultural identity, social media, multicultural communication, local wisdom, digital ethnography, tolerance.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelagic country with many ethnic groups, religions, cultures, and customs (Abdussamad et al., 2015; Amali & Katili, 2018; Cahaya et al., 2019, 2019; Frinaldi, 2021; Yunus et al., 2016). There are several provinces. In South Sulawesi Province, there are many different ethnic groups that intermingle with one another (Ahmad, 1997; Andaya, 1995). However, the largest ethnic groups in South Sulawesi are the Bugis, Makassar, Mandar, and Toraja. These ethnic groups have spread and settled in South Sulawesi, each using their local language to communicate with their supporting communities.

Indonesia, as the largest archipelagic country in the world, has a very high cultural diversity, with more than 1,300 ethnic groups spread across more than 17,000 islands (Andiani et al., n.d.). This richness is not only reflected in language and customs, but also in the values of local wisdom that have been passed down from generation to generation. However, amid the increasingly massive tide of globalisation and digitalisation, local wisdom faces major challenges in the form of neglect, marginalisation, and the dominance of global popular culture, especially among the younger generation.

In the 2024 Tolerant City Index (IKT) report released by the SETARA Institute, Parepare City ranked lowest out of 94 cities assessed, with a final score of only 3.945 on a scale of 1 to 7. This ranking reflects the very weak state of tolerance in Parepare. This low score is not solely due to the prevalence of intolerant incidents, but rather the absence of vision and innovation on the part of the city government in building an inclusive social life that upholds the value of diversity. Almost all indicators measured, ranging from government regulations, civil society dynamics, to concrete actions taken by the city government, show stagnant and non-progressive performance. There are no promotional policies or legal products that support tolerance, while religious social inclusion also received a low score.

Several ways to overcome the symptoms of intolerance are by increasing knowledge through education based on multiculturalism and pluralism, increasing individual awareness, and other traditional local solutions. In this context, multicultural communication strategies and social media tolerance play a crucial role in promoting understanding, reducing prejudice, and fostering inclusive interactions among diverse cultural groups (UNESCO, 2009). However, of course, this must also be supported by a strong legal system and clear law enforcement. One way to instil the ideology of tolerance is through cultural traditions, such as festivals. King (2016) describes how music and festivals can and have promoted peace between religious communities.

Morocco's Festival of World Sacred Music successfully attracted audiences from various religions, including Muslim, Christian, and non-religious, to enjoy music. The same thing happened in Lebanon. Muslim and Christian musicians and clerics gathered on one stage to play Arabic classical music along with readings of scripts, poetry, and holy books. Shinde (2015) saw how tourism and festivals can improve religious relations and tolerance in India.

So far, most festivals held in Indonesia have emphasised locality, such as one region that represents efforts to preserve local cultural values in the digital age is the city of Parepare and the district of Enrekang in South Sulawesi Province. Parepare and Enrekang are known as cultural cities that still maintain Bugis traditions in the form of traditional rituals, dances,

cuisine, and other symbolic expressions. The Salo Karajae Festival and the Cultural Festival have become annual cultural icons that not only showcase culture directly but also adopt social media as the primary medium for disseminating cultural messages. The Salo Karajae Festival in Parepare and the Kaluppini Cultural Festival in Enrekang are two prominent cultural celebrations in South Sulawesi that represent the richness of Bugis local wisdom and heritage. The Salo Karajae Festival showcases various coastal arts and maritime cultural expressions through decorated boat parades, traditional dances, regional music, micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) exhibitions, and Bugis culinary displays, reflecting the identity of the coastal Bugis community and strengthening local tourism. Meanwhile, the Kaluppini Cultural Festival highlights the ancestral traditions of the Kaluppini community through sacred rituals, cultural processions, traditional music and dances, as well as exhibitions of local crafts. Both festivals serve not only as platforms for preserving local culture but also as spaces for strengthening social harmony, promoting cultural identity, and engaging the community through digital media in the contemporary era.

This situation shows that political, bureaucratic, and community leaders in Parepare have not demonstrated a real commitment to making tolerance an integral part of the city's development agenda. While other cities are competing to create regulations, spaces for dialogue, and inclusive interfaith programmes, Parepare is lagging behind. As a city with historical multicultural potential, this position is ironic and a serious warning. Parepare risks becoming fertile ground for the growth of intolerant practices if strategic changes and political courage are not immediately implemented to make tolerance the foundation of regional development. However, this low score is not the end. With bold leadership and active community participation, Parepare still has the opportunity to transform into a more tolerant and inclusive city in the future (Ihsani & Yosarie, 2023).

Tolerance data in Enrekang regency shows the efforts made by the local government and the Religious Community Forum (FKUB) to strengthen interfaith harmony. Several activities have been carried out by the government, such as hearings, meetings, and religious lectures involving various elements of society, both religious leaders and the general public, demonstrating a commitment to maintaining harmony and dialogue between religious communities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been conducted on festivals, most of which are contemporary studies focusing on how festivals affect social and cultural life. When combined with tourism, festivals can increase civic pride and participation (Wood & Thomas, 2006). They can even help build local businesses (Thomas & Wood, 2003). According to Lee et al. (2014), festivals with high community participation and strong relationships will enhance the reputation of a region. This is because information will spread positively. Local sociological methods have been used by sociologists to study festivals in recent years (see Delgado, 2016; Wynn, 2015).

In festivals, various elements of uncertainty, multivocality, and carnivalism provide opportunities for different individuals and groups to promote their different agendas under the umbrella of tolerance and togetherness (Yeoh, 2001). Festivals can be described as the democratisation of public space, where they encourage people from other cultures to become and participate in cultural activities.

Festivals become a place for discussion where people can express their opinions on broader cultural, social, and political issues. This shows that during festivals there will always be conflict between two different poles: the pole that supports change and the pole that wants to preserve "traditional" or "local" culture in the face of modernisation and globalisation. However, there will always be negotiation and hybridisation between these two poles, which in ideal conditions will result in harmonisation (Crespi-Vallbona & Richards, 2007).

The development of social media has brought significant changes to cultural communication practices. According to a report by We Are Social (2024), Indonesia has more than 167 million active social media users (Choirin et al., 2024). Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok have become new spaces for people to interact, produce, and distribute cultural meanings more broadly, instantly, and participatively (Gushevinalti et al., 2020). This is where the urgency of this research lies: how social media is not only a means of cultural promotion but also an arena for the social construction of local wisdom values.

Previous studies have shown the contribution of social media in promoting local culture and tourism. Kurniawati (2020) shows that social media plays an important role in the branding process of culture-based tourist destinations (Kurniawati et al., 2022). Susanti (2021) emphasises that the success of cultural promotion is largely determined by the strength of the visual and narrative content presented. The findings of the study titled "*Chronotope and Syncretism: A Dialogical Study of Culture and Religion in the Rambu Solo Ceremony of the Tana Toraja Community*" show that the Rambu Solo ceremony serves as a dialogical space where the traditions of Aluk Todolo and the teachings of Abrahamic religions interact within the chronotopic framework of space and time. The results indicate that the syncretism that emerges is not a meaningless fusion but a dynamic process of symbolic negotiation, in which ancestral values passed down through generations are preserved while adapting to state-recognized religious teachings. The customary spaces with their clearly defined territorial boundaries function as social and spiritual stages that facilitate encounters between local cultural traditions and formal religious practices, while the temporal dimension links the collective memory of the past with the evolving values of the present. Through this interplay, the Toraja community successfully maintains both cultural and religious identity, resulting in a form of syncretism that safeguards the sacredness of tradition while remaining relevant to contemporary socio-religious developments (Nurhakki, 2025).

Intercultural Communication Theory by Hall, Gudykunst and Kim (1966) explains how individuals from different cultural backgrounds interact and understand the meanings used to see how these festivals manage messages to be inclusive of various ethnicities, religions, and cultures in South Sulawesi. Meanwhile, Cultural Performance Theory (Schechner, 2003) understands culture as a performative act displayed in the form of symbolic performances. Cultural festivals, in this case, are understood as spaces for articulating values and identities that can be studied through digital representations (Schechner, 2003). On the other hand, Media Convergence Theory and Uses & Gratifications helps explain how individuals are not only passive consumers but also active producers of content in constructing cultural meaning through social media to fulfil their needs for self-expression, entertainment, and social connection.

However, these studies tend to view social media as merely a promotional tool and have not yet thoroughly examined how local wisdom values are socially constructed in the digital space. In addition, there has not been much research examining how cultural digital communication practices occur specifically in the context of Bugis society, particularly through

cultural events such as the Salo Karajae Festival and the Cultural Festival. This study presents a novel approach by combining cultural communication analysis, digital media studies, and intercultural communication theory to disseminate information on social media. The focus on the Salo Karajae Festival also provides a strong local context for analysing the dynamics of participatory and contemporary cultural communication.

There is a gap in academic literature regarding the understanding of social media not only as a channel for cultural communication, but also as a symbolic arena that reshapes narratives of identity and local wisdom. Previous studies have not revealed much about the role of social actors (government, committees, communities, influencers) in shaping cultural representations in the digital space in an interactive and collaborative manner. Thus, this study fills this gap by viewing social media as a living and layered space of social construction, as well as part of a cultural promotion ecosystem that is reflective, emotional, and strategic.

Based on theory and the gaps in the literature described above, this study aims to analyse how social media is used to construct narratives and representations of local wisdom in the Salo Karajae Festival in Parepare City and the Cultural Festival in Kaluppini Enrekang; reveal the digital communication strategies used by organisers and the government in disseminating local cultural messages; examine how the online community receives, interprets, and helps shape these cultural narratives through digital practices; and contribute theoretically and practically to the development of local cultural communication strategies based on community participation and digital media.

With this focus, this research is expected to enrich the academic discourse on the role of social media in preserving local culture and to develop an inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable approach to cultural communication in the digital age.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a media ethnography study design. Virtual ethnography is an ethnographic method used to observe the social and cultural phenomena of users in cyberspace (Nugraha et al., 2015). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply understand the social and cultural processes that occur in the construction of local wisdom through social media, particularly in the context of the Salo Karajae Festival in Parepare City and the Cultural Festival in Enrekang Regency. The media ethnography design allows research to be conducted not only on cultural activities directly but also on representations, interactions, and the production of meaning that take place in digital spaces such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook.

The location of this research focuses on Parepare City and Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi, which are the areas where the Salo Karajae Festival and Cultural Festival are held. This city was chosen because it shows strategic efforts in promoting local culture digitally and has an active community involved in the production and dissemination of cultural content on social media. The research subjects consisted of various actors involved in the process of digital cultural communication, namely the festival organising team (including the Tourism Office), local content creators, MSME actors participating in the festival, and the general public who are social media users. Informants were selected purposively in the hope of obtaining information from the right sources according to what the informants knew (Noorhayati Sutisno & idayat Afendi, 2018). This was done by considering their involvement in festival activities, both directly and through digital platforms. The selection of informants was continued using

the snowball sampling technique until the data reached saturation point (Triane & Syahputra, n.d).

Data collection was carried out using four main techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, documentation, and netnographic studies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the experiences, views, and strategies of informants regarding the role of social media in promoting local culture. Observations were carried out in a participatory and non-participatory manner, both during the actual festival and its online activities on social media. In addition, the researchers also collected various forms of digital documentation such as screenshots of social media posts, videos, captions, hashtags, and engagement statistics from relevant accounts. All of this data was supplemented with supporting documents from the local government, such as activity reports, press releases, and tourism statistics.

The collected data was analysed using thematic analysis techniques. The initial step began with the transcription of interviews and open coding to identify units of meaning. Next, the codes are grouped into interrelated themes (axial coding), such as digital communication strategies, community participation, representation of local wisdom, and cultural identity construction. In-depth interpretation is carried out at the selective coding stage to understand the dynamics of meaning within the framework of the theories used, namely social construction theory, cultural performance theory, and media convergence theory. To enhance validity, this study employed triangulation of sources, techniques, and time.

Ethical aspects were strictly maintained throughout the research process. The researchers first sought consent from each informant (informed consent) before conducting interviews. The identities of the informants were kept confidential and were not included in the publication unless explicit permission was obtained. The researchers also ensured that the data was used solely for academic purposes and maintained sensitivity to the local cultural context being studied. With this approach, this study is expected to produce a rich and reflective understanding of how social media has become a space for the social construction of local wisdom in the digital age.

RESULTS

This study found that social media plays a strategic role in shaping social constructions of local wisdom promoted through the Salo Karajae Festival in Parepare City and the Cultural Festival in Enrekang Regency. Through platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, festival organisers and city governments have successfully packaged and conveyed cultural messages in attractive visual and narrative forms, which in turn shape public perceptions of local cultural values.

Digital Communication Strategies in Festival Promotion

Digital communication strategies in festival promotion are now a crucial element in expanding reach, increasing public participation, and shaping perceptions of local culture. Both the Salo Karajae Festival in Parepare City and the Cultural Festival in Enrekang Regency demonstrate how social media can be optimised as the main medium for conveying cultural messages in an effective, inclusive, and participatory manner.

Both festivals actively utilise various platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook to disseminate information, display visual content, and reach a wide audience.

Table 1. Festival Information Dissemination on Social Media

No	Figure	Source	Content uploaded
1	 Figure 1.1 (Salo Karajae Parepare Festival)	Instagram: salokarajae fest	Traditional art performances
2	 Figure 1.2 (Enrekang Cultural Festival)	TribunEnrekang.com/Erlan Saputra	
3.	 Figure 1.3 (Salo Karajae Parepare Festival)	https://eventdaerah.kemenparekr af.go.id/cerita-ken/cerita/festival-salo-karajae	Regional Speciality Food Show
4.	 Figure 1.4 (Enrekang Cultural Festival)	https://kaluppini.digitaldesa.id/b erita/festival-budaya-kaluppini-enrekang-hadirkan-ragam-kuliner-tradisional	
5.	 Figure 1.5 (Salo Karajae Parepare Festival)	https://eventdaerah.kemenparekr af.go.id/cerita-ken/cerita/festival-salo-karajae	

6	 Figure 1.6 (Enrekang Cultural Festival)	https://makassar.tribunnews.com/2022/08/27/permainan-tradisional-maggasing-meriahkan-festival-budaya-kaluppini-enrekang	Various Traditional Competitions
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The visual content published covers various aspects of local culture, including: Photos and videos of traditional Bugis clothing worn by participants in the cultural carnival. Traditional dances performed at the opening of the festival. Parepare and Enrekang specialties such as barongko, songkolo, and various market snacks sold at MSME stalls and various traditional competitions. The panorama of Salo Karajae, which is the main backdrop for the festival activities, shows the beauty of the river, the rainbow bridge, and the bustling community.

Visual description: a group of teenagers dancing on the Salo Karajae festival stage, smiling while dancing, with the festival banner in the background. Based on an interview with Sulvinajayanti, a digital media expert, she explained: *"We are aware that young people today are more connected through social media. Therefore, we upload posters, create Instagram reels, TikTok challenges, and countdown content to increase enthusiasm"*.

The statement "that young people today are more connected through social media. Therefore, uploading posters, creating Instagram reels, TikTok challenges, and countdown content to increase enthusiasm" reflects a strategy towards the communication characteristics of the digital generation, especially young people as the main target audience. In the context of Uses and Gratifications theory, this demonstrates an awareness that social media is not only used to convey information but also to fulfil users' needs for self-expression, entertainment, social engagement, and self-actualisation (Nurdiantara et al., 2024).

More deeply, the practice of using features such as *Instagram reels*, *TikTok challenges*, and *countdown content* can be understood as a form of digital cultural performance (Schechner, 2003), where cultural promotion is no longer passive and one-way, but interactive and participatory (Nurdiantara et al., 2024). By involving the public in challenges or countdowns, festivals are constructed not only as annual cultural events but also as digital experiences that can be enjoyed before, during, and after the event.

Furthermore, this approach highlights the dimension of media convergence, where organisers not only transfer cultural content to the digital realm but also *adapt formats* according to platform logic and user preferences. In this case, social media becomes more than just a promotional tool; it functions as a symbolic space that enables the dynamic and collaborative construction of cultural identity (Narendra, 2000). By creating engaging and "trendy" content, the organisers indirectly shape the perception of local culture as something relevant, interesting, and worth celebrating by the younger generation.

From the perspective of Social Construction Theory (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), the digital content produced by organisers reflects the process of externalising cultural values into modern visual media. When this content is shared, responded to, and imitated by social media

users, it undergoes objectification, i.e. it is accepted as a legitimate representation of local culture. This online social interaction ultimately results in a process of internalisation, where the community (especially the younger generation) begins to identify local culture as part of their digital identity (Hadiwijaya, 2023).

The festival promotion strategy carried out through creative social media features is not merely a form of technical communication, but part of the social construction process of local culture. This strategy demonstrates the organisers' critical understanding of changes in the communication landscape and cultural engagement in the digital age, while also marking a shift in how people understand and celebrate local wisdom in the context of the convergence of technology and popular culture. Through cultural education, collaboration between the government, academics, and local communities, the use of technology, active community participation, as well as festivals and cultural events, culture can continue to develop and inspire future generations (Agustin, 2024). In addition, H.M Iskandar Nusu, Head of the Youth, Sports and Tourism Office, said: *"Social media is currently the main tool in our promotional strategy. Not only because of its wide reach, but platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook are highly effective in reaching the younger generation. We not only post event information but also strong visual content such as parade videos, traditional dances, or local cuisine to make the community feel involved"* (Interview, 5 July 2025).

According to H.M Iskandar Nusu, social media is not only used to disseminate technical information about the festival, but also to convey messages of multiculturalism and tolerance. The Salo Karajae Festival is designed as an inclusive cultural space, where narratives of diversity and collaboration between communities take centre stage. He said, *"Every year we compile inclusive cultural narratives. In the Salo Karajae Festival, for example, we invite communities of different religions and ethnicities to perform together. On social media, we promote messages of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and appreciation for other cultures"*.

Two-way digital communication strategies were also revealed as an important factor in the effectiveness of cultural campaigns. Disporapar (Dinas Pemuda, Olahraga, dan Pariwisata) acknowledged that user-generated content often has a greater impact than official content, *"We feel that user-generated content is much more effective because it is more authentic. We encourage them to create vlogs, reels, or photos during the festival and tag them with official hashtags such as #SaloKarajae2024. This creates a participatory atmosphere, where culture is promoted by the community itself"*.

The main challenges faced by institutions in developing digital-based cultural communication are sustainability and the digital divide. To that end, Disporapar plans to form a special team that will continuously manage cultural content and bridge the digital access gap in several regions as stated, *"The euphoria only happens during festivals. After that, digital activity usually declines. We want to form a special creative team that can manage social media throughout the year. Also, we see that there are still digital limitations in villages that must be bridged"*.

In closing, H.M. Iskandar Nusu emphasised the importance of making local culture part of the identity of the younger generation through a participatory and contextual digital approach: *"We want local culture to not only be presented on stage or in ceremonial spaces, but also to be present on social media as the identity of the younger generation. The hope is that Parepare will be known as a tolerant and open city of culture"*.

The presentation of social media content that contains philosophical meanings of cultural elements not only strengthens the quality of digital festival promotion, but also plays an important role in the process of collective identity construction, cross-cultural education, and local cultural diplomacy in the global digital space. This strategy marks an important shift from culture as "something to be displayed" to culture as "something to be interpreted and discussed together," emphasising that social media is not only a communication channel but also a new social space where culture is negotiated and strengthened in a participatory manner. social media does not merely reproduce religious meanings, but also becomes a discursive arena where religious authority is challenged and negotiated (Mukhroman, 2025). The narrative content included in social media posts contains educational and persuasive messages, for example: *"Let's celebrate our cultural heritage together! The Salo Karajae Festival is a space for all of us to learn more about Bugis traditions and local wisdom. Don't just be a spectator, be part of the culture!"*.

Through this approach, the digital communication that is built is not merely promotional, but also shapes a broad understanding of culture. The style of language used is interactive and inviting, for example by inserting invitations such as "tag your friends who must come to Parepare!" or "follow the festival ticket giveaway, check the bio for details!".

In addition to institutional promotion, the general public also participates in disseminating content through their personal accounts. Popular hashtags such as #SaloKarajae2024 and #ParepareBerbudaya became local trends, demonstrating the high level of public participation.



Figure 1. Cultural Promotion
(Source: https://www.instagram.com/disporapar_parepare)

The Kaluppini Cultural Festival is one of our efforts to showcase the rich traditions of the Enrekang community. In recent years, we have begun to seriously utilise social media as our primary promotional tool. We use Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to disseminate cultural content in a contemporary style.

According to Achmad Faisal, social media provides a great opportunity to expand the festival's reach to audiences outside Enrekang. Moreover, visual promotions and digital narratives have proven to attract the interest of tourists, students, and the South Sulawesi diaspora community. He said, *"We want Kaluppini culture to be enjoyed not only on location, but also on people's mobile screens. Young people from outside the region can learn that Enrekang has unique traditions, such as traditional games, cultural rituals, and local cuisine"*.

In the context of multicultural values and tolerance, the Tourism Office emphasised that an inclusive approach was strongly emphasised, both in the organisation of the festival and in the preparation of digital content as they stated, *"We deliberately showcased diversity. For example, we invited students from different schools, youth communities of different religions, and MSMEs from various ethnic backgrounds. This became a symbolic message that culture belongs to everyone. On social media, we promote hashtags such as #KaluppiniUntukSemua (Kaluppini is for everyone)"*.

The promotional strategy carried out by the organisers also adapts to digital trends. The festival's creative team is empowered to produce reels, short videos, and live broadcasts through official accounts and accounts belonging to local influencers. They shared, *"We collaborate with local youth who are active on TikTok and Instagram. They create behind-the-scenes content, cultural challenges, and even traditional cooking tutorials. This is more popular with audiences than formal content"*.

Regarding the challenges in managing digital communication, Zainal said that limited human resources and digital infrastructure remain obstacles in some villages. However, collaboration with local communities is an important solution. He said, *"Our challenges are human resources and internet networks in mountainous areas. But we are working with Karang Taruna, schools, and content creator communities to fill that gap. These young people are extraordinary; they are creative and very enthusiastic about promoting their own culture"*.

According to Achmad Faisal, the hope for the future is to form a participatory and sustainable "digital cultural ecosystem". He emphasised that the Kaluppini Cultural Festival is not only a celebration, but also a means of education and local cultural diplomacy as he shared, *"We want to form a digital cultural ecosystem. It should not only go viral during the festival, but the content should live on throughout the year. Our hope is that Kaluppini culture will become widely known, a source of pride for the community, and encourage sustainable, culture-friendly tourism"*.

Thus, the digital communication strategy in the Salo Karajae Festival and the Klauppini Cultural Festival successfully combines visual power, cultural narratives, and online public participation in an effective cultural communication ecosystem. This shows that social media is not just a tool for disseminating information, but also a space for the construction of cultural meaning that is dialogical and participatory.

Construction of Local Cultural Identity

Social media indirectly shapes the cultural identity of the Parepare community in the eyes of the public, both locally and nationally. This identity is built through visual depictions and stories that show local wisdom as something that is alive, dynamic, and has economic and social value. This construction also strengthens the local residents' sense of belonging to their cultural heritage and increases their pride in showcasing Bugis culture in public forums.

The Salo Karajae Festival and the Kaluppini Cultural Festival are annual cultural events in Parepare City and Enrekang Regency that showcase a variety of local cultural treasures, such as dance, traditional music, Bugis cuisine, and traditional parades. In the last decade, the existence of these festivals has not only grown directly through community participation, but also digitally through social media. Official government accounts, local media, cultural communities, and even ordinary citizens have shared documentation of the festival in the form of photos, videos, and digital narratives.

Social media plays a role as a symbolic space that allows the cultural identity of the Parepare community to be constructed and distributed to a wide audience. Posts during the Salo Karajae Festival show cultural elements as something that is: (i) Alive: Continually practised in a contemporary context. (ii) Dynamic: Undergoing aesthetic and functional adaptations in the digital era. (iii) Contributing economically and socially: Boosting the tourism sector and MSMEs.

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural communication strategies implemented by the local government, the researcher conducted interviews with the Parepare City Tourism Office. This institution plays a central role in designing, managing, and promoting various cultural and tourism agendas, including the Salo Karajae Festival, which has become one of the city's cultural icons. The interview aimed to explore how the Tourism Office utilises social media as part of its public communication strategy, as well as how it frames local culture in the context of city branding. From an institutional perspective, the interviews also revealed the government's views on community participation in the digital dissemination of cultural messages. The following is an excerpt from a statement by Nahrul, a lecturer in communication studies, explaining the Tourism Office's strategic approach to using social media as a means of building the city's cultural figure and promoting the local identity of Parepare.

"Using social media is not just for documentation, but for building a brand. The Salo Karajae Festival is a showcase of Bugis culture in Parepare" (Nahrul, Lecturer in Communication Studies).

Nahrul's statement reflects a cultural communication strategy that utilises the power of social media as a convergent space to disseminate, showcase, and frame local culture. Based on the analysis that the government does not only act as an administrator of cultural events but also as an active communication actor in producing cultural representations through digital media. This approach is not only effective in promoting tourism but also in strengthening cultural identity and community ownership of their cultural heritage.

As part of mapping the role of the community in digital cultural communication, the researcher interviewed Ahmad, a local content creator who is active on the TikTok platform with the account @parepareheritage. In his interview, Ahmad revealed that, *"Posts about Salo Karajae often go viral. Videos of cultural parades and traditional dances are widely viewed. This is proof that local culture can enter the popular algorithm."* This statement confirms how local cultural content is now not only consumed by the surrounding community, but is also able to reach a wider audience through popular digital platforms.

"Posts about Salo Karajae often go viral. Videos of cultural parades and traditional dances are widely viewed. This is proof that local culture can enter the popular algorithm". (Ahmad Rijal, TikTok creator @parepareheritage)

Through Media Convergence Theory, we see how digital technology enables the convergence of traditional cultural practices with new media. TikTok, as a short-video-based platform with an algorithm, has become a new distribution channel for local cultural expressions. Ahmad Rijal not only records culture but also adapts it into a format that aligns with the preferences of dynamic digital users: short, visual, and easy to share. This process demonstrates that media convergence is not only technological but also cultural whereby local culture transforms into content that can be consumed within a global digital context.

From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, Ahmad's activities as a content creator can also be interpreted as fulfilling the need for self-expression, social achievement, and the desire to educate and entertain his audience. On the other hand, viewers who consume videos of cultural parades and traditional dances derive satisfaction in the form of knowledge, entertainment, and emotional closeness to their local identity. This interaction creates a reciprocal relationship between the creator and recipient of messages in a needs-based digital media ecosystem. Surahmat, a local culinary entrepreneur said,

"Every time there is a festival, we post barongko, gogos, and onde-onde for sale on Instagram. We get many orders from outside the city after people see them on social media".

Surahmat's statement illustrates how local economic practices, in this case the sale of traditional culinary items such as *barongko*, *gogos*, and *onde-onde*, have undergone a transformation due to the use of social media as the main promotional channel. From the perspective of Media Convergence Theory, as developed by Henry Jenkins (2006), this phenomenon shows an important shift from a location-based economy (physical locality) to a digital network-based economy, where the boundaries between producers, distributors, and consumers are becoming increasingly blurred.

Media convergence in this context refers not only to the integration of various forms of media (text, Figures, video, online interaction), but also to the convergence of traditional cultural practices with digital technology. Local culinary products that were previously only accessible directly at the festival venue can now be reached by audiences and consumers from outside the city through platforms such as Instagram. This shows that social media has become a bridge between physical space (the festival venue) and virtual space (online communities), enabling the distribution of economic and cultural value beyond geographical boundaries.

Culinary posts by MSME players such as Surahmat are not only informative, but also participatory and promotional. The food photos displayed, accompanied by narratives such as the origin of the food or the traditional ingredients used, make these posts part of the cultural narrative ecosystem. This content has symbolic and cultural value, as well as a real economic function. When audiences from outside the city see this content and then place orders, a process of convergence between cultural production and digital consumption occurs, which reinforces each other.

Furthermore, social media such as Instagram acts as an interactive platform that allows local MSMEs to practise two-way communication. With features such as comments, direct messages, and tags, customers can interact directly, provide testimonials, or order products in real-time. This creates a hybrid business model: traditional in terms of products (local cuisine

based on cultural heritage), but modern in terms of marketing and distribution (digital and cross-regional).

This convergence also influences how consumers perceive products. Barongko or gogos are no longer seen merely as Bugis specialities, but also as representations of local culture that are "worthy of appearing" on social media and entering the competitive *visual culinary* ecosystem. This means that social media not only expands distribution reach, but also elevates the Figure of cultural value through the aesthetic appearance and visual appeal of these products.

Thus, the quote shows that media convergence has transformed the role of social media from merely a communication channel into an interconnected space for economic and cultural production. MSME actors such as Surahmat have become cultural actors who actively utilise digital spaces to expand market access, promote traditional products, and strengthen local identity narratives in a broader context. Egi, a student from Parepare said,

"I used to be less interested in attending cultural events. But after seeing my friends' posts, I became curious and finally attended. Now I participate every year".

Egi's statement shows how social media acts as a catalyst for the transformation of young people's cultural participation, from apathy to activism, through a process of social construction that takes place in the digital space. Within the framework of social construction theory (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), Irfan's friends' posts about the Salo Karajae Festival act as an externalisation of culture that brings local values into his consciousness, which are then internalised as part of his identity. Through the lens of Uses and Gratifications Theory, Irfan derives cognitive and affective satisfaction from the content, which arouses curiosity and the need for social connection. Meanwhile, in the context of media convergence, cultural experiences are no longer purely physical, but also digital in the form of stories, short videos, or visual posts that are integrated into the daily lives of social media users. Thus, Irfan's involvement in the festival from year to year is the result of the interaction between digital exposure, social encouragement, and the reinterpretation of local culture in a new media landscape that is participatory and personal.

A range of communication theories and models play an important role in explaining how cultural messages are constructed, disseminated, and received by multicultural communities, especially through social media. Through Media Convergence Theory, the dissemination of local culture such as the Salo Karajae Festival and Bugis culinary traditions can be understood as the intersection between traditional cultural practices and digital technology, enabling cultural messages to reach audiences across regions and identities. Meanwhile, Uses and Gratifications Theory helps explain the motivations of users in producing and consuming cultural content, whether as a form of self-expression, information seeking, entertainment, or to fulfil the need for social identity. Social Construction Theory illustrates how cultural representations shared on social media whether by the government, content creators, or the general public serve as a process of externalisation that is later internalised by the audience, shaping new meanings of local culture. In the context of multicultural communities. Thus, the combination of these theories shows that delivering cultural messages to diverse communities requires communication strategies that are adaptive, dialogical, and sensitive to cultural differences, while also leveraging digital technology to broaden reach and strengthen the acceptance of local culture.

Table 2. Cultural Aspects, Representation on Social Media, and Their Impact

Cultural Aspects	Representation on Social Media	Social & Cultural Impact
Traditional Dance & Music	Video of the <i>Padduppa</i> dance parade, <i>Gandrang Bulo</i>	Increasing young people's interest in the arts
Bugis Traditional Attire	Photo of young men and women wearing <i>bodo shirts</i> and <i>jackets</i>	Fostering pride in cultural heritage
Local Cuisine	Posting content about Bugis specialties (gogos, barongko, palopo)	Enhancing the economic value of traditional cuisine
Bugis Language & Expressions	Captions using the Bugis language or distinctive expressions	Promoting the preservation of local languages
Rituals & Cultural Symbols	Visualising traditional ceremonies (mapacci, mappadendang)	Enhancing public understanding of cultural significance



Figure 2. Screenshot of the Salo Karajae Festival website post

(Description: Cultural parade at the 2024 Salo Karajae Festival uploaded by the @pareparetourism account).

Online Community Response and Participation

Community participation in promoting the Salo Karajae Festival can be seen through high interaction on social media, such as reposting festival content, giving positive comments, and creating personal content related to the festival. This shows that social media is not only used unilaterally by the organisers, but also becomes a collaborative arena between managers and the public in shaping cultural discourse.

The Salo Karajae Festival is not only a space for direct (offline) cultural interaction, but also creates an online participatory ecosystem through social media platforms. The people of Parepare and the wider public responded to this event very actively, not only as spectators, but also as co-creators of culture through various forms of digital interaction. Online community participation includes the following main activities:

Table 3. Online Community Response and Participation

Form of Participation	Activity Description
Reposting/sharing content	Residents reposted official festival content to their personal accounts with supportive captions
Creating original content	Festival visitors create vlogs, TikTok dances, and behind-the-scenes videos of the festival
Interacting through comments/likes	Positive comments, testimonials, constructive criticism on the festival's implementation
Hashtag Campaign	Using hashtags such as #SaloKarajae2024 #BudayaParepare in personal posts
Live streaming & live broadcasts	Broadcasting festival activities live spontaneously from the location

To gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions, experiences, and participation of the community in local cultural activities, researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with a number of informants involved in the Salo Karajae Festival. These interviews aimed to explore the subjective views of participants and visitors on the role of media, communication, and cultural promotion in the local context. The information gathered provides a concrete picture of how individuals interpret their involvement in cultural events, as well as how they use digital media as a means of expression and communication. The following interview excerpt is taken from Novita Sari, a local vlogger, who shares her experience of documenting and sharing moments from the festival through digital platforms. She said, *"I made a vlog about the Salo Karajae event and it turned out that many people watched it. Some people asked questions about Parepare. I am happy to be able to introduce my own village"*.

Novita's statement, a local vlogger who captures and shares moments from the Salo Karajae Festival through vlogs, can be analysed from a communication theory perspective, specifically the Uses and Gratifications Theory. Based on Uses and Gratifications Theory, Novita's actions show that she actively utilises digital media to fulfil her needs for self-expression, strengthening her local identity, and social integration. By creating vlogs, she not only gains personal satisfaction from being able to introduce her hometown, but also builds communication relationships with audiences who show an interest in Parepare.

As part of efforts to understand the dynamics of digital communication in promoting local culture, researchers also interviewed a number of social media observers. These interviews were intended to obtain analytical perspectives on the role of social media in shaping public perception, disseminating cultural information, and building online community engagement. Social media observers are considered to have a reflective, view of the communication patterns of the digital community, including how local content such as cultural festivals is produced, disseminated, and received by a wide audience. Their views are important in assessing the effectiveness of social media-based communication strategies and in understanding their long-term impact on cultural identity and regional representation in the digital space. The following is an excerpt from an interview with a social media observer who provided an analysis of the digitalisation of culture by local content creators. *"The current trend is that community-generated content is more effective in spreading cultural messages because it is more authentic and relatable"* (Alfiansyah, Lecturer in Digital Communication, IAIN Parepare).

Alfiansyah's statement that *"the current trend is that user-generated content is more effective in spreading cultural messages because it is more authentic and relatable"* can be

analysed through Media Convergence Theory, which shows how the boundaries between media producers and consumers are becoming blurred. The public is no longer merely a passive audience but also actively produces content, particularly in the form of videos, photos, or digital narratives circulating on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok. This process enables the dissemination of cultural messages in a more horizontal and participatory manner, differing from the one-way communication model of mainstream media. Content created by the public tends to be considered more authentic because it comes from direct experience, and is more easily accepted because it uses language and symbols that are familiar to the audience's daily lives.

In order to understand how cultural communication strategies are applied in local cultural promotion policies and practices, the researchers also conducted interviews with representatives from local governments. The government's perspective is very important because they have a role as facilitators and policy makers in cultural preservation and promotion. These interviews aimed to explore how the government responds to community involvement in the production of cultural content through social media, and how this participation is viewed in the context of public communication. The views of the local government show recognition of the active role of the community as part of a more inclusive and sustainable communication strategy. One interesting statement came from H. Makmur Husaein, Head of the Parepare City Education and Culture Office, who highlighted the importance of organic community participation in introducing local culture to the digital space. The following is an excerpt from an interview that reflects the government's appreciative attitude towards citizens' initiatives in producing and disseminating cultural content: *"We are actually happy when the community creates its own content. It means that there is a sense of ownership of our culture. This kind of participation cannot be paid for by formal promotion"* (Hj. Nurul Wahida, Head of Culture at the Parepare Tourism, Youth and Sports Agency).

Online community participation demonstrates a shift in the cultural communication paradigm from monologue (top-down) to dialogue and collaboration. Communities are no longer passive recipients of information, but actively select, produce, and distribute their own cultural narratives. This means that social media has become: A collaborative cultural arena a place where cultural identity and pride are negotiated between the government, cultural communities, and the general public. An inclusive space for cultural expression All groups from students to the diaspora can contribute to strengthening local cultural discourse.

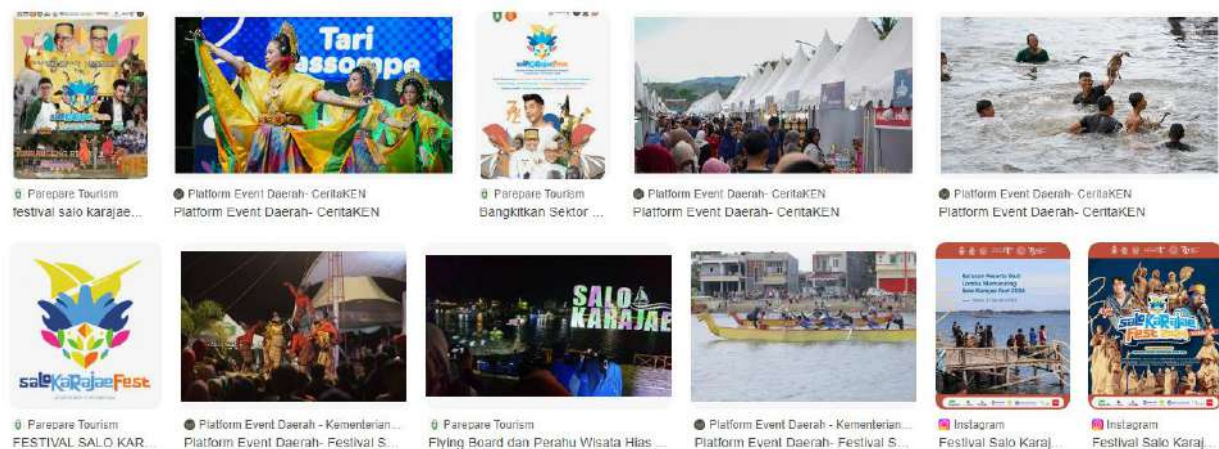


Figure 3. Compilation of Instagram Stories from Parepare Residents

(Description: Residents uploaded the atmosphere of the Salo Karajae Festival through Instagram Stories with various visual narrative styles).

Table 4. Social Media Activity Statistics

Social Media Activity Indicators	Number/Figure (2024 Festival)
Number of posts with the hashtag #SaloKarajae2024	4,300+ posts
Accounts sharing official festival content	1,800+ accounts
Number of views on the cultural parade video on TikTok	>1 million views
Positive comments on Tourism Department posts	2,300+ comments
Number of vlogs and YouTube content themed around festivals	150+ videos

(Description: The number of uses of the hashtag #SaloKarajae2024 increased dramatically during the three days of the festival. The online participation of the Parepare community in the Salo Karajae Festival not only reflects enthusiasm for local culture, but also confirms that social media has become a democratic means of building cultural discourse and identity. Collaboration between residents, content creators, and organising institutions opens up new opportunities for cultural preservation *that is adaptive to the times*).

Social Construction in Digital Media

In line with Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction Theory, the cultural reality formed through social media is the result of a process of repeated interaction and communication between various parties: the city government, festival organisers, and the general public. Social media here becomes a symbolic space that allows for the formation of a new social reality about local wisdom that is not only consumed locally but also widely recognised.

The development of communication technology, particularly social media, has changed the way people shape, understand, and disseminate cultural reality. In the context of the Salo Karajae Festival, digital media has become a new arena where local wisdom is not only displayed but also socially shaped through a constructive process involving various actors.

According to Berger and Luckmann in 'The Social Construction of Reality' (1966), social reality is not objective or fixed, but is shaped through three processes in the context of the Salo Karajae Festival: (i) Externalisation: The government, artists, the community, and netizens share festival content (photos, videos, narratives) on social media. (ii) Objectification: The content is viewed, shared, and receives public validation in the form of comments, likes, and media coverage. (iii) Internalisation: The community begins to identify local culture as part of a modern, attractive, and proud identity.

The collective visual narrative of Instagram posts from the @pareparetourism account features a cultural parade with the caption: *"Culture is our face in the eyes of the world. Let's celebrate #SaloKarajae2024 together."* This post was then reposted by residents, accompanied by comments such as *"Proud to be Bugis!"* or *"Cool, Parepare is progressing!"* This shows the internalisation of cultural values as a collective social identity. Local culture is not only seen as an ancestral heritage, but also a symbol of modernity and prestige.

Emotional and participatory narratives residents uploaded photos with their families while attending the festival with captions *such as: "We come to Salo Karajae every year. This is how we introduce our children to Bugis culture."* The presence of this emotional content shows that social media enables the transmission of cultural values in a personal and affective way—a dimension that strengthens social construction as part of everyday life.

The Salo Karajae Festival is a concrete example of how social media acts as a symbolic space where social construction of local culture takes place. Using Berger and Luckmann's approach, we can see that the cultural reality of Parepare presented in digital media is not static, but rather the result of a dynamic and collaborative social process. Social media not only conveys culture, but also shapes and revives it in the modern narratives of digital society.

Strengthening the Appeal of Cultural Tourism

Through social media, the Salo Karajae Festival is not only constructed as a celebration of local culture, but also as a cultural tourism asset. This digital promotion increases the appeal of Parepare City as a destination that not only has natural beauty, but also a wealth of cultural values. Thus, social media-based promotion contributes to building a tourism ecosystem rooted in local wisdom.

The Salo Karajae Festival has transformed into more than just a local cultural event. With the support of social media, this festival has undergone a transformation in meaning, from a cultural celebration to a cultural tourism attraction that is integrated with city promotion and the strengthening of the creative economy. Massive and strategic digital promotion has made Parepare City known not only for its geographical position and history, but also for its vibrant and dynamic cultural strength.

Social media acts as a bridge between local culture and potential tourists. Through platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok, the wider community can access real-time visualisations of the Salo Karajae Festival activities without having to be physically present. This opens opportunities for domestic and international tourists to learn about Bugis-Parepare culture, strengthening the city's figure as a culture-based tourist destination, increasing the economic value of the MSME, culinary, and craft sectors involved in the festival. The content uploaded on social media typically highlights the following elements:

Table 5. Tourism Promotion

Visual or Narrative Elements	Tourism Promotion Function	Example Content
Traditional attire and cultural parades	Showcasing traditional uniqueness and aesthetics	Photo of Bugis traditional costume parade
Traditional music and dance	Attracting tourists through cultural entertainment	Video of <i>Padduppa</i> dance performance
Local cuisine (live cooking)	Stimulating culinary interest and encouraging direct visits	Reels "How to make barongko"
Festival-themed photo spots	Encouraging tourists to capture their travel moments	"Instagrammable spots" in the festival area
Interviews with traditional figures/artists	Adding cultural depth for digital audiences	TikTok or YouTube shorts

The impact of digital promotion on tourism in Parepare, increase in tourist visits, according to the Parepare Tourism Office (2024). The number of visits during the Salo Karajae Festival increased by 38% compared to the previous year, with most visitors coming from outside the city, such as Makassar, Sidrap, and Palopo.

In terms of the growth of MSMEs and the creative economy, data shows that the income of culinary and MSMEs craft increased by 50–70% during the festival. This was due to the virality of local product content on social media. Meanwhile, as for city figure as a cultural destination, social media sentiment analysis shows a dominance of positive narratives with hashtags such as #WisataBudayaParepare, #SaloKarajaeFestival, and #ExploreParepare, which indirectly strengthen the city's brand.

Table 6. Impact of Social Media on Tourism Aspects

Aspect	Before Digital Promotion	After Digital Promotion
Domestic Tourist Visits	±8,000 people	±11,000 people
Festival SME Turnover	±75 million rupiah	±125 million rupiah
Social Media Engagement	±1,200 likes/post	±3,800 likes/post

Promoting the Salo Karajae Festival through social media has significantly strengthened Parepare's position as a cultural tourism destination. Engaging and participatory digital content has successfully fostered a positive Figure of tourism in the public's mind. Through this approach, the city not only showcases its physical beauty but also its values, stories, and identity—creating a tourism appeal rooted in local wisdom and sustainability.

DISCUSSION

Findings show that social media has become a very effective means of promoting local cultural festivals such as the Salo Karajae Festival in Parepare and the cultural festival in Enrekang. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook are used to their fullest potential to share a variety of visual and narrative content that showcases the richness of local culture, from traditional dances to regional cuisine. In addition, the use of creative features such as Instagram reels and TikTok challenges not only distributes information but also builds active public participation, especially among the younger generation. This practice proves that social media has become a participatory space that allows the community to be directly involved in cultural promotion. Social media not only conveys messages but also invites the audience to be part of the cultural process itself.

The digital communication strategies implemented in both festivals demonstrate that social media can change the way people consume and understand local culture. The content shared contains messages that are not only related to event promotion, but also to a dynamic local cultural identity that is relevant to everyday life. With the development of technology, cultural festivals that were previously only known at the local level are now able to reach a wider audience, even beyond the region. This underlines the importance of social media in strengthening local cultural identity and introducing local wisdom to a wider audience, while promoting tourism and the creative economy.

Furthermore, this study also reveals how social media plays a role in shaping and sharing socio-cultural realities. Content uploaded by the government and the public not only

depicts culture as an object to be displayed, but also as an identity that is formed collectively. Social media becomes a symbolic space that allows the community to engage in the construction of cultural meaning, which is then accepted as part of their collective social identity. This is in line with the concept of Social Construction Theory, which states that social reality, in this case local culture, is formed and maintained through repeated social interactions. Social media not only conveys messages, but also allows the community to actively participate in the process of negotiating cultural meaning.

This research is in line with Media Convergence Theory, which suggests that developments in digital technology enable the integration of various forms of media, including content, format, and structure, within a single platform (Dwyer, 2010; Jenkins, 2004). Social media has successfully integrated visual information, text, and video within a single ecosystem, enabling audiences to consume culture more quickly, flexibly, and interactively. In the context of cultural festivals, this is reflected in the use of various platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, which enable the dissemination of cultural messages more widely and deeply. Digital communication strategies that optimise visual and narrative content on these platforms demonstrate a change in the way people consume cultural information. Information that was previously disseminated through traditional media can now be accessed globally via the internet, creating a more inclusive and open culture.

Meanwhile, in the context of Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction Theory, social media acts as a symbolic space that enables the formation of cultural meaning through the process of social interaction (Adoni & Mane, 1984; Stallings, 1990). The content shared by festival organisers and the community is not merely promotional, but also a representation of culture that is accepted and internalised by the audience as part of their social identity. Through repeated interactions on social media, local culture is not only displayed, but also shaped together through the processes of externalisation, objectification, and internalisation. In this context, social media does not merely function as a means of information distribution but also as a space for the ongoing construction of cultural meaning.

The findings of this study on the use of social media in promoting cultural festivals, such as the Salo Karajae Festival and the Kaluppini Cultural Festival, show that digital platforms not only serve as tools for disseminating information but also as spaces for collectively and inclusively building and strengthening local cultural identities. This is in line with the research by Pradanna and Abdulkarim (2024) which reveals that social media can strengthen multicultural tolerance, provided it is used wisely and with appropriate digital literacy. In this context, social media not only facilitates event promotion but also builds dialogue between cultural groups, allowing audiences to better appreciate diversity. These findings also echo research by Koc-Damgaci and Aydin (2017), which shows how social media can be used to promote multicultural education. This is reflected in content that showcases cultural diversity and educates audiences about the values of inclusivity and tolerance, alongside increasing community participation in producing cultural content.

In addition, the findings of research by Mesa and Jacinto (2022), which show that digital skills can increase tolerance for diversity, are highly relevant to my findings, where active community participation in creating content such as vlogs and TikTok challenges not only introduces local culture but also strengthens social relationships between different groups. This is in line with the research results of Rahmawati and Haryati (2024) which emphasise the importance of multicultural communication through social media as a space for building dialogue between groups. As found in the study Muharis et al. (2024), social media is also a

platform that can be used to build a more inclusive and moderate cross-cultural understanding, strengthen tolerance and appreciation for differences, and reduce conflict. Thus, social media not only serves as a promotional channel but also as a strategic tool in building more harmonious and multicultural relationships between communities.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that social media plays a very strategic role in shaping and disseminating local cultural values and strengthening the spirit of multiculturalism and tolerance in the digital space. Through an inclusive, interactive, and participatory digital communication approach, the Salo Karajae Festival and the Kaluppini Cultural Festival not only serve as a venue for cultural preservation, but also as a space for dynamic identity negotiation and cultural diplomacy.

The use of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook allows local governments, cultural actors, and the general public to become active participants in the construction of cultural narratives that are open, collaborative, and relevant to the younger generation. The digital communication strategies implemented, such as creative content creation, campaign hashtags, and collaboration with local creators, have proven to increase public participation and expand the reach of cross-regional cultural promotion.

The findings of this study also confirm that cultural communication practices through social media are not only technical and promotional in nature, but also rich in social meaning. Within the framework of Social Construction Theory, local cultural identity is formed through a process of interaction, objectification, and internalisation that takes place in the digital space. Meanwhile, Media Convergence Theory explains how traditional culture is able to adapt to the logic of new media, bridging local wisdom with global communication trends.

Thus, digital communication strategies in the context of local cultural festivals have proven effective in building a tolerant, multicultural, and sustainable cultural ecosystem. Local governments, cultural communities, and the younger generation have an important role to play in continuing to develop digital expression spaces as a medium for preserving values, public education, and strengthening local identity in the face of the challenges of globalisation and digital disruption.

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INDUSTRI MINYAK KELAPA SAWIT: DINAMIKA SEKURITI MAKANAN DAN PEMBANGUNAN MAMPAN DI LAHAD DATU, SABAH

PALM OIL INDUSTRY: DYNAMICS OF FOOD SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN LAHAD DATU, SABAH

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ABSTRAK Lahad Datu merupakan daerah yang mengalami pengembangan industri minyak kelapa sawit terutamanya dengan penubuhan Palm Oil Industrial Cluster (POIC). Industri ini giat berkembang dan mengubah landskap sosioekonomi penduduk setempat. Maka itu, kajian ini dijalankan bagi menilai dinamik sekuriti makanan dan pembangunan mampan berdasarkan pengembangan industri minyak kelapa sawit di Lahad Datu. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kualitatif melalui sumber sekunder seperti artikel jurnal, tesis, buku, e-buku dan sebagainya. Kajian ini mendapati berlakunya pertukaran guna tanah pertanian di Lahad Datu, *deforestation* dan perubahan iklim yang memberi kesan bagi produktiviti tanaman makanan. Kajian ini mencadangkan penyelidikan yang lebih holistik dan inklusif terutamanya bagi pelaksanaan dasar kerajaan.

Kata Kunci: Dinamika Sekuriti Makanan, Industri Minyak Kelapa Sawit, Lahad Datu, Pembangunan Mampan

ABSTRACT - Lahad Datu is a district that has experienced the expansion of the palm oil industry, particularly since the establishment of the Palm Oil Industrial Cluster (POIC). This industry is growing rapidly and has changed the socio-economic landscape of the community. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess the dynamics of food security and sustainable development based on the expansion of the palm oil industry in Lahad Datu. This study uses qualitative methods through secondary sources such as journal articles, thesis, books, e-books and so on. This study found that there is a change in agricultural land use in Lahad Datu, *deforestation* and climate change which affects the productivity of food crops. This study recommends more holistic and inclusive research, especially for the implementation of government policies.

Keywords: *Dynamics of Food Security, Palm Oil Industry, Lahad Datu, Sustainable Development*

PENDAHULUAN

Kelapa sawit (*Elaeis guineensis*) berasal dari Afrika Barat dan diperkenalkan di Asia Tenggara pada tahun 1848 apabila ditanam di Taman Botani Bogor, Indonesia (Kementerian Perladangan dan Komoditi, 2025). Kelapa sawit tiba di Tanah Melayu sebagai tanaman hiasan oleh British pada tahun 1870an dan penanaman kelapa sawit sebagai tanaman komersial bermula pada tahun 1917 oleh Henri Fauconnier (Kementerian Perladangan dan Komoditi, 2025). Malaysia yang ingin mengurangkan kadar kemiskinan menubuhkan Lembaga Pembangunan Tanah Persekutuan (FELDA) pada tahun 1961 melalui penerokaan tanah untuk penanaman kelapa sawit dan getah (Mohd Adib Ismail et al., 2022). Penanaman kelapa sawit sebagai tanaman komersial ini menjadi asas terhadap pengembangan industri minyak kelapa sawit kini dan menyumbang kepada pertumbuhan ekonomi negara.

Keluasan tanah penanaman bagi kelapa sawit di Sabah menunjukkan peningkatan pada 2022 sebanyak 2, 039, 334 hektar (ha) daripada 1, 819, 390 ha pada tahun 2019 (Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 2024). Sektor ini telah menyumbang sebanyak 16.0% terhadap Keluaran Dalam Negeri Kasar (KDNK) Sabah pada tahun 2019 (Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 2024). Lahad Datu, merupakan antara pengeluar kelapa sawit utama di Sabah dengan keluasan tanamam sebanyak 280, 606.31 ha pada tahun 2022 (Pejabat Pertanian Lahad Datu, 2023). Industri minyak kelapa sawit membawa manfaat yang signifikan kepada sosioekonomi penduduk setempat di Lahad Datu seperti membuka peluang pekerjaan, menjamin kebajikan tenaga kerja dan penduduk setempat melalui *Corporate Social Responsibility* (CSR) dan meningkatkan taraf hidup penduduk setempat.

Namun begitu, pengembangan industri minyak kelapa sawit menyebabkan ketergantungan yang tinggi terhadap industri ini sebagai sumber utama pendapatan penduduk setempat. Memberi kesan terhadap guna tanah pertanian dan sekuriti makanan di Lahad Datu. Sekuriti makanan didefinisikan apabila semua individu pada setiap masa, mempunyai akses fizikal, sosial dan ekonomi kepada makanan yang mencukupi, selamat dan berkhasiat yang memenuhi keperluan diet dan keutamaan makanan untuk kehidupan yang aktif dan sihat (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO, 2023). Malaysia telah menjadikan sekuriti makanan sebagai salah satu objektif penting bagi dasar pembangunan negara sejak tahun 1950 setelah berhadapan dengan kekurangan makanan khususnya bekalan ketika perang (Bakri Mat et al., 2016). Pelbagai dasar dan inisiatif telah dilaksanakan bagi menjamin sekuriti makanan dalam negara. Sebagai contoh, Dasar Sekuriti Makanan Negara, Dasar Agromakanan Negara dan Rancangan Malaysia Kedua Belas (RMK-12). Walau bagaimanapun, pengembangan industri ini berpotensi menyebabkan peralihan guna tanah tanaman makanan kepada tanaman kelapa sawit. Kelapa sawit yang bersifat monokultur menyukarkan tanaman lain ditanam di kawasan penanaman yang sama dengan kelapa sawit memberi kebimbangan terhadap kawasan penanaman yang semakin didominasi oleh tanaman kelapa sawit.

Oleh itu, kajian di dijalankan bagi menilai dinamika industri minyak kelapa sawit kepada sekuriti makanan dan pembangunan mampan di Lahad Datu. Kajian ini penting bagi memahami konteks sekuriti makanan di Lahad Datu dan bagi melihat bagaimana aktiviti industri ini mempengaruhi guna tanah pertanian di Lahad Datu. Kajian ini juga penting bagi menyumbang kepada kajian literatur dan menilai hubungan antara industri minyak kelapa sawit

kepada sekuriti makanan dan pembangunan mampan di Lahad Datu selari dengan agenda pembangunan negara dan Matlamat Pembangunan Mampan (SDG).

SOROTAN LITERATUR

Pertanian merupakan komponen penting dalam ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). Pada tahun 2020, pertanian membentuk kira-kira 11% daripada Keluaran Dalam Negeri Kasar (KDNK) rantau ASEAN (Pushpanathan Sundram, 2023). Namun begitu, peralihan kegiatan ekonomi dari sara hidup tradisional kepada penanaman monokultur kelapa sawit menjejaskan sekuriti makanan (Sibhatu, 2023). Pengembangan kelapa sawit telah membawa kepada penebangan hutan dan perubahan guna tanah dan mengakibatkan kerugian dalam biodiversiti dan fungsi ekosistem (Sibhatu, 2023).

Pengembangan kelapa sawit telah menggantikan tanaman sedia ada. Kawasan bagi penanaman padi telah mengalami pertukaran tanah untuk penanaman monokultur tanaman kelapa sawit (Sudrajat et al., 2021). Pengembangan penanaman sejak tahun 2007 telah mendorong penggunaan tanah pertanian yang semakin berkurangan. Melalui kajian yang dijalankan di Sumatera Indonesia, didapati 33% isi rumah memiliki sawah kurang daripada 0.5 hektar manakala hanya 4% yang memiliki sawah padi lebih daripada 1 hektar (Sudrajat et al., 2021). Hasil kajian ini melihat berlakunya penurunan yang ketara bagi penanaman padi disebabkan oleh pengembangan penanaman kelapa sawit.

Selain itu, produktiviti tanaman makanan yang rendah akan menyumbang kepada kebergantungan makanan import. Malaysia terpaksa mengimport makanan asas seperti daging lembu/kerbau, halia, bawang merah, daging kambing, mangga, kelapa, cili dan kubis bulat sejak 10 tahun yang lepas bagi menampung keperluan tempatan (Nurzatil Sharleeza Mat Jalaluddin et al., 2022). Kebergantungan makanan import ini akan memberi dampak negatif terhadap negara sekiranya negara eksport seperti China, Vietnam, Ukraine dan negara lain bertindak mengurangkan kadar eksport atau menghentikan eksport makanan kepada Malaysia.

Ketidakstabilan pasaran dunia akan memberi kesan domino yang mengakibatkan kenaikan harga makanan seperti ayam, daging dan lain-lain yang ditanggung oleh pengguna (Mohd Hafiz Jamaludin, 2023). Sebagai contoh, konflik Ukraine-Rusia dan penyebaran pandemik COVID-19 yang telah memberi dampak yang signifikan kepada rantai makanan dunia. Ukraine yang merupakan pengeksport utama gandum dan bunga matahari dunia mengalami penurunan dari segi produktiviti ekoran dari konflik yang berlaku mengakibatkan rantai makanan serantau terjejas. Keadaan ini berlaku kerana Ukraine dan Rusia menghasilkan lebih daripada 50% daripada bekalan biji bunga matahari dunia, 19% daripada barli dunia, dan 14% daripada gandumnya dan menyumbang kira-kira 30% daripada global eksport gandum pada 2016-2021 (Mohammad Al-Saidi, 2023).

Seterusnya, tanah pertanian yang tidak mencukupi di Malaysia turut menjadi salah satu kebimbangan. Sebahagian besar tanah pertanian di Malaysia lazimnya menumpukan tanaman kelapa sawit kerana menjana pendapatan yang lebih tinggi (Norhasni Zainal Abidin et al., 2023). Penanaman kelapa sawit di Malaysia telah diperkenalkan oleh kerajaan untuk membasmi kemiskinan di kawasan luar bandar (Fithriyaani Zainal & Er Ah Choy, 2022). Walaupun pencapaian ketara Malaysia dalam mengurangkan agregat kadar kemiskinan daripada 8.9% pada tahun 1995 kepada 1.7% pada tahun 2012, negara masih menghadapi jurang kemiskinan di kawasan luar bandar (Mohamad Ikhrum Mohamad Ridzuan et al., 2024).

Tambahan pula, generasi baru turut mendapati tanaman ladang seperti kelapa sawit adalah lebih mudah dan pendapatan dalam industri ini lebih stabil berbanding tanaman makanan (Lim, 2023). Keadaan ini secara langsung menyebabkan ramai anak muda menukar tanah mereka kepada ladang atau menjualnya untuk diubah menjadi perumahan dan pembangunan perindustrian. Ketidakseimbangan antara permintaan dan penawaran telah memberi tekanan kepada harga makanan di Malaysia. Keadaan ini dilihat apabila permintaan terhadap tanaman makanan meningkat namun hasil pertanian adalah terhad akibat dari penggunaan guna tanah pertanian di Malaysia yang lebih tertumpu terhadap tanaman industri.

Keadaan ini menyumbang kepada peralihan guna tanah pertanian untuk tanaman makanan kepada tanaman industri. Tanah pertanian semakin didominasi oleh tanaman komoditi bernilai tinggi seperti minyak sawit, yang menawarkan nilai eksport dan keuntungan yang lebih tinggi, menyebabkan pengabaian sektor agri-makanan (Nurqamarina Baharuddin et al., 2025). Masyarakat melihat pengembangan industri minyak sawit sebagai peluang yang lebih baik untuk keuntungan yang lebih besar berbanding tanaman makanan, yang mengambil masa lebih lama untuk dituai dan mempunyai permintaan serta pasaran yang tidak stabil. Sektor pertanian secara sejarahnya dikaitkan dengan kemiskinan disebabkan oleh gaji yang rendah dan harga komoditi antarabangsa yang tidak stabil.

METODOLOGI

Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif bagi menilai dinamika sekuriti makanan dan pembangunan mampan di Lahad Datu, Sabah. Kaedah ini dipilih sejajar dengan objektif kajian untuk menilai dinamika sekuriti makanan dan pembangunan mampan di Lahad Datu, Sabah berdasarkan pengembangan industri minyak kelapa sawit. Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk kajian kes yang memberi tumpuan kepada satu kawasan kajian yang khusus. Kawasan kajian yang dipilih adalah daerah Lahad Datu, Sabah.

Rajah 1: Peta Daerah Lahad Datu, Sabah



Sumber: Pejabat Pertanian Lahad Datu, Sabah (2023)

Rajah 1 merupakan peta daerah Lahad Datu Sabah. Lahad Datu terbahagi kepada tiga kawasan iaitu Silam, Segama dan Tungku. Lahad Datu memiliki keluasan seluas 7, 444km² /

687, 372 ha dan terletak di Pantai Timur Selatan (Pejabat Daerah Lahad Datu, 2024). Landskap Lahad Datu dikelilingi Bukit Bakau di bahagian Barat dan berhadapan Laut Sulawesi di bahagian timur (Pejabat Daerah Lahad Datu, 2024). Silam dan Segama berada dalam pentadbiran yang sama di bawah Pejabat Daerah Lahad Datu manakala Tungku berada dalam pentadbiran Pejabat Daerah Kecil Tungku. Jumlah penduduk dianggarkan sebanyak 306, 360 orang penduduk (Lahad Datu: 226, 360 orang dan Tungku: 80,000 orang) dengan jumlah kampung Lahad Datu sebanyak 87 buah kampung yang mana di Lahad Datu (Silam dan Segama) meliputi sebanyak 50 buah kampung dan 37 buah kampung di Kawasan Tungku (Pejabat Daerah Lahad Datu, 2024). Sebilangan penduduk daerah Lahad Datu terdiri dari petani, pekebun, peladang dan nelayan (Arkib, 2024). Aktiviti ekonomi Lahad Datu bergantung kepada sektor pertanian khususnya penanaman kelapa sawit dan koko (Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 2023). Aktiviti ekonomi utama penduduk Lahad Datu dalam industri sawit menjadikan daerah ini sesuai sebagai kawasan kajian.

Data kajian ini diperoleh melalui sumber sekunder dengan menganalisis dokumen. Data sekunder merupakan data yang sedia ada seperti hasil penyelidikan terdahulu, laporan tahunan dan lain-lain (Azima Hanifa et al., 2025). Data sekunder yang digunakan dalam kajian ini terdiri dari buku, e-buku, artikel jurnal, dokumen arkib dan bahan ilmiah lain yang bercetak dan tidak bercetak. Data sekunder dalam kajian ini dipilih berdasarkan beberapa kriteria utama, iaitu kesesuaian dengan objektif kajian, kebolehpercayaan sumber, tempoh masa penerbitan dan skop geografi. Sumber data terdiri daripada laporan rasmi kerajaan, artikel jurnal dan laporan agensi berkaitan yang diterbitkan dalam tempoh lima tahun kebelakang. Data yang dipilih tertumpu kepada industri minyak kelapa sawit, sekuriti makanan dan pembangunan mampan di Lahad Datu serta konteks Sabah dan Malaysia secara umum. Data sekunder ini dapat dilihat melalui Jadual 1 dibawah.

Jadual 1: Data Sekunder

	Rujukan	Platform	Perkara
I.	Artikel Jurnal	● ELSEVIER	● Sorotan
II.	E-Book	● Google Scholar	● Literatur
III.	Laman rasmi agensi	● E-Publication Library UMS	● Data dan maklumat mengenai pertanian dan hutan di Lahad Datu
		● Kementerian Perlindungan dan Komoditi	● Maklumat mengenai pembangunan mampan
I.	Buku	● Perpustakaan UMS	● Profail Lahad Datu
II.	T		
III.	Profail Lahad Datu	● Jabatan Pertanian Lahad Datu	● Data dan maklumat mengenai sekuriti makanan

Sumber: Pengkaji, 2024

Jadual 1 merupakan data sekunder yang digunakan. Bahan rujukan perpustakaan didapati dari platform seperti google scholar, ELSEVIER, dan *e-publications* dari perpustakaan Universiti Malaysia Sabah dan Jabatan Pertanian Sabah. Kata kunci carian bagi jurnal/artikel, e-book dan tesis adalah “*Theory and practice of food security, Agriculture and Food Security, Impact of Palm Oil Industry towards Food Security in Lahad Datu, Sabah*”. Data dan maklumat lain didapati di perpustakaan UMS dan laman sesawang berita.

Kaedah analisis data

Sumber sekunder dalam kajian ini dianalisis menggunakan analisis dokumen bagi meneliti maklumat yang diperoleh daripada dokumen bertulis seperti laporan rasmi agensi seperti Pejabat Pertanian Lahad Datu, buku dan artikel jurnal. Proses analisis dokumen dijalankan secara sistematik melalui beberapa peringkat. Pertama, dokumen yang relevan dipilih berdasarkan objektif kajian, kebolehpercayaan sumber dan tempoh masa penerbitan. Kedua, dokumen diasingkan untuk mengenal pasti maklumat penting berkaitan industri minyak kelapa sawit, sekuriti makanan dan pembangunan mampan. Ketiga, mengklasifikasikan data mengikut tema. Akhir sekali, dapatan dianalisis dan ditafsirkan selaras dengan objektif kajian bagi mengenal pasti hubungan industri minyak kelapa sawit dan dinamika sekuriti makanan dan pembangunan mampan di Lahad Datu, Sabah.

Konsep

Melalui World Food Summit 1996, sekuriti makanan ditakrifkan wujud apabila semua individu pada setiap masa mempunyai akses fizikal, sosial dan ekonomi kepada makanan yang mencukupi, selamat dan berkhasiat yang memenuhi keperluan diet dan keutamaan makanan mereka untuk kehidupan yang aktif dan sihat (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO, 2023). Dimensi sekuriti makanan terdiri daripada:

- I. Ketersediaan: Dimensi ini merujuk sama ada makanan berpotensi hadir secara fizikal atau tidak, termasuk aspek jumlah, kualiti dan kepelbagaian ketersediaan makanan.
- II. Akses: Merujuk kepada keupayaan individu dan isi rumah untuk mendapatkan makanan melalui pembelian, pengeluaran dan lain-lain.
- III. Penggunaan: Adakah isi rumah memaksimumkan penggunaan nutrisi dan tenaga yang mencukupi atau tidak.
- IV. Kestabilan: Untuk kestabilan makanan, isi rumah atau individu mesti mempunyai akses kepada makanan yang mencukupi pada setiap masa. Dimensi ini akan terjamin bergantung dengan dimensi ketersediaan dan akses sekuriti makanan.

Sektor pertanian merupakan elemen yang penting bagi menjamin dimensi ketersediaan sekuriti makanan. Maka itu, penglibatan dan pengembangan sektor pertanian amat penting bagi memastikan kestabilan sekuriti makanan sama ada di peringkat negara mahupun di kawasan luar bandar.

DAPATAN KAJIAN

Pertanian di Lahad Datu

Perkembangan sektor pertanian di Malaysia dipengaruhi pada zaman penjajahan British dan tanaman komoditi yang diberi tumpuan pada ketika itu ialah kelapa sawit, getah dan koko. Tumpuan yang diberikan terhadap tanaman komoditi ini mempengaruhi dasar pertanian yang

sedia ada sehingga ke hari ini. Menurut Donysius (2025), kelapa sawit telah diperkenalkan di Tanah Melayu sebagai tumbuhan hiasan sebelum tahun 1875 dan penanaman secara komersial bermula pada tahun 1917 di Selangor. Pengembangan penanaman kelapa sawit secara besar-besaran merupakan sebahagian daripada strategi kerajaan bagi mengurangkan kebergantungan kepada getah dan kayu dan Lembaga Kemajuan Tanah Persekutuan (FELDA) dan syarikat-syarikat ladang menjadi aktor penting bagi memacu pengembangan ini (Donysius, 2025).

Pertanian telah dijadikan sebagai salah satu medium bagi membasmi kemiskinan di Malaysia terutamanya di kawasan luar bandar. Salah satu inisiatif yang telah dirancang oleh kerajaan adalah melalui penubuhan Lembaga Kemajuan Tanah Persekutuan (FELDA). FELDA telah ditubuhkan pada 1 Julai 1956 di bawah Ordinan Kemajuan Tanah 1956 (Akta 474) untuk pembangunan tanah dan penempatan semula (dibawah *GSA-Group Settlement Areas*-Akta 530) dengan objektif pembasmian kemiskinan melalui penanaman tanaman minyak sawit dan getah (FELDA). Fungsi FELDA adalah untuk melaksanakan projek-projek pembangunan tanah dan aktiviti pertanian, perindustrian dan komersial sosial ekonomi (FELDA). Penanaman kelapa sawit dibawah pengurusan FELDA yang terbesar di Sabah adalah di Lahad Datu dengan keluasan sebanyak 89776.5 hektar (ha) (Jabatan Pertanian Lahad Datu, 2024).

Kawasan bandar Lahad Datu dan laluan menuju ke Tungku didapati sesuai bagi penanaman kelapa sawit, buah-buahan dan padi (Mohamad Ikhrum Mohamad Ridzuan & Amrullah Maraining, 2025). Maka tidak hairanlah apabila keluasan penanaman kelapa sawit di Lahad Datu sebanyak 280, 606.31 ha pada 2023 (Pejabat Pertanian Lahad Datu, 2024). Pengembangan industri ini turut disokong dengan penubuhan *Palm Oil Industrial Cluster* (POIC). POIC terletak berhampiran perbandaran Lahad Datu merangkumi dua fasa. Dua fasa pertama seluas 1,150 ekar memberi tumpuan kepada industri minyak sawit utama seperti kilang penapisan, loji biofuel, oleokimia, biojisim, loji baja dan industri sokongan kritikal seperti pemasangan pukal dan pelabuhan bersepadu yang terdiri daripada Terminal Pukal Kering, Terminal Pukal Cecair, Dermaga Tongkang dan Terminal Kontena manakala fasa seterusnya meliputi kira-kira 4,000 ekar, POIC Lahad Datu akan mempelbagaikan kepada kluster yang lebih luas merangkumi sektor intensif tenaga, koko, pembaikan dan pembinaan kapal, makanan, marin, perabot dan sektor jentera (POIC, t.th).

Seterusnya, pengembangan industri minyak kelapa sawit dan kehadiran POIC di daerah ini berpotensi menarik pelabur asing untuk melabur di Lahad Datu terutamanya pelabur dari China. POIC di Lahad Datu telah menjadikan daerah tersebut sebagai hab bagi industri minyak kelapa sawit dan China merupakan salah satu negara pengimport minyak sawit maka tentunya dengan penubuhan POIC, pengeksportan ke China akan menjadi lebih mudah. Apatah lagi, Malaysia dan China telah menjalin hubungan dua hala yang erat terutamanya pada era pimpinan Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad dan Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. Di bawah kepimpinan Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, kerjasama perdagangan dan pelaburan antara Malaysia dan China telah berjaya dikembangkan. Tambahan pula, China mula menjadi enjin pertumbuhan ekonomi serantau bermula pada tahun 2004 di bawah pimpinan Hu Jintao yang merupakan Presiden China ke-6 (Mohamad Ikhrum Mohamad Ridzuan et al., 2025). Keadaan ini tentunya mampu memberi impak yang positif terhadap pengembangan ekonomi Malaysia.

Selain itu, pengembangan industri ini tentunya menjadikan industri minyak kelapa sawit sebagai tunjak ekonomi utama di Lahad Datu. Namun begitu, kebergantungan yang tinggi dalam industri ini mengakibatkan industri tanaman makanan terpinggir. Dasar pertanian Malaysia yang mengutamakan komoditi industri berbanding industri tanaman makanan mengakibatkan sektor agromakanan terpinggir dan ketinggalan dari segi pertumbuhan dan

produktiviti (Faridah Suffian & Firdausi Suffian, 2021). Namun, pengeluaran beras tempatan tidak mencukupi untuk memenuhi penggunaan domestik. Pengeluaran makanan ruji yang tidak mencukupi tentunya mengakibatkan penduduk setempat memiliki ketergantungan yang tinggi terhadap bekalan makanan import. Walaupun terdapat potensi penanaman buah-buahan dan sayur-sayuran untuk pasaran bandar dan eksport tempatan, landskap pertanian di Lahad Datu jelas didominasi oleh ladang kelapa sawit.

Isu sekuriti makanan di Lahad Datu, Sabah

Dasar Kerajaan yang ingin membasmi kemiskinan di kawasan luar bandar telah membawa kepada pengembangan industri minyak kelapa sawit di Sabah terutamanya di Lahad Datu. Namun begitu, pengembangan ini telah mengubah landskap pertanian Lahad Datu terutamanya dari aspek sosioekonomi penduduk setempat dan alam sekitar. Kegiatan ekonomi yang dahulunya berlandaskan tanaman makanan seperti padi bukit dan buah-buahan, kini berubah kepada tanaman industri dan sebahagian besar kegiatan ekonomi yang dijalankan di Lahad Datu merupakan industri minyak kelapa sawit.

Guna tanah pertanian di Lahad Datu telah dimonopoli oleh tanaman kelapa sawit yang mengamalkan sistem penanaman monokultur menimbulkan persaingan antara guna tanah tanaman kelapa sawit dan tanaman makanan. Sistem penanaman monokultur ini menghadkan penanaman tanaman lain di kawasan tanaman kelapa sawit menghalang sistem penanaman secara polikultur yang membolehkan pelbagai jenis tanaman ditanam dalam kawasan penanaman yang sama. Keadaan ini berpotensi mengakibatkan produktiviti tanaman makanan tidak seimbang dan mengalami penurunan. Maka itu, permintaan yang tinggi bagi tanaman makanan namun pengeluaran yang terhad akan mempengaruhi ketersediaan dan akses pengguna terhadap bekalan makanan.

Seterusnya adalah perubahan iklim. Iklim yang tidak menentu akan memberi impak terhadap tanaman padi terutamanya di bahagian Tungku, Lahad Datu. Terdapat sebahagian kecil kawasan bagi penanaman padi bukit di bahagian Tungku dan antara kawasan tersebut adalah di Kampung Ulu Teburi. Penanaman padi bukit di kawasan ini dijalankan secara kecil-kecilan dan dilakukan untuk sara diri, dan jika ada lebih hasil tuaian, barulah dipasarkan kepada orang kampung (Nurqamarina Baharuddin et al., 2025). Kawasan penanaman tanaman makanan yang terhad mengakibatkan pengeluaran hasil tanaman padi bukit terbatas. Keadaan ini akan menyebabkan ketergantungan terhadap makanan ruji dan ketergantungan yang semakin meningkat mendorong terhadap kebimbangan akan sekuriti makanan penduduk setempat.

Selain daripada itu, perubahan iklim turut menjadi isu bagi menjamin sekuriti makanan. Fenomena ini akan membawa kepada ketidakamanan makanan jangka pendek dan jangka panjang dari segi mengurangkan tanaman, simpanan benih, perikanan dan ternakan pengeluaran, peralatan ladang yang rosak, infrastruktur dan sistem bekalan, serta menjejaskan perdagangan makanan. Situasi ini mengganggu pengeluaran dan pengedaran makanan sistem, mengakibatkan gangguan ketersediaan dan akses kepada makanan yang mencukupi dan sesuai di kawasan terjejas (Muhammad Ikhran Mud Shukri, 2023).

Pandemik COVID-19 telah turut menyebabkan ekonomi merosot dan mempengaruhi sekuriti makanan (Aryati et al., 2022). Ketergantungan terhadap bank makanan atau pengagihan makanan percuma bagi mendapatkan keperluan asas mampu mempengaruhi tahap ketersediaan dan akses mereka terhadap makanan kerana inisiatif ini hanya berkesan dalam jangka masa

yang singkat sahaja. Apatah lagi, pandemik ini telah menurunkan kuasa beli penduduk setempat menyebabkan akses terhadap bekalan makanan menjadi terhad (Atin & Lintangah, 2023). Keadaan ini tentunya telah melanggar dimensi ketersediaan, akses dan kestabilan sekuriti makanan menjadikan tahap sekuriti makanan semasa pandemik berada dalam tahap yang kritikal.

Dinamika Sekuriti makanan dan pembangunan mampan di Lahad Datu, Sabah

Industri minyak kelapa sawit memainkan peranan yang signifikan kepada dinamika sekuriti makanan dan pembangunan mampan di Lahad Datu, Sabah. Industri minyak kelapa sawit tidak dinafikan berfungsi sebagai pemangkin ekonomi, namun pada masa yang sama mencetuskan *trade-off* antara pertumbuhan ekonomi dan kelestarian sumber makanan.

Ladang kelapa sawit lazimnya ditubuhkan di kawasan luar bandar melibatkan kawasan hutan (Norhasni Zainal Abidin et al., 2023). Pembangunan industri ini telah memberi kesan kepada kepelbagaian biologi di Sabah terutamanya terhadap hutan di Sabah. Antara tahun 2002 dan 2017, penebangan hutan dan penukaran hutan untuk pengeluaran minyak sawit telah mengurangkan populasi orang utan sebanyak 30% (Donysius, 2025). Keadaan ini tentunya memberi dampak yang negatif terhadap alam sekitar.

Seterusnya adalah persaingan untuk memastikan kelangsungan hidup telah menyebabkan ramai petani beralih kepada sektor tanaman industri, seperti kelapa sawit, yang menawarkan kestabilan pasaran yang lebih baik menyebabkan landskap guna tanah pertanian berubah (Nurqamarina Baharuddin et al., 2025). Keadaan ini dilihat memberi sumbangan terhadap penduduk masyarakat yang terlibat dengan industri minyak kelapa sawit dan membuka peluang pekerjaan sekaligus mengurangkan kadar pengangguran. Namun begitu, peningkatan ini memberi kesan negatif terhadap tenaga kerja bagi tanaman makanan.

Guna tanah pertanian telah beralih dari tanaman makanan kepada tanaman kelapa sawit menyebabkan sosioekonomi penduduk berubah. Kegiatan ekonomi yang dahulunya tertumpu kepada tanaman makanan kini didominasi oleh tanaman kelapa sawit. Keadaan ini menyebabkan kawasan penanaman tanaman makanan semakin berkurang menyumbang kepada ketergantungan terhadap bekalan makanan luar dan meningkatkan import bekalan makanan seperti beras, buah-buahan, dan bekalan makanan lain.

Pendapatan penduduk setempat yang melibatkan diri dalam kegiatan ekonomi industri minyak kelapa sawit tentunya lebih tinggi berbanding tanaman makanan dan peluang pekerjaan lebih banyak apatahlagi dengan pengembangan industri ini di Lahad Datu. Namun begitu, industri ini bergantung dengan harga pasaran global dan ketidakstabilan harga akan memberi dampak kepada pekebun kecil dan terhadap syarikat yang terlibat dalam industri ini.

Risiko yang perlu ditanggung turut berlaku sekiranya terdapat kilang minyak kelapa sawit yang terpaksa ditutup, mengakibatkan pekerja terpaksa diberhentikan. Pada tahun 2019, Sabah mencatatkan kadar pengangguran sebanyak 5.8%, dengan kemasukan tenaga kerja sebanyak 70.0% (Mohd Ikbal Mohd Huda et al., 2022). Isu timbul apabila pekerja tempatan perlu bersaing dengan buruh asing dan imigran dari daerah lain. Melalui pemerhatian yang dijalankan, kawasan kebun/ladang yang kecil cenderung memilih buruh asing kerana upah yang lebih rendah.

Ekonomi tempatan pada masa lalu bergantung kepada pendatang tanpa izin dan kebimbangan berlaku bagi ladang kelapa sawit (Donysius, 2025). Banyak ladang kelapa sawit kekurangan buruh yang mengakibatkan buah tidak dituai sebanyak 20 peratus dan ditakuti bahawa buruh dari Indonesia akan semakin sukar diperoleh terutamanya apabila Indonesia turut mengalami pengembangan industri minyak kelapa sawit (Donysius, 2025). Buah yang tidak dapat dituai akan memberi kesan terhadap kuantiti hasil tanaman sekaligus menjejaskan nilai pendapatan isi rumah.

PERBINCANGAN

Lahad Datu merupakan antara pengeluar terbesar minyak kelapa sawit di Sabah. Industri ini telah menjadi tunjak ekonomi penduduk setempat melalui penciptaan peluang pekerjaan, pembangunan infrastruktur dan meningkatkan taraf kehidupan masyarakat. Kajian ini mendapati, Lahad Datu berpotensi untuk menjadi hab utama bagi industri minyak kelapa sawit di Sabah. Namun begitu, terdapat keperluan bagi penelitian yang lebih terperinci terhadap ekonomi pertanian di Lahad Datu terutamanya bagi mengimbangi tanaman industri seperti kelapa sawit dan tanaman makanan.

Kajian ini mendapati terdapat beberapa kawasan tanaman makanan yang telah diubah untuk penanaman kelapa sawit. Keadaan ini akan memberi kesan terhadap ketersediaan bekalan makanan penduduk setempat. Tambahan pula, pembangunan ladang kelapa sawit telah dikaitkan dengan isu *deforestation* sehingga timbulnya keperluan untuk memulihara biodiversiti dan mengekalkan hutan Sabah. Minyak sawit lestari telah mengamalkan rangka kerja 'Rakyat, Planet, Keuntungan' yang dikenali sebagai rangka kerja kelestarian *Triple Bottom Line* (TBL) yang memperluaskan fokus tradisional perniagaan melebihi keuntungan kewangan untuk merangkumi prestasi sosial dan alam sekitar (Donysius, 2025).

Di bawah rangka kerja TBL, kelestarian alam sekitar TBL komited kepada matlamat untuk meminimumkan kesan negatif terhadap alam sekitar dan menyumbang secara positif kepada kesihatan alam sekitar dengan mengurangkan jejak karbon, menggunakan pengurusan sisa yang bertanggungjawab, menjimatkan air dan tenaga, sumber bahan secara lestari, dan melindungi biodiversiti (Donysius, 2025). Oleh itu, kajian ini dirancang bagi meningkatkan kesedaran penduduk setempat mengenai pentingnya mengimbangi ekonomi berasaskan kelapa sawit dan tanaman makanan bagi menjamin ketersediaan dan akses terhadap makanan. Kajian ini turut penting untuk menyumbang sebagai bahan kajian akademik terhadap sekuriti makanan di Lahad Datu, Sabah.

KESIMPULAN

Sekuriti makanan menjadi isu yang kian dibangkitkan di Malaysia dan kesan jangka panjang yang berlaku akibat dari pengembangan industri kelapa sawit mengakibatkan peralihan tanah pertanian dan perubahan terhadap sosioekonomi penduduk. Pada awal pengembangan kelapa sawit, pembukaan hutan dilakukan secara tidak mampan mengakibatkan kesan jangka panjang sehingga ke hari ini. Sebahagian dari hutan di Sabah terutamanya di Lahad Datu telah dijadikan sebagai tanah pertanian bagi penanaman kelapa sawit dan sistem monokultur yang diamalkan mendominasi guna tanah pertanian yang sedia ada. Keadaan ini mengakibatkan berlakunya persaingan guna tanah antara tanaman kelapa sawit dan tanaman pertanian seperti sayur-sayuran, makanan ruji dan buah-buahan. Pengeluaran tanaman ini yang terhad mengakibatkan negara terpaksa mengimport makanan dari negara luar bagi memenuhi keperluan asas komuniti. Oleh itu, terdapat keperluan bagi melakukan kajian yang lebih holistik mengenai sekuriti

makanan di Lahad Datu terutamanya melalui pelaksanaan dasar kerajaan dan amalan pertanian mampan dalam kalangan penduduk setempat.

Data dan maklumat mengenai sekuriti makanan di Lahad Datu adalah terhad. Maka itu, data dan maklumat yang diperolehi melalui dokumen, kajian lepas dan sebagainya mungkin memiliki *bias* institusi. Oleh itu, pembacaan yang kritikal adalah penting dalam kajian kes ini.

PENGHARGAAN

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TRANSFORMASI MANIK PADA BUSANA *PINONGKOLOH* MASYARAKAT MURUT TAHOL DI SABAH

TRANSFORMATION OF PINONGKOLOH COSTUME BEADS AMONG THE MURUT TAHOL COMMUNITY IN SABAH

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ABSTRAK Busana *Pinongkoloh* merupakan pakaian tradisional dalam kalangan masyarakat Murut Tahol di Sabah yang kaya dengan nilai simbolik, spiritual dan sosial, khususnya melalui penggunaan manik sebagai unsur hiasan utama yang melambangkan identiti masyarakatnya. Pengaruh pemodenan, globalisasi dan perkembangan industri fesyen kontemporari telah membawa kepada transformasi yang ketara terhadap penggunaan manik pada busana *pinongkoloh*. Oleh itu, penyelidikan ini meneliti transformasi manik pada teknik sulaman dan motif terhadap busana *pinongkoloh*. Kaedah penyelidikan ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui pemerhatian lapangan, temu bual bersama penggiat seni dan penyulam tradisional di daerah Keningau, Tenom dan Nabawan. Dapatan penyelidikan menunjukkan bahawa transformasi yang berlaku bukan sahaja melibatkan aspek bahan manik, teknik dan reka bentuk tetapi turut memperlihatkan penyesuaian budaya masyarakat Murut Tahol terhadap nilai moden dan komersial yang masih mengekalkan nilai-nilai tradisi. Penyelidikan ini turut membincangkan kepentingan usaha pemeliharaan serta inovasi dalam seni busana etnik agar warisan *pinongkoloh* terus lestari dan relevan dalam kalangan masyarakat masa kini.

Kata Kunci: Transformasi, Manik, *Pinangkoloh*, Murut Tahol, Sabah

ABSTRACT The *Pinongkoloh* attire represents the traditional costume of the Murut Tahol community in Sabah, rich in symbolic, spiritual, and social values, the particularly through the use of beads as the main decorative element that represent the ethnic identity of the Murut Tahol community. The Influences of modernization, globalization, and the development of the contemporary fashion industry have led to significant transformation in the use of beads in *pinongkoloh* attire. Therefore, this study examines the transformation of beadwork techniques and motifs in the *pinongkoloh* costume. This research employs a qualitative approach through field observations and interviews with artisans and traditional embroiderers in the districts of Keningau, Tenom and Nabawan. The findings indicate that the cultural adaptation of the Murut tahol community to modern and commercial values while maintaining traditional elements. This study also discusses the importance of preservation and innovation efforts in ethnic

costume art to ensure that the pinongkoloh heritage remains sustainable and relevant within contemporary society.

Keywords: Transformation; Beadwork; Pinongkoloh; Murut Tahol; Sabah

PENDAHULUAN

Busana tradisonal merupakan salah satu identiti etnik serta lambang kesinambungan warisan budaya sesebuah masyarakat. Melalui busana, nilai-nilai sejarah, simbol dan kepercayaan sesuatu komuniti dapat diterjemahkan dalam bentuk visual dan tekstil yang berfungsi sebagai medium komunikasi budaya (Ahmad Safril, 2019). Busana *pinongkoloh* memiliki kedudukan istimewa kerana bukan sekadar pakaian yang dipakai dalam majlis adat atau perayaan tetapi turut berperanan sebagai simbol status sosial, keindahan estetik dan kehalusan seni sulaman yang diwarisi secara turun-temurun (Majlis Kebudayaan Negeri Sabah, 2020).

Salah satu elemen penting yang memperlihatkan keunikan *pinongkoloh* ialah penggunaan manik sebagai hiasan utama. Hiasan manik ini bukan sahaja memperindah busana, malah mengandungi makna simbolik dan hubungan masyarakat Murut Tahol dengan alam sekitarnya (Humin et al., 2015). Pada masa kini, kebanyakan objek budaya tradisi mengalami transformasi termasuklah budaya dan cara kehidupan. Hanafi (2007) menyatakan perubahan adalah selaras dengan nilai-nilai budaya sendiri walaupun diolah semula, tetapi konsep, idea dan fungsi-fungsi tidak bercanggah daripada nilai-nilai budaya mereka. Dengan itu, penyelidikan ini meneliti proses transformasi dan perubahan yang berlaku dapat mempengaruhi nilai budaya serta identiti busana tradisonal masyarakat Murut Tahol di Sabah.

SOROTAN LITERATUR

Pelbagai penyelidikan lepas telah menekankan kepentingan busana tradisonal sebagai simbol identiti dan warisan budaya yang mencerminkan nilai, kepercayaan, serta sistem sosial masyarakat asal (Humin, et al., 2015). Menurut Ahmad Safril (2019), busana etnik bukan sekadar pakaian tetapi fungsi sebagai medium komunikasi budaya yang memperlihatkan struktur sosial dan status pemakaiannya. Setiap kumpulan etnik yang terdapat di Sabah mempunyai gaya busana yang tersendiri, termasuk penggunaan hiasan manik sebagai elemen utama yang memperkaya estetika dan simbol pakaian tradisonal.

Penyelidikan oleh Majlis Kebudayaan Negeri Sabah (2020) menegaskan bahawa seni manik dalam busana tradisonal berperanan sebagai alat ekspresi identiti dan lambang keindahan seni wanita pribumi. Manik tidak hanya dianggap sebagai bahan hiasan, tetapi juga turut membawa makna simbolik yang berkaitan dengan kepercayaan spiritual sosial, kematangan wanita, serta peranan mereka dalam komuniti Murut Tahol. Humin et al. (2015) menyatakan yang menyatakan bahawa seni hiasan tekstil etnik Sabah mengandungi sistem simbol yang kompleks dan diwarisi secara turun-temurun melalui amalan lisan dan pembelajaran tidak formal.

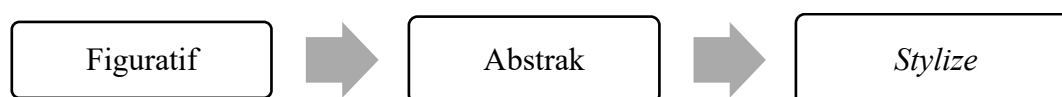
Pada masa kini, pengaruh globalisasi dan modenisasi telah mengubah seni reka bentuk, teknik sulaman dan motif pada busana tradisonal masyarakat Murut Tahol. Kini pelbagai hasil kraf yang menyerap budaya asing atau budaya luar dalam pembuatan kraf untuk membuat perubahan dan menambahkan tarikan kepada pelancong dan pembeli. Ahmad Safril (2011) menyatakan bahawa budaya lokal memberi tindak balas terhadap budaya asing yang dibawa

oleh globalisasi. Hal ini demikian turut dialami oleh masyarakat Murut Tahol apabila busana *pinongkoloh* mula diadaptasi ke dalam bentuk moden seperti gaun, blaus dan kostum persembahan kebudayaan (Humin et.al, 2015). Walaupun transformasi ini memperlihatkan inovasi kreatif dalam mengekalkan warisan, hal ini juga menimbulkan persoalan tentang keaslian dan nilai simbolik busana tradisional tersebut.

Transformasi dalam seni busana perlu dilihat sebagai proses dinamik yang menggabungkan unsur tradisi dan moden. Perubahan bukan sahaja dari bentuk kehilangan nilai budaya, tetapi juga strategi adaptasi masyarakat tempatan terhadap perkembangan industri kreatif dan permintaan pasaran (Rahman, 2022; Linggi, 2017). Dalam konteks ini, seni manik *pinongkoloh* menjadi bukti masyarakat Murut Tahol menyesuaikan diri dengan perubahan zaman tanpa menghapuskan akar tradisi mereka. Secara keseluruhannya, penyelidikan terdahulu menunjukkan bahawa transformasi busana tradisional termasuk *pinongkoloh* adalah hasil antara faktor budaya, ekonomi dan sosial. Walaupun terdapat perubahan dari segi bahan dan reka bentuk, nilai simbolik dan identiti etnik masih terpelihara dan bentuk baharu. Namun terdapat kekurangan penyelidikan yang meneliti secara khusus perubahan untuk mengisi jurang tersebut dengan memberi tumpuan kepada aspek transformasi, simboli dan kesinambungan budaya dalam seni manik busana tradisional Murut Tahol di Sabah.

METODOLOGI

Penyelidikan ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif bagi memahami secara mendalam proses transformasi manik yang pada busana *pinongkoloh* masyarakat Murut Tahol di Sabah. Data diperoleh melalui temu bual bersama penyulam busana, penggiat budaya dan informan masyarakat tempatan serta pemerhatian lapangan terhadap proses pembuatan dan penggunaan *pinongkoloh*. Pendekatan ini membolehkan penyelidik meneliti transformasi dari segi aspek bahan, teknik, corak dan makna simbolik yang terkandung dalam seni hiasan busana tersebut. Lokasi utama penyelidikan adalah di daerah Keningau, Nabawan dan Tenom yang merupakan penempatan masyarakat Murut Tahol yang masih aktif dalam pembuatan dan pemakaian busana *pinongkoloh*.



Rajah 1: Proses Perubahan Manik

Rajah 1 menunjukkan teori bagi proses perubahan manik busana yang diadaptasi daripada Widiyanto (2020). Teori ini digunakan untuk menganalisis proses perubahan manik *pinongkoloh* masyarakat Murut Tahol yang merangkumi tiga tahap utama, iaitu figuratif, abstrak dan stail (*stylize*) yang menggambarkan proses perubahan kreatif dalam penghasilan busana *pinongkoloh*.

DAPATAN KAJIAN

Latar Belakang Busana *Pinongkoloh*

Busana *pinongkoloh* secara tradisional diperbuat daripada kain kapas hitam dan dihiasi pelbagai manik yang membentuk motif-motif menarik. Busana ini dipakai oleh wanita Murut Tahol dalam majlis-majlis rasmi seperti perkahwinan, upacara adat seperti sambutan pesta Kaamatan dan Pesta Kalimaran. Hiasan manik pada busana ini disulam menggunakan tangan

secara manual yang memerlukan ketelitian. Corak dan motif yang digunakan pada busana ini adalah gabungan corak geometri, motif flora dan fauna. Bahan manik yang digunakan adalah bahan semula jadi seperti batu halus, kulit siput, biji benih hutan dan tulang-tulang kecil haiwan untuk menghiasi busana *pinongkoloh*. Namun pada masa kini, telah wujud manik yang berwarna-warni diperbuat daripada getah disulam pada busana *pinongkoloh*. Busana *pinongkoloh* kini mempunyai tarikan yang lebih unik dari segi penggunaan warna dan ragam hias yang lebih kompleks menghiasi busana.



Rajah 2: Busana *Pinongkoloh*
Sumber: Koleksi Penyelidik

Rajah 2 merupakan busana *pinongkoloh* masyarakat Murut Tahol yang lengkap dengan aksesori. Busana paras atas dikenali sebagai *babaru linantian* yang direka tanpa lengan dan berwarna hitam serta dihiasi dengan sulaman manik berwarna-warni. *Babaru linantian* dipadankan dengan sarong panjang yang dikenali sebagai *tapi linantian*, berwarna hitam dan dihiasi manik-manik yang disulam menjadi motif dan corak. Motif dan corak manik yang bertemakan flora dan fauna telah disusun secara simetri, dengan memperlihatkan ketelitian dan kreativiti penyulam busana.

Transformasi manik telah berlaku selaras dengan perkembangan zaman teknologi. Busana *pinongkoloh* telah mengalami transformasi melalui tiga aspek iaitu, transformasi bahan manik, transformasi warna manik dan transformasi reka bentuk sulaman manik. Melalui tiga aspek transformasi manik, penyelidikan ini mendapati transformasi manik mempengaruhi dalam penghasilan busana *pinongkoloh* kontemporari.

Transformasi Bahan Manik

Pemakaian busana *pinongkoloh* tidak lagi terhad kepada majlis adat semata-mata, tetapi juga turut diadaptasi dalam pertunjukan fesyen, kostum tarian dan produk pelancongan. Pereka muda Murut Tahol juga mula memperkenalkan reka bentuk kotemporari yang mengekalkan elemen manik tradisional tetapi dalam potongan moden seperti gaun, kemeja atau aksesori. Transformasi ini membuktikan bahawa warisan budaya mampu berkembang selaras dengan arus semasa tanpa kehilangan identiti asalnya.



Rajah 3 :Transformasi Bahan Manik Bungkas
Sumber: Kajian Kerja Lapangan Penyelidik tahun 2024

Rajah 3 adalah transformasi bahan manik *bungkas* iaitu salah satu aksesori busana *pinongkoloh* yang dipakai pada bahagian pinggang. Pembangunan teknologi kini yang semakin canggih turut menyumbang dalam transformasi motif-motif *pinongkoloh* dengan pengeluaran manik-manik yang pelbagai jenis. Manik-manik kini semakin diperbaharui dengan peningkatan teknologi dalam bidang kraf tangan. Transformasi manik yang semakin moden telah mempengaruhi corak dan motif busana. Menurut penggiat kraf dan penyulam busana, penggunaan manik moden membolehkan proses pembuatan *pinongkoloh* dilakukan dengan lebih cepat dan menjimatkan kos, terutamanya bagi tujuan persembahan kebudayaan atau jualan cenderamata. Terdapat juga penyulam yang masih mengekalkan penggunaan manik kaca asli sebagai tanda keaslian dan nilai warisan. Perubahan bahan bukanlah kehilangan nilai tradisi tetapi suatu bentuk adaptasi budaya terhadap keperluan semasa (Rahman, 2022).

Transformasi Warna Manik

Dahulu manik diperbuat daripada bahan semula jadi seperti batu, tulang, kulit siput dan biji benih hutan yang diperolehi secara tempatan. Namun kini, penggunaan bahan tersebut semakin berkurangan dan diganti dengan manik kaca dan plastik berwarna yang lebih ringan dan mudah didapati di pasaran.



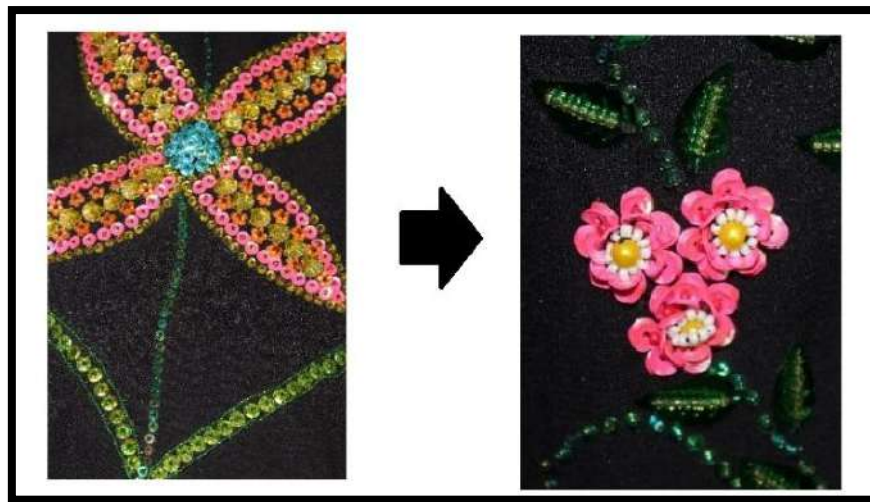
Rajah 4: Jenis dan Warna-warni Manik Moden
Sumber: Koleksi Penyelidik

Rajah 4 menunjukkan kepelbagaian jenis manik masa kini. Manik-manik kini mempunyai pelbagai warna baharu dan yang lebih menarik. Hal ini telah mendorong penyulam untuk menyulam motif-motif moden dan menambahkan tarikan pada *pinongkoloh*. Warna-warna manik dominan pada masa dahulu adalah sangat terhad kerana hanya menggunakan warna asas seperti warna merah, putih dan hitam. Hal ini telah menyebabkan kreativiti para penyulam sangat terbatasi. Disebabkan itu, motif-motif yang terdapat pada busana *pinongkoloh* juga adalah terhad. Motif-motif yang dibentuk semuanya hanya berbentuk simbol dan geometri. Namun, kehadiran pengaruh daripada rekaan fesyen kontemporari dan kemasukan bahan import, maka reka bentuk *pinongkoloh* kini lebih bersifat moden memperlihatkan penggunaan warna yang lebih pelbagai seperti biru, hijau, kuning, *neon*, merah jambu (pink) dan emas.

Transformasi ini turut memberi kesan kepada identiti visual busana *pinongkoloh*, yang kini lebih cerah dan menarik perhatian khalayak muda. Namun, penggiat budaya tetap memastikan susunan warna utama tradisional tidak dihapuskan agar nilai warisan masih dapat dirasai dalam versi baharu.

Transformasi Reka Bentuk Sulaman Manik

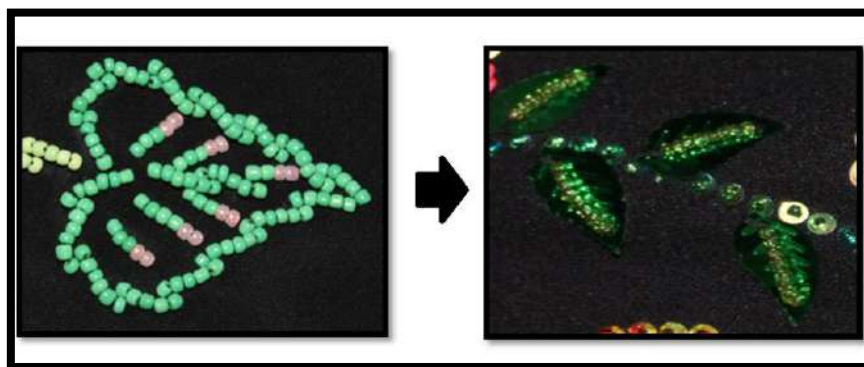
Transformasi yang berlaku terhadap reka bentuk manik yang lebih pelbagai turut mempengaruhi para penyulam untuk mendapatkan teknik sulaman yang baharu. Teknik sulaman yang baharu telah membentuk reka bentuk sulaman motif-motif yang baharu dan bersifat moden. Transformasi reka bentuk manik-manik telah memberikan kelebihan kepada para penyulam iaitu mengaplikasikan teknik sulaman yang baharu dan lebih menarik. Para penyulam telah memilih untuk menggunakan jalan yang mudah untuk menghasilkan sesuatu motif dengan menggunakan manik yang mempunyai bentuk motif sedia ada seperti yang ditunjukkan dalam Rajah 5 di bawah.



Rajah 5: Transformasi Manik dan Motif *Vusak* (Bunga)
Sumber: Koleksi Penyelidik

Motif yang terdapat pada Rajah 5 dikenali sebagai motif *vusak* yang telah melalui proses transformasi. Pada masa kini, para penyulam dan pemakai busana lebih gemar terhadap motif yang berbentuk 3D. Perkembangan jenis-jenis manik yang pelbagai menyumbang kepada perkembangan kreativiti untuk menghasilkan motif yang berbentuk 3D. Teknik sulaman juga berkembang dengan adanya kepelbagaian jenis manik yang dapat menghasilkan teknik sulaman yang baharu. Pilihan manik yang 3D dan pelbagai warna dapat memudahkan para penyulam untuk menghasilkan busana *pinongkoloh* dengan lebih menarik.

Melalui transformasi motif yang berlaku terhadap motif *vusak*, kini terdapat pelbagai jenis motif *vusak* yang ada. Motif ini juga menggunakan pelbagai figura bunga yang ada untuk dimasukkan dalam sulaman busana *pinongkoloh*. Manik yang pelbagai pilihan memudahkan para penyulam untuk menghasilkan pelbagai jenis motif yang dikehendaki. Dari segi figura adalah proses pertama transformasi motif busana *pinongkoloh*, seterusnya berkembang ke bentuk abstrak iaitu corak dan motif dibentuk kepada bentuk simbol. Proses yang ketiga iaitu proses *stylize* iaitu corak dan motif dikontemporarikan kepada bentuk yang lebih kreatif dan bersifat *stylize* mengikut transformasi manik yang mempengaruhi pembentukan corak dan motif busana.



Rajah 6: Transformasi Manik dan Pembentukan Motif *Raun* (Daun)
Sumber: Koleksi Penyelidik

Rajah 6 merupakan proses transformasi motif *raun* (daun yang disulam pada busana *pinongkoloh*). Proses transformasi motif dapat dilihat melalui pembentukan motif *raun* yang pada mulanya adalah berbentuk figura daun. Bagi menghasilkan satu motif daun pada mulanya, para penyulam akan menyulam setiap corak dengan menggunakan manik kecil yang banyak untuk menghasilkan satu corak dan motif daun. Seterusnya berkembang ke bentuk abstrak iaitu bentuk motif yang berbentuk daun. Perkembangan kepelbagaian jenis manik masa kini telah menyebabkan para penyulam menggunakan manik yang sudah mempunyai bentuk atau corak yang dikehendaki. Oleh itu, dengan adanya manik yang mempunyai corak sedia ada telah membantu menjimatkan masa dalam menghasilkan sulaman manik pada busana. Ini adalah proses transformasi *stylize* iaitu penyulam bebas untuk memberi sentuhan baharu terhadap pembentukan corak dan motif busana *pinongkoloh* kontemporari.

Medium Kelestarian Transformasi Warisan *Pinongkoloh*

Transformasi yang berlaku terhadap manik busana *pinongkoloh* dalam masyarakat Murut Tahol tidak memberi kesan kepada kehilangan identiti budaya, sebaliknya mencerminkan proses adaptasi visual dinamik. Masyarakat Murut Tahol perlu menyesuaikan simbol dan motif tradisional ke dalam bentuk baharu yang selaras dengan medium, teknik dan kehendak zaman moden. Proses ini memperlihatkan elemen budaya mampu disesuaikan tanpa menghapuskan makna asal yang tersirat dalam seni busana tradisional. Konsep *stylization* menjelaskan bentuk adaptasi ini sebagai usaha mengekalkan makna budaya melalui transformasi bentuk dan gaya yang diperkuat oleh estetika kontemporari. Menurut Schapiro (1994), *stylization* ialah strategi visual yang membolehkan unsur tradisional kekal dikenali walaupun perubahan formal. Hal ini turut disokong oleh Khan dan Alghamdi (2019) serta Widiyanto (2020) yang menegaskan bahawa penyesuaian gaya merupakan kaedah penyampaian semula simbol budaya agar kekal relevan dalam konteks estetik moden.

Proses transformasi busana *pinongkoloh* turut dipengaruhi oleh faktor pertembungan budaya dan komodifikasi moden. Interaksi antara masyarakat Murut Tahol dan pengaruh luar melalui pelancongan, pameran seni serta festival kebudayaan telah mendorong kepada penyesuaian gaya dan bentuk yang lebih menarik serta universal. Kini, *pinongkoloh* bukan sahaja dipakai dalam upacara tradisional tetapi juga diperagakan dalam festival kebudayaan, acara pelancongan dan pertunjukan fesyen kontemporari. Keadaan ini menuntut transformasi visual agar busana tersebut tampil lebih segar dan berdaya saing tanpa menjejaskan nilai asalnya sebagai lambang identiti etnik. Namun, transformasi budaya perlu dilakukan secara seimbang dan beretika. Jika inovasi dilakukan tanpa pemahaman mendalam terhadap nilai dan simbolik tradisi, risiko penghakisan makna budaya tidak dapat dielakkan. Oleh itu, setiap bentuk inovasi busana tradisional perlu pengetahuan budaya dan usaha pemeliharaan nilai yang asal agar busana *pinongkoloh* terus menjadi identiti masyarakat Murut Tahol. Kesedaran ini penting bagi memastikan warisan busana tidak sekadar menjadi produk komersial tetapi kekal sebagai identiti masyarakat Murut Tahol.

KESIMPULAN

Secara keseluruhan, perubahan manik busana *pinongkoloh* memperlihatkan proses dinamik dan berterusan. Terdapat tiga proses transformasi yang ketara terhadap manik iaitu transformasi bahan manik, transformasi warna manik dan transformasi reka bentuk sulaman manik. Transformasi yang berlaku dapat mencerminkan keupayaan masyarakat Murut Tahol mengekalkan warisan seni hiasan sambil menyesuainya dengan perkembangan masa kini.

Transformasi ini tidak menghapuskan nilai tradisi, sebaliknya memperkuat kesinambungan budaya melalui inovasi dan kreativiti yang selaras dengan arus globalisasi.

PENGHARGAAN

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CLEAN WATER SOURCES AND LIVELIHOOD ASSETS IN THE INDUSTRIAL AREA OF BERGAS DISTRICT, SEMARANG REGENCY, CENTRAL JAVA PROVINCE, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT Water is a vital need for everyone, while its availability is very limited and access gaps still exist. The purpose of this study is to analyze household clean water sources in industrial areas and to assess household livelihood assets. This study used a survey method with 42 respondents selected purposively, namely households living and working in the industrial area of Karangjati Village, Bergas District. The research variables are household clean water sources and household livelihood assets. Data were collected through questionnaires, observations, and supported by in-depth interviews with several key figures. Data analysis was conducted quantitatively using descriptive statistics and with the asset pentagon. The results show that most households use clean water from the Regional Water Company (PDAM) and drilled wells. Household livelihood assets are classified as fairly sustainable. The results of the study support the sustainable development goals, in goal 6 indicator 6.1.

Keywords: Clean Water Sources, Households, Livelihood Assets, Industrial Areas, Sustainable Development Goals.

INTRODUCTION

Water is a basic necessity that is vital to human life. Every individual requires clean water for various basic needs such as consumption, sanitation, hygiene, and daily domestic activities. Not only is clean water essential for survival, but the availability of clean water is also a crucial indicator in measuring the quality of life and sustainable development of a region. However, amidst population growth, urbanization, and industrial expansion, the challenges of ensuring clean water availability are increasingly complex. The availability of safe and adequate water is not always equally accessible to all levels of society, especially in areas experiencing high environmental pressure. In various regions, including those adjacent to industrial centers, significant disparities in access to clean water persist. This activity assumes that the more complex human and industrial activities are, the greater the level of pollution that occurs, thus impacting aquatic ecosystems, sanitation quality, and the availability of safe drinking water for humans (Kustanto, 2020).

Industrial areas in particular face greater challenges in providing clean water. Intensive industrial activity not only drastically increases water consumption but also has the potential to pollute surface and groundwater resources due to production waste and chemical use. This has resulted in a decline in water quality in the surrounding area and poses health risks to communities relying on local water sources. This situation forces households near industrial areas to seek alternative sources such as dug wells, drilled wells, rainwater harvesting, or even bottled water. However, these options do not necessarily guarantee water quality that meets health standards. A study by Suryani and Prasetyo (2021) in the Gresik industrial area revealed that despite the availability of a PDAM network, most households still choose to use water from wells due to affordability and limited service distribution.

The issue of clean water access in industrial areas cannot be separated from the context of community livelihoods as a whole. One relevant approach to analyzing this is the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) developed by Chambers and Conway (1992) and Scoones (1998). Within this framework, household livelihoods are understood as the result of the interaction of five types of assets: human, natural, physical, financial, and social. Access to clean water is a direct reflection of the condition of a household's physical and natural assets. It is also influenced by the strength of financial assets to pay for services, social assets to secure community support, and human capacity to manage water resources independently. Therefore, clean water issues need to be viewed not only from a purely technical perspective but also from the perspective of integrated community livelihood sustainability.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the types of clean water sources used by households in industrial areas and examine the condition of household livelihood assets related to access to clean water.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Clean Water Sources

Household clean water sources are a crucial factor in supporting public health and quality of life. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2017), clean water is water used for daily household needs such as drinking, cooking, and maintaining hygiene. It must be free from contaminants that could endanger health. This aligns with the opinion of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia in Regulation No. Law No. 492 of 2010 states that clean water must meet physical, chemical, microbiological, and radioactive requirements to be safe for consumption (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2010). Some of the main sources of clean water for households include dug wells, drilled wells, tap water or PDAM (Regional Water Company), bottled water, rainwater, and springs.

Statistics Indonesia (BPS) research (2023–2024) shows that in Indonesia, the main source of drinking water for households varies between urban and rural areas (BPS, 2024). In urban areas, households rely more on tap water and bottled water, while in rural areas, many still use wells or springs. Meanwhile, according to (Harianja, Sipayung, Purba, & Abdilla, 2022), the quality of drinking water from refill depots is greatly influenced by poorly maintained equipment and inadequate sanitation conditions, which have a high risk of contamination by *Escherichia coli*, thus emphasizing the importance of maintenance and hygiene to ensure water quality.

Livelihood Assets

Livelihood assets are a key concept in the study of sustainable development and community welfare. According to Chambers and Conway (1992), livelihoods can be understood as the capabilities, assets, and activities a person needs to live. Within the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) developed by the Department for International Development (1999), livelihood assets consist of five main assets: human capital, social capital, natural capital, physical capital, and financial capital. These five assets are interconnected and serve as the foundation for households and communities to meet their living needs and improve their well-being. Scoones (1998) emphasized that the success of a community's livelihood strategy depends heavily on the combination of assets held and how these assets are managed to address vulnerabilities and capitalize on opportunities. Meanwhile Ellis (2000) argued that asset diversity enables households to develop better adaptive strategies in the face of social, economic, and environmental change. Thus, livelihood assets are not merely the ownership of resources, but also represent a community's ability to effectively utilize and manage these resources so they can strengthen their resilience, adapt, to changing conditions, and achieve sustainable livelihoods.

Clean water sources are closely linked to community livelihood assets because water is a basic need that supports household survival and productivity. According to Chambers and Conway (1992), livelihoods depend not only on financial or physical assets but also on the ability to manage natural resources, including water, which is a key asset in the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (Department for International Development, 1999). Clean water, as part of natural capital, plays a direct role in supporting health (human capital), strengthening labour productivity, and enabling communities to access economic opportunities. Scoones (1998) emphasized that the sustainability of livelihood strategies is strongly influenced by the availability and quality of natural resources. Therefore, limited access to clean water will reduce a community's capacity to manage other assets, such as social, physical, and financial assets. Ellis (2000) also emphasized that diversification of livelihood assets, including the use of water resources, provides opportunities for better adaptation to economic and environmental risks. Thus, the availability of clean water sources not only serves to fulfil basic needs, but also serves as an important support for the sustainability of livelihood assets, both through improving health, economic productivity, and social resilience of the community.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted in Karangjati Village, Bergas District, Semarang Regency, Indonesia. This research was conducted in Karangjati Village because it is one of the areas in Bergas District with a high concentration of industry, particularly along the Semarang-Solo route. The presence of factories and industrial areas near residential areas puts pressure on clean water resources. The population in this study was all households living in Karangjati Village, Bergas District, Semarang Regency. The sample consisted of 42 household respondents, selected purposively from the population in Karangjati Village, Bergas District. The purposive sampling technique was used, considering certain criteria: households living in areas adjacent to industrial areas and using clean water sources for daily needs.

The main variables in this study consisted of two aspects: the type of clean water source used by the household and household livelihood assets, which encompass the five types of assets within the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (human, natural, physical, financial, and

social assets). Data collection was conducted using several techniques: distributing closed-ended questionnaires to obtain quantitative data, field observations to assess the physical and environmental conditions of respondents' homes, and in-depth interviews with key figures such as neighbourhood heads, community leaders, and representatives from clean water management agencies to enrich the data and gain contextual perspectives.

Prior to analysis, the questionnaire data underwent a data refinement process, including validity and reliability tests to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the measurement instruments. Construct validity was tested using Pearson's product-moment correlation to assess whether each item measured the intended concept, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with coefficients above 0.70 considered acceptable for internal consistency. The questionnaire employed a Likert scale, explicitly ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to measure respondents' perceptions of their asset ownership levels. This scale allowed for the quantification of subjective judgments related to the five livelihood asset dimensions.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to present frequencies, proportions, and mean scores for the types of clean water sources used and the levels of ownership across each livelihood asset category. In addition, the analysis utilized the asset pentagon approach, which visually and numerically illustrates the relative strength of the five livelihood asset types, enabling the identification of the most and least dominant dimensions among households.

Meanwhile, the responses obtained from in-depth interviews were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive analytical approach. This included coding, categorization, and thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, contextual explanations, and community-level dynamics related to clean water challenges and livelihood conditions. The qualitative findings were then compared with quantitative results to achieve a more comprehensive interpretation of household livelihood conditions in industrial-area communities and their relationship to access to clean water sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Household Clean Water Sources

Water sources in the Bergas District industrial area come from various sources, such as PDAM (Regional Water Company), drilled wells, and dug wells, which are utilized to meet both industrial operational needs and the domestic needs of the surrounding population. This utilization pattern reflects the geographic conditions and available infrastructure in the area. The results obtained from the average use of clean water sources in Karangjati Village are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Clean water sources in Karangjati Village, Bergas District

Clean Water Source	Total	
	n	%
PDAM Water	25	59,52
Drilled Well With Filtration System	17	40,48
Total	42	100

Source: Processed data, 2025

In Karangjati Village, the primary source of clean water for households is divided into two: 59.52% use the Regional Water Company (PDAM) and 40.48% rely on drilled wells with filtration systems. The absence of rainwater or dug wells indicates that the community has chosen water sources that are relatively safer and of guaranteed quality. This composition indicates that local residents rely more heavily on the piped water network managed by the PDAM, as it is considered more practical, offers guaranteed quality, and offers relatively stable distribution compared to non-piped water sources. No use of rainwater or dug wells was found in this area. This can be interpreted as a shift in community preference toward more modern and safer sources of clean water. Dug wells, which are generally susceptible to bacterial contamination and domestic waste, are no longer preferred, while rainwater utilization is also not an alternative, likely due to limited storage facilities and a lack of continuity of supply throughout the year. The results of this study align with Chambers and Conway's (1992) findings, which state that access to adequate natural resources, including water, is a crucial livelihood asset for communities. The use of PDAM by the majority of households reflects the availability of clean water infrastructure. This aligns with the findings of the Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2024), which show that access to safe drinking water in urban areas in Indonesia continues to increase, with PDAM being one of the primary providers.

The relatively high proportion of drilled wells indicates limited PDAM coverage or a preference among communities for drilled wells as a more stable and economical alternative. These findings suggest that drilled wells can be a viable water source if equipped with an adequate filtration system. The results of this study align with those of Putra & Mairizki (2020), who assessed groundwater quality based on physical and chemical parameters and then compared them to drinking water quality standards, including Minister of Health Regulation 492/2010. The results indicate that drilled wells or groundwater are suitable for consumption if they meet the tested parameters.

The sustainability of drilled wells requires attention. Scoones (1998) emphasized that sustainable livelihoods are significantly influenced by the quality of natural resources, including groundwater. In areas experiencing industrial growth and population density, drilled wells are prone to waste contamination and deterioration over time. This is in line with research by Nadiyah Khairunnisa (2025) who found that the distance between septic tanks and wells/groundwater sources affects the total coliform and *E. coli* content in shallow groundwater in Jakarta. This situation can be categorized as having a fairly good level of clean water access, as all households use improved water sources. However, special attention still needs to be paid to the long-term quality of drilled well water. Local governments need to expand the reach of the Regional Water Company (PDAM) and encourage well users to ensure they use filtration systems that meet health standards and conduct regular water quality tests.

Methods of Obtaining Clean Water for Households

Water sources for communities in the industrial area of Bergas District come from various methods, including using PDAM water, drawing from their own wells, drawing from public wells, and collecting rainwater. The results obtained from the average method of obtaining clean water sources in Karangjati Village are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Methods of obtaining clean water sources in Karangjati Village, Bergas District

How To Get Clean Water	Total	
	n	%
Water Pipes	25	59,52%
Water Pumps	17	40,48%
Total	42	100,00%

Source: Processed data, 2025

The primary source of clean water for households in Karangjati Village is divided into two broad categories. The majority of households, 59.52%, obtain clean water through the PDAM (Regional Water Company) pipeline, while the remaining 40.48% still rely on water pumps (drilled wells with pumping systems). No households used public wells, rainwater, or other alternative water sources such as springs or surface water. This reflects that the community generally has access to adequate water sources. Access through the PDAM provides advantages in terms of supply continuity, ease of distribution, and quality assurance because the water is managed according to certain standards. Meanwhile, households using water pumps also continue to have adequate access to clean water, especially because they are generally equipped with filtration systems to maintain water quality. According to Chambers and Conway (1992), the availability of clean water is a vital asset within the framework of sustainable livelihoods, as water not only serves basic household needs but also impacts community health, productivity, and quality of life.

The use of PDAM by the majority of households reflects the Karangjati community's connection to urban infrastructure, which is more stable in terms of quality and distribution. This aligns with the BPS Report (2023), which states that access to safe drinking water in Indonesia is increasing year by year, with PDAM as the primary provider in urban areas. However, the proportion of households still relying on private wells indicates variations in patterns of meeting clean water needs, influenced by factors such as residential location, economic conditions, and the accessibility of the PDAM network. The results of this study are in line with research (Kurniawati & Ulfa, 2024) which found that many drilled well samples did not meet several standard parameters (including pH, turbidity, color, odor, and chemical content such as Fe) indicating that the quality of water from drilled wells can vary and requires routine testing and processing. The difference in access between PDAM users and private well users in Karangjati shows that not all households receive clean water services of the same standard. According to Scoones (1998), the sustainability of community livelihoods is highly dependent on the quality and availability of natural resources, including clean water. Therefore, local governments need to ensure the expansion of PDAM services to be more equitable, while also encouraging well users to use filtration systems that meet health standards. This step can ensure sustainable access to clean water, thereby supporting public health, environmental quality, and household livelihood resilience.

Distance to Household Clean Water Sources

The distance between a household and a clean water source is a critical factor influencing the level of community access to this basic need. In Karangjati Village, the distance to household clean water sources reflects the varying levels of affordability and availability of clean water facilities used by residents. The results of the average distance to clean water sources in Karangjati Village are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Distance to Clean Water Sources in Karangjati Village, Bergas District

Distance To Get Clean Water	Total	
	n	%
Inside The House/Yard	42	100,00%
Total	42	100,00%

Source: Processed data, 2025

Households access clean water sources within their homes or yards. Forty-two households (100%) utilized water sources that were very close by, so none had to travel a distance, whether less than 100 meters, 100–500 meters, or more than 500 meters. This indicates that the community has very good access to clean water, as proximity facilitates meeting daily needs such as cooking, washing, bathing, and drinking. The WHO (2017) emphasizes that one of the main indicators of clean water access is the distance to the water source, with the availability of water within the home or yard categorized as an ideal basic service. The availability of clean water sources near the home also has important social implications. According to Cairncross and Feachem (1993), close access to clean water can reduce the time and labour burden on households, especially for women and children, who in many areas still play the primary role in fetching water. This finding is in line with research by (Sebayang, Sapha, & Hidayat, 2025) which shows that access to water and sanitation is correlated with health status and household socioeconomic indicators — indicating that households with better access tend to be healthier and in more stable economic/family conditions.

This condition reflects equitable access to clean water infrastructure through the PDAM network and private wells. The results of this study are in line with (Setyoadi, 2012) who found that the provision of adequate clean water and sanitation infrastructure significantly supports the reduction of water-related diseases (such as diarrhea) in the community. Scoones (1998) also emphasized that access to basic services, including clean water, is a key pillar within the sustainable livelihoods framework, as it is directly related to the health, well-being, and sustainability of household livelihoods. Access to clean water not only reflects the fulfilment of basic service standards but also strengthens the sustainability of community livelihoods. Access to clean water within the home or yard is an ideal service, as it not only meets the quantity and quality requirements but also minimizes physical burden and improves the overall quality of life for the community.

Household Livelihood Assets in Karangjati Village

Household livelihood assets are a crucial component of the sustainable livelihood framework, determining a household's capacity to meet living needs, adapt to pressures, and sustainably improve well-being. In this context, households in Karangjati Village, Bergas District, are assessed based on five main asset types: human assets, natural assets, physical assets, financial assets, and social assets. The results of the average household livelihood assets in Karangjati Village are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Household Livelihood Assets in Karangjati Village, Bergas District

Livelihood	Total
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Assets	Total Average	%
Human	3,50	65,04
Natural	3,70	73,1
Physical	3,30	66,79
Financial	2,40	47,26
Social	2,30	46,63
Average	3,04	59,76

Source: Processed data, 2025

Household livelihood assets in the industrial area of Karangjati Village, Bergas District, Semarang Regency can be explained using the asset pentagon as follows.

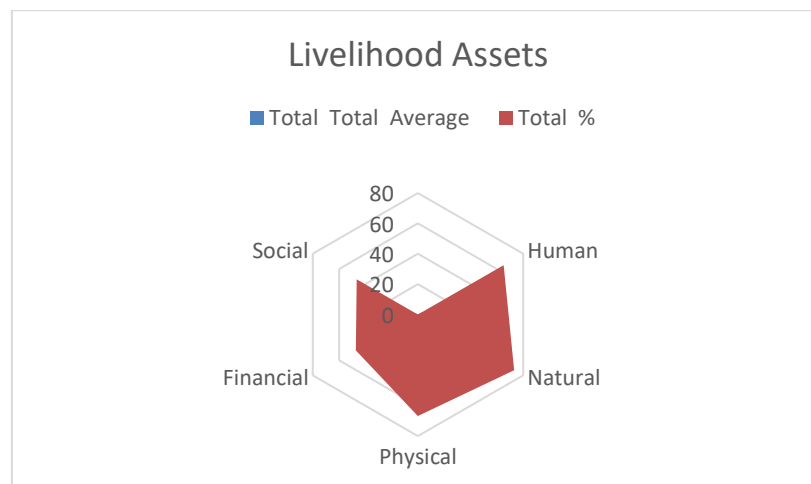


Figure 1. Asset Pentagon

Source: Processed data, 2025

The sustainability of household livelihood assets reached 59.76%, which is classified as moderate. Of the five asset types, natural assets received the highest score of 3.70 or 73.1%, which is classified as high. This achievement indicates that the community has good access to natural resources, particularly the availability of clean water and productive land, which are the main assets in supporting sustainable livelihoods. This aligns with Ellis (2000) perspective, which emphasizes that natural assets are the main foundation of a sustainable livelihoods framework, as environmental resources directly influence a household's ability to meet basic needs and adapt to change.

Human assets and physical assets performed quite well, with scores of 65.04% and 66.79%, respectively, which are classified as moderate. This achievement reflects that the quality of education and public health is at a relatively adequate level, although there is still room for improvement. A good education provides opportunities for household members to acquire skills and capacities that can increase resilience to social and economic change. Meanwhile, good health is a crucial asset in maintaining labour productivity and reducing vulnerability to disease. A high level of physical assets indicates that most households have access to basic infrastructure, such as adequate housing, road networks, and other public

facilities. Adequate infrastructure not only supports people's daily activities but also facilitates economic mobility and access to social services. According to Ellis (2000), human and physical assets are crucial for building sustainable livelihood strategies because they act as a bridge to optimize the use of natural and financial assets. This finding is in line with research (Mukhtar & Pradoto, 2021) which emphasized that access to physical aspects such as sanitation, clean water, health facilities, educational facilities, housing conditions, and infrastructure such as embankments/pump houses are part of the indicators in measuring the "adaptive capacity" of the community. Therefore, although the results are still in the moderate category, human and physical assets can be said to provide a strong foundation for communities to build sustainable livelihoods, provided they are continuously improved through investment in education, health, and infrastructure. Scoones (1998) emphasized that adequate human assets will enhance a household's adaptive capacity, while strong physical assets support accessibility and expand livelihood opportunities. Research by (Sukesi, Satoto, Murhandarwati, & Padmawati, 2021) shows that health education interventions improve healthy housing conditions and community social capital in Sleman, which supports community health levels.

Financial assets (47.26%) and social assets (46.63%) were both in the low category, constituting a weakness in household livelihood sustainability. Low financial assets reflect limited income sources and limited access to formal financial institutions such as banks, cooperatives, or microcredit institutions. This situation hinders households' ability to save, invest in productive activities, and cope with economic shocks such as rising prices of basic necessities or job losses. According to Scoones (1998), financial assets are essential capital that can increase household flexibility in choosing livelihood strategies. Therefore, limitations in this aspect directly impact the community's low adaptive capacity. Meanwhile, weak social assets are reflected in minimal community participation in formal and informal groups, weak social networks, and limited collective support among residents.

Social assets are crucial for strengthening solidarity, expanding access to information, and opening economic opportunities through collaborative networks. According to Putnam (2000), social trust and participation in community organizations can strengthen social capital, which in turn enhances community development capacity. These findings in Karangjati align with research by Sari and Utami (2021), which showed that weak social and financial assets often hinder household livelihood sustainability, despite relatively strong natural and human assets. Therefore, increasing access to inclusive financial institutions and strengthening the role of local community groups are important strategies to promote more equitable and resilient livelihood sustainability in Karangjati. These findings align with a study by Sari and Utami (2021), which explains that while natural and human assets can support sustainable livelihoods, weaknesses in financial and social assets remain major obstacles to household capacity development. Furthermore, Suwondo et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of integration between assets in promoting livelihood sustainability, particularly in areas experiencing development and urbanization pressures. Their study in Bergas District demonstrates that the strength of one or two assets alone is insufficient, as true sustainability can only be achieved through a balance between natural, human, physical, financial, and social assets. Thus, although household livelihood conditions can be categorized as quite sustainable, efforts to strengthen financial assets through increasing inclusive financial access and economic empowerment, as well as strengthening social assets through increasing community participation, mutual cooperation, and institutional support, are essential to ensure that livelihood sustainability can be increased evenly across all levels of society.

CONCLUSION

Households using PDAM (Water Utility Company) have better physical assets due to the support of piped infrastructure, but financial attention is needed, given that subscription fees can be a burden on low-income groups. Appropriate recommendations include strengthening customer groups, providing subsidies or progressive tariffs, and providing education on installation maintenance to ensure efficient service. Meanwhile, households using drilled wells rely on natural assets and are therefore vulnerable to declining groundwater quality and availability. This requires sustainable extraction practices, pump and filter maintenance, diversification through rainwater harvesting, and collective regulation if wells are shared. In general, both groups require financial and social support through access to microcredit, village-level water forums, and water conservation programs to ensure sustainable livelihoods.

Community livelihood assets are categorized as moderate. Natural assets are a key strength, with a sufficient supply of clean water and productive land. Human and physical assets are also adequate through education, health, and basic infrastructure, although they still need improvement. However, financial and social assets are low, reflecting limited income, access to financial institutions, community participation, and collective support. This condition weakens households' adaptive capacity to economic and social pressures. The strength of natural, human, and physical assets needs to be supported by strengthening financial assets through inclusive financial access, productive economic empowerment programs, and business capital support. Furthermore, enhancing social assets can be achieved by strengthening community participation in local groups, cooperatives, and community-based organizations to strengthen solidarity and social networks. Therefore, although livelihood conditions in Karangjati are already quite good, strategies to strengthen financial and social assets are key to improving sustainable livelihoods that are more equitable, resilient, and inclusive across all levels of society.

Recommendations that can be made to several parties, particularly to support the sustainability of household livelihoods, are as follows:

1. The local government needs to expand inclusive financial access through collaboration with banks, cooperatives, and micro-finance institutions, along with productive economic empowerment through training on MSMEs, entrepreneurship, and marketing of local products. They also encourage the formation of revolving funds or community-based savings and loan groups to strengthen household economic resilience.
2. Households using drilled wells need to raise awareness of the importance of sustainable groundwater management, for example by limiting excessive water extraction, constructing infiltration wells, and regularly maintaining pumps and filters to maintain water quality. Village governments can provide support by providing water quality testing programs, technical training, and access to microfinance for water facility improvements.
3. Households using rainwater are advised to equip their reservoirs with simple filtration systems and covers to ensure safe water quality, and to utilize rainwater only as a supplemental, not primary, source. Government support can include assistance with more efficient reservoir technology, sanitation outreach, and incentive programs for households that practice water conservation.

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TRANSFORMATION OF LOCAL MOVEMENTS TO TRANSNATIONAL: THE ROLE OF PANDAWARA IN EFFORTS TO COMBAT PLASTIC WASTE IN MARINE

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ABSTRACT Environmental issues, particularly plastic waste pollution in marine ecosystems, have become a global concern. This study explores the transformation of Pandawara, a local environmental movement in Indonesia, into a transnational advocacy initiative. Pandawara has effectively utilized digital platforms, particularly social media, to raise awareness, mobilize public participation, and establish collaborations with international environmental organizations. Using the concepts of productive power by Barnett and Duvall, as well as the Transnational Advocacy Network (TAN) and Transnational Social Movement (TSM) approaches in International Relations, this research analyzes how Pandawara has evolved beyond its local context. The study employs a descriptive-analytical method based on literature review and digital content analysis. Findings indicate that Pandawara's strategies—comprising field actions, community education, and digital campaigning—have successfully engaged a global audience. Collaborations with foreign NGOs and participation in international environmental programs highlight the movement's growing transnational impact. However, challenges remain in policy advocacy, as Pandawara has yet to influence governmental regulations. This study contributes to understanding how grassroots environmental movements can leverage digital activism to achieve transnational influence. Strengthening policy engagement and expanding global partnerships are recommended to enhance Pandawara's long-term sustainability as a transnational environmental movement.

Keywords: Pandawara, Environmental Movement, Transnationalism, Plastic Waste, Social Media Advocacy

INTRODUCTION

Environmental issues have become a very concerning problem, especially the issue of plastic waste in water bodies, which, if continuously neglected, can worsen the environmental condition both domestically and globally. Based on data from the United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC) in 2017, more than 8 million tons of plastic enter the oceans every year, equivalent to dumping one truckload of plastic waste every minute. As much as 80% of all the waste in our oceans is made of plastic. Therefore, according to several estimates, with the rate of disposal of items such as bottles, bags, and single-use plastic cups, it is predicted that by 2050 the oceans will carry more plastic mass than fish and 99% of seabirds will ingest plastic. Similarly, according to data from Greenpeace, an international environmental organization, it

is estimated that around 80% of marine debris originates from land sources, which accumulate through processes such as poor waste disposal and runoff from rivers and drainage systems (Allsopp, Walters, Santillo, & Johnston, 2011).

Pandawara as a local movement focused on environmental issues and addressing water pollution, demonstrates its concern for the problem of plastic waste that causes environmental damage. The actions of Pandawara itself include organizing cleaning activities in water areas, educating the community through social media platforms, and campaigning for environmental awareness, especially regarding water waste issues on both domestic and global scales. The phenomenon of the Pandawara's role shows how collective actions based on local movements can contribute to social change in environmental issues.

The study of the transformation of social movements plays a crucial role in advocating for environmental issues globally as explained by Rakhman and Haryadi (2020), by showing that under certain conditions, non-governmental organization (NGO) strategies directly influence change by utilizing international advocacy networks, thereby accelerating the formation of power relations within existing multi-actor groups. Movements that focus on environmental issues possess transformative qualities within them, making these movements increasingly global as the issues raised have become topics of discussion in the international political agenda (Hidayat, 2017).

While others argue that environmental issues often face obstacles due to political factors, the research by Firliandoko, Sarwoprasodjo & Saleh (2023) reveals that politics is both a supporting and hindering factor in social movements conducted in various communities. Although there are regulations issued by the government regarding environmental issues, their implementation often experiences inconsistency. It is evident from the research findings of Esthy, Aqshadigrama, and Baga (2023) that there is a lack of environmental representation in the political system, causing environmental issues to often not be prioritized in political decision-making.

This research aims to examine the journey and role of local movements such as Pandawara in strengthening global awareness to transform a local movement that begins from the concerns of civil society into a transnational movement to raise and voice environmental issues, especially regarding water waste problems, which not only become a movement but also a concrete action in addressing global issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Study on transnationalism the movement is divided into two main views. On one hand, researchers feel that transnationalism is important, while others consider that transnationalism is not the main issue. The view regarding transnationalism is important as conveyed by Nkongolo-Bakenda and Chrysostome (2020), who state that transnationalism is crucial and must be implemented by an organization. Similarly, Harrington and Seabrooke (2020) explain that transnationalism operates under the strong influence of globalization. Globalization creates an increase in the mobility of international communication, forming extensive professional networks to build the exchange of ideas and best practices at the global level. This becomes the foundation for the Movement that will later address global issues (Nkongolo-Bakenda & Chrysostome, 2020).

Meanwhile, another study that considers transnationalism not to be the main focus, as explained by Tedeschi et al. (2020), states that transnationalism is transformative in nature,

which often leads to debates in providing a precise and clear theoretical definition, as transnationalism can be defined as telecommunications, return migration, and the relationship between bodies and laws. This is also supported by the research of Redclift & Rajina (2019), which explains that transnationalism is often seen as an obstacle to integration and is considered too abstract, leading to various interpretations when considering the practical implications of social interactions (Tedeschi, 2022).

Research examining the process of transnationalism in movements has been explained by James, Checker and Edelman (2022) stating that the process towards transnationalism in a movement requires collective action to achieve the goal of building a new framework for governance and advocacy globally. These actions can be divided into two types: vertical (connecting transnational, national, and subnational organizations within the same movement country) and horizontal (international and regional). Meanwhile, Asy'ar (2020) explains that the process towards a transnational movement can also go through the framing process as a bridge in interpreting an issue, thereby influencing public understanding and response. The framing process is divided into three types of framing: diagnostic (identifying injustice), prognostic (proposing solutions), and motivational (providing reasons to act) to help mobilize collective action and support from various parties globally (Harrington & Seabrooke, 2020).

In the case of Indonesia, the explanation of local social movements that then grow into transnationalism is described by Wahyudi et al. (2021) through a case study of the WALHI (The Indonesian Forum for Living Environment Movement, stating that the process of WALHI as a local movement certainly has several stages to develop into a transnational movement. As one of the movements that started as a local movement, WALHI often involves various strategies in conducting broader international advocacy. This is done as one of the steps to gain momentum through actions and the formation of inter-institutional networks to elevate domestic issues to global ones (Wahyudi et al., 2021).

The study on Pandawara itself has been previously researched by Arlanthy et al. (2023) by analyzing the go green campaign program conducted by Pandawara. The researchers discuss how social media, especially the TikTok application, serves as a platform for Pandawara to conduct their campaigns. Through social media insights, Pandawara finds it easier to conduct campaigns that can be seen by the public at large. On the other hand, Rayhan et al. (2023) researched the contribution of Pandawara in organizing marine waste on the Labuan Bay beach as an effort to realize a welfare state. The researchers also highlighted the responsibility and awareness of the government and society regarding environmental damage, which will eventually lead to public welfare through various programs such as public health and social security benefits (Arlanthy, 2023).

Dony (2024) highlights the Pandawara content and examines a number of values reflected in the actions of the Pandawara content using the value philosophy perspective of Max Scheler to deepen the essence of values that play a role in human life. The research explains that the actions of the Pandawara content are not merely a movement but rather a significant social influence in raising environmental awareness and motivating constructive actions within the broader community.

This study will attempt to explain the phenomenon of local movements becoming transnationalism using the productive power approach by Barnett and Duvall. According to Barnett and Duvall in their writing titled "Power in International Politics" productive power is a concept of power that shapes identity, norms, and understanding (Barnett & Duvall, 2005). In

their writing, they also explain that the concept emphasizes two important aspects in its application: first, the formation of social identity as the foundation in the discursive process of society in giving meaning to social identity to become an object of power dynamics in the global context. Second, generating norms and social understanding as a form of representation of a social action that shapes social behaviour to be easily understood and regulated to achieve goals in analyzing the process of global governance.

This study will also attempt to explain the phenomenon of the transformation of local movements towards transnationalism using the Transnationalism approach in international relations, focusing on non-governmental actors (NGOs), particularly the Transnational Advocacy Network (TAN) and Transnational Social Movement (TSM) as forms of cross-national organization and both organized and unorganized mass power in advocating for various global interests and issues (Soetjipto, 2018).

From various studies, none have explained the Pandawara phenomenon using the productive power approach by Barnett and Duvall and transnationalism in international relations. Thus, the uniqueness of this research lies in the case of the environmental movement, which is not commonly found in third-world countries like Indonesia.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the phenomenon of the transformation of the local Pandawara movement into a transnational movement on environmental issues, particularly as a movement focused on water pollution. This approach is also used to systematically illustrate how the development process of Pandawara, which began as a local initiative, became part of the global discourse in environmental advocacy, as well as to analyze the factors contributing to that process.

This research was conducted by focusing on literature that has discussed Pandawara activities. This was done by searching for keywords that are relevant to Pandawara, such as environmental activism, community engagement, and social impact. After that, searching for relevant journals that discuss Pandawara in various databases, especially through Google Scholar, JSTOR, the Pandawara organization website, and the media that discusses it whose news has validity. This is intended so that the data obtained is relevant and can be used as scientific data that can be used in this study. The data obtained will later be categorized in the form of activities, strategies and impacts. Then, after collecting various sources of literature, it was compiled into a single cohesive piece by examining the dynamics of this movement using the concept of *productive power* by Barnett and Duvall. Barnett Duvall (2005) explains that the concept of productive power is a form of social reality that is built based on the identity, interests and social capacities owned by a person or organization in the form of discourse, practice and situation. Product power is different from coercive or structural power, the difference lies in how food is created and the ability to understand oneself and others. Productive power runs that discourse and narrative are the main forces that are considered legitimate and have an influence on the environment. Pandawara as a social organization is able to demonstrate this in a massive way, especially in environmental management and norms that are in line with the vision of society. Then *transnationalism* of *Transnational Advocacy Network (TAN)* and *Transnational Social Movement (TSM)* approach in international relations. Transnationalism in international relations refers to cross-border interactions and networks that go beyond state actors. In this context, Keck & Sikkink (1998) explain that Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) are networks of activists and organizations, often with shared

values, that work together across borders to advocate for issues such as human rights or environmental protection, while Transnational Social Movements (TSMs) are broader grassroots movements that aim to challenge power structures or advocate for social change globally. Both TANS and TSMs demonstrate how non-state actors can shape international norms, influence policy, and connect local struggles to global agendas, highlighting the growing role of global civil society in international relations. This research aims to provide a deep understanding of the role of social movements in shaping global awareness of environmental issues.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pandawara as an Environmental Movement

Pandawara Group, commonly known as an environmental care community focused on waterways in Indonesia, was founded by five young men from Bandung: Agung Permana, Gilang Rahma, Muhammad Ikhsan, Rafla Pasya, and Rifki Sa'dula in mid-2022. This community was born from the phenomenon of frequent flooding in Bandung. They found that the accumulation of waste in the surrounding rivers became a dominant factor. In addition, the low public awareness about the impact of littering also worsens the environmental conditions (Tamba, Sitorus, Situmorang, Wahyudi, & Ibrahim, 2024). As a result of the flooding phenomenon they experienced, they initiated the Pandawara initiative to organize the cleaning of ditches and nearby small rivers, which was first published on the TikTok post @pandawaragroup and the official Pandawara Instagram @pandawaragroup.

Pandawara implements its vision for the environment through three main forms: field actions, socialization, and social media models. *First*, the field actions carried out by Pandawara in implementing the water waste cleaning program, Pandawara formed a survey team known as river hunters, tasked with identifying river areas that have a high level of urgency for cleaning. One of the aids received by Pandawara in identifying river areas with a high level of urgency for cleaning was the Cikeruh River in Bandung, which became Pandawara's main project in carrying out river waste cleaning actions (M. Elgana & Wismabrata, 2023). During the cleaning activities of the water area, they successfully collected 27,066 kilograms of waste or 4,511 trash bags from 78 water points, including large rivers, small rivers, and gutters that were cleaned by Pandawara in the 2022 recap (Defitri, 2023).

Secondly, through direct socialization with the community, this was carried out by Pandawara through visits to junior high schools at SMPN 7 Bandung, where they provided education on the types of waste and the dangers of littering. Pandawara also teaches students to utilize recyclable waste into creative crafts. This has become one of Pandawara's programs called Ajaraksa, which is an effort to instill education and fundamental awareness of environmental conditions (Pradana, 2024). The Ajaraksa program was implemented at the end of 2023 and has been carried out in three junior high schools, namely SMPN 2, SMPN 5, and SMPN 7, located in Bandung. The target of this program is aimed at junior high school students because junior high school students are the most suitable target for education and the first target in this work program (Manurung & Wijaksono, 2024). Although Pandawara's outreach on environmental issues predominantly uses social media, Pandawara strives to provide further education to the community.

Third, the model of social media usage is carried out through TikTok and the official Pandawara Instagram by creating content related to the organization of river cleaning actions

and environmental education as a form of Pandawara's campaign to voice environmental issues. The documentation carried out by Pandawara shows the initial process and results of the river cleanup action, known as a clean-up, with the hashtag #onedayonetrashbag, as well as educating the audience verbally. The documentation and content created by Pandawara on their official social media accounts contain environmental advocacy and education, with text posts accounting for 90.90%, images for 93.47%, and audio for 86.36% (Lestari, Handayani, & Mahdalena, 2025). Pandawara also initiated several environmental campaigns in their actions by opening volunteer opportunities for the general public who wish to join through announcements on social media. With this strategy, Pandawara can easily attract a wide audience and the community in carrying out their activities (Nufus & Sukmawati, 2024).

Pandawara, as an environmental movement that relies on social media as its main tool in executing its strategy, through the documentation of organized waste clean-up activities, campaigning on environmental issues, and providing education on waste problems in waterways, has had a significant impact on the wider community. Pandawara as an environmental movement shows that efforts to clean up waste in water bodies cannot develop sustainably without adequate educational support for the surrounding human resources (Putri, Christiani, Sari, & Pramuja, 2024). Pandawara received various responses from the community. On one hand, this movement inspires many young people to participate in environmental cleaning actions, such as the emergence of small content creators who follow in Pandawara's footsteps by cleaning trash in ditches and rivers. Pandawara's consistency in advocating for environmental issues greatly contributes to increasing public awareness and helps expand the impact of their movement to organize larger waterway clean-up efforts beyond the Bandung area. On the other hand, there is criticism regarding whether the education provided by Pandawara truly has a long-term impact on the community's behaviour in managing waste. Because there are often cases of residents littering around the water areas that Pandawara cleans openly or even thinking that Pandawara is responsible for cleaning the surrounding river waste (Rossa, 2024).

Media as a Basis for Collaboration with Foreign NGOs

Pandawara's strategy in campaigning for environmental issues through social media involves creating content and documentation that showcase the process of organizing waste clean-up operations in water bodies, as well as socialization related to education both verbally and non-verbally (Melangedd, 2019). This serves as a platform for Pandawara to develop their environmental movement collaboration with NGOs outside Indonesia. The social media exposure gained by Pandawara also serves as a bridge in spreading environmental issue campaigns from domestic to global. Thus, Pandawara is able to expand cooperation and collaboration related to global efforts to tackle plastic waste in waters. Pandawara's confidence in creating broader global cooperation and collaboration in organizing clean-up actions is also driven by its success in building networks with Pertamina Trans Kontinental (PTK) in Semarang and Yogyakarta through the "Coastal Clean Up" action in September 2023 (Alexander, 2023).

The collaboration and cooperation strategy formed by Pandawara takes the form of the Creator Contribution program, which focuses on visits to countries facing environmental issues, particularly related to waste in waterways, by collaborating with communities and NGOs from those countries (Rahman & Astriani, 2024). Published on the official Pandawara TikTok social media platform, the creator contribution program aims to discuss the proper communication education techniques for the public regarding proper waste segregation, river maintenance

techniques, and conducting clean-up actions with environmental communities in various countries. Pandawara, which is active in campaigning for environmental issues through social media, has an advantage in connecting its movement with global environmental communities (Asy'ari, 2020). In this creator contribution program, Pandawara has begun a collaboration with a Vietnamese content creator focused on environmental issues, namely Sài Gòn Xanh. This community in Vietnam shares the same action focus as the Pandawara movement. The design of the creator contribution program between Pandawara and Sài Gòn Xanh is also one of the programs in celebration of Earth Day on April 22, 2024 (Amalia, 2024). In the creator contribution program, Pandawara is committed to facilitating various environmental activities by opening discussion forums and clean-up actions. Through the documentation shared by Pandawara on their official TikTok platform, Pandawara conducted outreach regarding waste segregation, education in efforts to raise public awareness about the environment, and discussed clean-up techniques with Sài Gòn Xanh members. The clean-up action was carried out by Pandawara and members of Sài Gòn Xanh, inviting the Vietnamese community to contribute to waste organization efforts around Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The visit made by Pandawara to Vietnam, besides aiming to strengthen relationships among content creators focused on environmental issues, also commits to regular communication with environmental communities there. The documentation uploaded through the official Pandawara TikTok account regarding the collaboration between Pandawara and Sài Gòn Xanh has been viewed by more than 33.7 million TikTok users and liked by 2.2 million accounts as of February 18, 2025.

Seeing the support given by the audience encourages Pandawara to continue the program. Pandawara has begun to continue the implementation of the content contribution program by collaborating with content creators from other countries, namely LoKoHoPunoh, which is one of the environmental communities in Malaysia. This time, Pandawara and LoKoHo_Punoh are committed to working hand in hand to preserve the environment and prevent further damage. The collaboration took place at Batu Rakit Beach, Kuala Terengganu City, where they conducted a joint clean-up action and uploaded documentation related to the clean-up process on Pandawara's official TikTok account (Nurshabrina, Vistara, Sijabat, & AlMunawarah, 2024). With the existence of the creator contribution program, Pandawara is committed to continuing the collaboration extensively to various other ASEAN countries as a form of campaign related to environmental issues. Through the content contribution program created by Pandawara, it shows how social media insights can connect communities and movements in voicing environmental issues globally. Pandawara has used media as a basis for collaboration in campaigning for environmental issues, demonstrating how audience engagement on social media can serve as another strong indicator of the effectiveness of the #CreatorContribution campaign. The insights obtained by Pandawara through social media show that 86.3% of respondents actively participate in environmental activities and 84.3% frequently interact with Pandawara's campaign content on TikTok (Simamora & Nugroho, 2025). This provides concrete data regarding how media functions as a catalyst for collaboration with foreign NGOs.

In addition, the exposure gained by Pandawara through social media also provides an opportunity to be involved in the development of the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) program in collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Denmark (Tamba, 2023). Material Recovery Facility (MRF) is a program that builds waste recovery facilities that can serve as facilities combining several waste processing techniques, such as separation, composting, or recycling. This collaboration aims to enable Pandawara to learn more about effective waste management policies and practices, which can be implemented to enhance environmental sustainability in Indonesia. Denmark is considered the best example in this

regard, so the views and techniques applied there are very valuable for policy development in Indonesia. The training received by Pandawara from the Danish embassy and the Danish government is an effort to strengthen bilateral relations with Indonesia, where environmental issues are one of the main focuses in the cooperation agenda of both countries (Rahman, et al., 2024). The invitation received by Pandawara through participation in a comparative study on waste management in Denmark, namely the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) program, has been implemented by Pandawara in Bandung, and it is hoped that if this program is successful, it will be applied in other cities in Indonesia (Wuri, 2024).

Analysis of the Transformation of Pandawara Towards a Transnational Movement

The Pandawara initiative through its programs and actions has become relevant, especially with the increasing awareness of the surrounding community regarding environmental issues related to waste problems in water bodies, which is one of the positive impacts provided by Pandawara (Allsopp, 2010.). This movement not only contributes to environmental preservation efforts but also plays a role in increasing public participation regarding ecological issues more broadly. The distinctive feature built by Pandawara in sharing action documentation and education as a form of campaigning for environmental issues has garnered attention from various local to international media platforms, thereby expanding their influence on a global scale (Dony, 2024). In the context of power theory, Pandawara's actions can be linked to the concept of productive power, which highlights how discourse and social practices shape identity, understanding, and norms within society. Through social media-based communication strategies involving content creation and documentation, Pandawara successfully created a discourse that environmental concern can be an initial step towards collective societal responsibility. In other words, this movement not only focuses on direct environmental cleanup actions but also builds awareness and new norms in the social behaviour of the surrounding community regarding waste management. This has become one of the approaches used by Pandawara in conducting advocacy and mass mobilization related to environmental issues, especially concerning waste in water bodies. The impact of this is evident from the emergence of similar initiatives towards communities at various domestic and global levels inspired by the Pandawara model (Barnett & Duvall, 2005).

Additionally, Pandawara, as one of the NGO actors, plays a role in educating and advocating the importance of environmental preservation (Esthy Reko et al., 2023). By utilizing social media based on internet technology and data algorithms, this movement is able to disseminate information quickly and create communication networks without geographical boundaries. This not only raises global awareness about environmental issues but also encourages community involvement in tangible actions, such as participating in trash clean-ups or adopting environmentally friendly habits both domestically and internationally (Dony, 2024). Thus, the networking and collaboration of Pandawara with NGOs or international environmental communities also become opportunities to strengthen the global dissemination of their ideas. With the support that Pandawara receives through social media and international communities for the pro-environment movement, it becomes a driving force for Pandawara to develop beyond national borders and encourages the transformation of Pandawara into a transnational movement. One of the ways is through the creator contribution program initiated by Pandawara, using the transnationalism approach in International Relations regarding the Transnational Advocacy Network (TAN) and Transnational Social Movement (TSM) (Nkongolo-Bakenda & Chrysostome, 2020). This means that cross-national organization and the mobilization of both organized and unorganized mass power in advocating various issues can influence social movements that start from a local dimension to a transnational dimension.

Transnational movements have become one of the methods for NGOs in their efforts to promote an issue (Tedeschi, 2022). The transnational movement allows for a broader scope of action for non-state actors because the efforts undertaken are not limited by specific territories (Soetjipto, 2018).

In the transnationalism approach in International Relations regarding Transnational Advocacy Networks (TAN) and Transnational Social Movements (TSM), the transformation of a movement into a transnational movement requires a policy formulation stage. To become an NGO or transnational actor capable of convincing the government or state, along with other organizations, to change their policies on an issue (Soetjipto, 2018). Meanwhile, Pandawara still faces obstacles in this regard, as their environmental advocacy has not yet influenced any policies. Pandawara's initiative in organizing a beach cleanup at Loji Beach, Sukabumi, as a form of campaigning for environmental issues by inviting the community to participate in the cleanup action, was met with rejection from the local government. Thus, various perspectives emerged from the community and environmental movements regarding the government's decision in reflecting the community's aspirations related to environmental issues. Even environmental movements like WALHI have spoken about the controversy surrounding the matter and supported the Pandawara action initiative (Damayanti, Fidianingsih, Melyani, & Syawalia, 2024). The issue serves as evidence of the obstacles in the Pandawara advocacy process to influence policy on a particular issue. On the other hand, with the increasing global awareness of environmental issues, Pandawara still has the potential to develop into a transnational movement capable of inspiring and mobilizing collective action in various countries in the future through support from the community to local and international environmental movements (Wahyudi, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The process of transforming a local movement into a transnational movement with a case study Pandawara, in its efforts to combat plastic waste in the waters as a community-based environmental movement, has successfully organized waste cleanup actions in Indonesian waters with strategies that include field actions, community education, and digital campaigns through social media. Social media has become the main instrument in expanding Pandawara's reach, enabling collaboration with various communities and international environmental organizations, including through the Creator Contribution program. On the other hand, Pandawara's role as an environmental movement still faces obstacles in influencing environmental policies at the national level despite receiving support from various global communities. This shows that Pandawara needs to adopt a more strategic approach in policy advocacy to achieve a broader impact in order to move towards a transnational movement.

From an academic perspective, this research contributes to the study of social movement transformation by highlighting how the concepts of productive power and transnationalism in International Relations within the concepts of transnational advocacy networks (TAN) and transnational social movements (TSM) can be used to understand the evolution of Pandawara as an environmental movement from the local to the transnational level. To strengthen the global transformation of Pandawara, there is still a need to enhance advocacy capacity to influence environmental policies at both national and international levels. the lack of global network development through collaboration with NGOs and other communities can be encouraged through the optimization of digital platforms to increase community participation, as well as the empowerment of local to global communities through sustainable educational programs to build long-term environmental awareness.

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CULTURAL VALUES, COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND ASSET MANAGEMENT: PATHWAYS TO SOCIOECONOMIC WELL-BEING IN KLAMPOK VILLAGE

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ABSTRACT Klampok Village, a hybrid village in Singosari, East Java, Indonesia, is undergoing a complex social transition driven by modernization and the establishment of a Special Economic Zone. In this context, village asset management becomes crucial to enhancing the Village Original Revenue and improving the community's socioeconomic well-being. This study aims to analyze the potential of village assets (water springs, tourism markets, and traditional arts) as drivers of Village Original Revenue and well-being, while identifying challenges related to human resources and community participation within this transitional phase. Employing a qualitative case study approach, this research applies the Nusantara Paradigm and the Sacred Framework to explore the dynamics of asset management and the value shifts influencing community well-being. The findings reveal that key assets such as Sumber Bendo, the Sunday Market, Bantengan traditional art, and local micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) hold significant potential to boost Village Original Revenue and well-being. However, management is hindered by human resource HR limitations (digital literacy in *Sistem Pengelolaan Aset Desa* (SIPADES) - Village Asset Management Information System, minimal top-down participation, and the erosion of cultural values due to modernization. Nevertheless, local strengths such as mutual cooperation and cultural wisdom serve as effective resilience mechanisms supporting socioeconomic well-being amidst these challenges. This study contributes to a holistic understanding of village asset management, emphasizing the integration of cultural and social values into economic development to enhance community socioeconomic well-being in times of transition. It aligns with the vision of strong villages, strong nation through local empowerment.

Key words: Village Asset Management, Socioeconomic Well-Being, Community, Nusantara Paradigm, Village Original Revenue.

INTRODUCTION

Amidst rapid globalization and modernization, Indonesian villages are facing a complex social transition. Village patterns are shifting from traditional agrarian societies to hybrid structures influenced by urbanization, industrialization, and the development of special economic zones (SEZs) (Diartho et al., 2025). This phenomenon is problematic because modernization often erodes local cultural values such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and *musyawarah* (deliberation), which have long served as the ethical foundation of rural life. The erosion of these values threatens to disrupt the balance between economic growth and social well-being (Ichwanto et al., 2025; Manaf et al., 2018). Villages are a cornerstone of Indonesia's social and economic structure, contributing significantly to food production and employment (BPS - Financial Statistic, 2024). Yet, despite the allocation of IDR 44.85 trillion in village funds in 2023 (Kementerian Keuangan, 2023), the contribution of Village Original Income (VOI) to

welfare remains low due to suboptimal asset management. Previous studies show that the management of village assets, such as land, water, and cultural heritage, plays a decisive role in determining whether financial allocations translate into real improvements in well-being (Firmansyah, 2018; Mardalena et al., 2023).

Cultural values and community participation are closely intertwined within this process. Cultural values provide the moral compass guiding collective behavior, while participation acts as the operational mechanism that transforms shared values into tangible outcomes. When village communities manage assets based on cultural ethics such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), *musyawarah* (deliberation) and respect for nature, they foster trust, accountability, and social cohesion, essential elements for effective asset governance. Thus, integrating cultural values into participatory asset management not only enhances economic performance but also strengthens community identity and resilience, creating a pathway to holistic well-being.

This study therefore focuses on how the integration of cultural values and community participation shapes the management of village assets and their impact on socioeconomic well-being in Klampok Village, East Java. Situated near the Singosari Special Economic Zone, Klampok represents a hybrid village navigating between tradition and modernization. Through the lens of the Nusantara Paradigm and the Sacred Framework, this study seeks to understand how the sacred, social, and economic dimensions of asset management interact to sustain the well-being of local communities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural Values and Socioeconomic Well-being

Cultural values serve as the moral infrastructure of rural communities, defining relationships between humans, nature, and the divine. They act as a guiding framework that shapes social conduct and economic behavior. Diartho et al. (2025) and Manaf et al. (2018) highlight that rural development grounded in cultural wisdom fosters collective prosperity and resilience. Similarly, Ichwanto et al. (2025) demonstrate that social capital rooted in trust and cooperation reinforces community welfare and economic self-sufficiency.

In Indonesia, the values of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), *musyawarah* (deliberation), and *tepo seliro* (empathy) form the foundation of collective decision-making and equitable resource distribution. Saraswaty et al. (2022) and Setia Budi et al. (2025) show that traditional practices surrounding sacred natural sites not only protect ecosystems but also sustain spiritual and social harmony. Hence, cultural values function as a form of “social capital” that enhances resilience against external pressures such as modernization, climate change, and market dependency (Saraswaty, 2024). From this perspective, socioeconomic well-being in rural contexts cannot be reduced to material prosperity alone. It encompasses cultural continuity, social solidarity, and ecological balance, dimensions that ensure communities thrive sustainably across generations.

Community Participation and Asset Management

Community participation represents the dynamic expression of local empowerment in managing shared resources. It promotes transparency, equity, and collective ownership, key factors for effective asset governance. Studies by Hermawan (2019), Wahyuningrat and Harsanto (2025) reveal that participatory approaches increase community empowerment and improve welfare outcomes. Meanwhile, Mardalena et al. (2023) emphasize that village fund allocations yield significant welfare impacts only when communities are actively engaged in managing assets and monitoring financial flows.

Nevertheless, participation in many villages remains limited due to structural and human resource challenges. Sukaris and Kirono (2025) identify low digital literacy as a major barrier to implementing digital-based management systems such as SIPADES. Generational gaps also weaken youth involvement in rural initiatives, leading to the decline of community-based enterprises. Research by Sara et al. (2021) and Wahyuningrat et al. (2024) suggests that strengthening human capital through training and mentoring programs enhances participation and asset sustainability. Thus, community participation functions as the operational bridge that transforms financial and natural resources into social and economic well-being. Without participation, village assets risk becoming dormant, fragmented, or mismanaged.

Integrating Cultural Values and Participation in Asset Governance

Although many studies have analyzed either cultural values or community participation in rural development, few have examined their integration within the context of asset management. Prior works such as Manaf et al. (2018) and Ichwanto et al. (2025) highlight participation as a determinant of effective governance, while Diartho et al. (2025) and Saraswaty (2024) focus on cultural resilience. However, the interaction between these two dimensions, how cultural values motivate participation, and how participation operationalizes cultural ethics in managing assets, remains underexplored, especially in hybrid villages facing modernization.

This gap becomes particularly relevant in transitional contexts like Klampok Village, where the coexistence of traditional norms and modern pressures creates both opportunities and tensions. Research on digital transformation (Sukaris & Kirono, 2025) and smart villages (Muhtar et al., 2023) often overlooks the ethical and cultural dimensions of technology adoption. Meanwhile, studies on village fund management (Liani et al., 2024) rarely address how cultural and participatory values moderate the effectiveness of economic empowerment programs.

This study responds to these gaps by adopting the Nusantara Paradigm (Kamayanti, 2021; Mulawarman, 2021) and the sacred framework to integrate cultural, participatory, and spiritual dimensions into asset management analysis. The Nusantara Paradigm decolonizes development discourse by centering local wisdom, while the Sacred Framework interprets how sacred meanings attached to assets (such as water springs and traditional arts) influence communal responsibility and well-being. Together, they provide a holistic lens to understand how hybrid villages sustain their identity and prosperity in the midst of globalization. In summary, existing literature underscores the critical roles of cultural values and community participation in fostering effective asset management and improving well-being. However, most studies treat these elements separately, leaving a theoretical and practical gap regarding their integration. This research addresses that gap by proposing a holistic model grounded in local values where culture motivates participation, participation enables equitable asset governance, and together they promote sustainable socioeconomic well-being.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was chosen because the research objective was to deeply understand the interconnectedness between village assets, cultural values, and the socio-economic well-being of the Klampok Village community. The case study allows researchers to explore the specific context of Klampok Village as a hybrid village undergoing a modernization transition due to the development of the Singosari Special Economic Zone (SEZs). Through this approach, the phenomenon is understood not only from an economic perspective, but also from the social, cultural, and spiritual aspects inherent in the community.

The paradigm used is the Nusantara Paradigm, as developed by Mulawarman (2021) and Kamayanti (2021). This paradigm stems from the spirit of decolonizing knowledge by placing local Nusantara values as the foundation of research. With this paradigm, community welfare is not solely measured through material indicators, but also through cultural sustainability, social solidarity, and spirituality. The methodological approach offered by the Nusantara Paradigm encourages researchers to integrate local values into research instruments, so that the data collection and interpretation process is more aligned with the village context. Meanwhile, the Sacred Framework is used selectively as an interpretive lens to understand the sacred dimensions of village assets, such as springs and Bantengan art, but is not positioned as the primary analytical method.

The research location is Klampok Village, Singosari District, Malang Regency, East Java. The selection of informants was based on the relevance of their roles and involvement in village asset management. Interviews were conducted with five key informants: (1) the Head of Klampok Village, who acts as a village policy maker; (2) the Head of the Community Unit, who understands the social dynamics of the community; (3) a child Bantengan artist, as a representative of the younger generation in cultural preservation; (4) a community member, as a direct beneficiary of village asset management; and (5) a Pasar Minggu trader, who represents local economic actors.

Data collection techniques consisted of two main methods. First, in-depth interviews to explore the informants' perspectives, experiences, and strategies in interpreting village assets. Second, participant observation at several key locations, such as water sources, Pasar Minggu (Sunday Market), the Bantengan performance, and historical sites around Klampok. These observations allowed researchers to directly witness social interactions and practices in the utilization of village assets. The research procedure was conducted in four stages. The first stage was preparation, which included literature review, development of research instruments, and initial coordination with the village government. The second stage was field data collection through interviews and observations. At this stage, the researcher attempted to obtain official village documents, however, these documents were not available online or in open publication form. Therefore, data on local revenue and village planning were obtained through interviews with village officials and community leaders. The third stage was data verification using triangulation between informants and academic literature to ensure validity. The fourth stage was analysis and reporting, in which the collected data was collated.

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative thematic analysis. The process began with data reduction, focusing solely on descriptions of asset utilization, cultural values, and participation practices. The next step was open coding to identify initial concepts (e.g., 'water as sacred,' 'Pasar Minggu decline,' 'youth digital gap'). These codes were then grouped into key themes, such as 'Natural Assets and Sacred Value,' 'Economic Transition and Resilience,' and 'Human Resource Challenges'. Finally, these themes were interpreted using the Nusantara Paradigm to provide a holistic understanding, emphasizing the interconnectedness of material (economic) and immaterial (social, spiritual) well-being. To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, several strategies were applied. Data triangulation was conducted across multiple informants (village head, community leaders, artists, and traders) and data sources (interviews, observations, and field notes). Member checking was performed by sharing preliminary interpretations with key informants to confirm accuracy. Peer debriefing with academic colleagues familiar with the Nusantara Paradigm was also used to minimize researcher bias. These measures ensured that the results accurately represented the participants' perspectives and maintained analytical consistency within the study's cultural context.

RESULTS

This research examines how Klampok Village, located in an area with a long history of the Singosari Kingdom, manages its assets to support community well-being. These assets encompass not only natural resources but also economic, cultural, and historical resources, which are interwoven into the daily lives of residents. Through the Nusantara Paradigm approach, well-being is understood as a harmony between the material and the immaterial. This approach positions culture, spirituality, and social solidarity as integral parts of development. Furthermore, the use of the Sacred Framework provides a new perspective in understanding assets considered sacred, such as springs and Bantengan art, which cannot be treated simply as commodities.

Natural assets-springs: sacred meaning, ecological function, and economic potential

One of the strongest findings of this research is the centrality of springs to the lives of the Klampok community. Water is not just a basic necessity, but rather a sacred ancestral heritage. The village boasts several important water sources, including Bendo Spring, Banteng Spring, Nagan Spring, and Gunung Biru Spring, which are used for both domestic and agricultural needs. The Klampok Village Head emphasized the importance of water to the community:

"The water from Sumber Bendo is not only for the residents' daily needs, but also a symbol of heritage that must be preserved. If the water is damaged or polluted, not only will the economy be disrupted, but our traditions will also be lost."

The neighbourhood association (RW) Head said something similar, emphasizing the spiritual meaning of the existence of water sources:

"Every year, residents still regularly hold communal prayers around the water source. It's not just a ritual, but a way of honoring nature and our ancestors."

This annual ritual demonstrates that the community views water as a sacred entity. This aligns with the findings of Setia Budi et al. (2025), who showed that traditional practices in Indonesia's sacred waters create de facto conservation zones, supporting ecological preservation through spiritual values. In Klampok Village, this religio-magical value distinguishes springs from mere natural resources that can be exploited for economic gain. Within the Sacred Framework, springs should be viewed as entities that connect humans with nature and ancestors, as found by Saraswaty et al. (2022) in their indigenous knowledge-based water literacy in Bali, which strengthens local ecological and economic resilience through community practices. If water management is viewed solely from an economic perspective, there is a risk of losing the community's spiritual bond with the environment, as warned by Saraswaty (2024) in their study of sacred water sources in Bali, which face the threat of commercialization.

From an economic perspective, springs hold untapped potential. In addition to irrigation and domestic needs, these sources can be developed into community ecotourism attractions or educational tour packages, as suggested by Saraswaty (2024) for water-based ecotourism in Bali. Batoro et al. (2020) also found that sacred trees in Malang, associated with water sources, support traditional conservation, providing lessons for the management of Sumber Bendo to maintain spiritual values while exploring economic benefits. Field experience warns that commercialization without considering sacred values risks severing socio-spiritual connections, so management must combine the protection of local values, ecological conservation, and equitable economic benefit schemes, in line with the Nusantara Paradigm that emphasizes holistic well-being.

The findings on Klampok's springs show that natural assets are not merely economic resources but are deeply embedded in the community's cultural and spiritual values. Rituals and collective maintenance activities around the springs demonstrate that cultural beliefs strengthen community participation in asset preservation. In this way, cultural values serve as the moral foundation of sustainable asset management, directly contributing to the community's well-being through ecological balance and social solidarity.

Economic Assets – Sunday Market (Pasar Minggu): A Traditional Economic Space That Is Fading

In contrast to the vitality of the spring, Klampok Village's Sunday Market faces significant challenges. Once a hub of economic activity, the market has lost its prestige. Observations and accounts from residents corroborate information from village documents that the market is no longer as bustling as it once was. One resident described the current condition of the Sunday market:

"Now many people shop at minimarkets or via applications. The Sunday Market is quiet, not as busy as before."

This phenomenon reflects a transition in consumer behavior, consistent with the findings of Purnomo et al. (2018), who showed that traditional markets in Indonesia are losing their social and economic role due to the penetration of supermarkets and e-commerce. Prabowo et al. (2017) also identified competition with minimarkets as the main cause of the decline of the traditional market business ecosystem, similar to the situation in Sunday Market (Pasar Minggu). Within the framework of the Nusantara Paradigm, traditional markets are not only arenas for transactions, but also spaces for togetherness and solidarity. The loss of market vitality means the loss of interactions that strengthen village social cohesion, as found by Murdiyanto and Sudarmiatiin Sudarmiatiin (2024), who noted the impact of digitalization on traditional Indonesian markets.

Market revitalization is necessary to maintain its contribution to village revenue and community well-being. A study by Schipmann and Qaim (2011) in Thailand showed that traditional markets are vulnerable to modern retail without managerial innovations, such as improved facilities or digital marketing. Similar solutions are relevant for Klampok, including institutional strengthening through village-owned enterprises, market integration into local tourist routes, and digital marketing, as suggested by Murdiyanto and Sudarmiatiin Sudarmiatiin (2024) to attract visitors. With this approach, Pasar Minggu can once again become an economic and social hub that supports community well-being.

The decline of Pasar Minggu highlights how modernization challenges traditional economic spaces that once embodied social interaction and collective identity. Revitalizing the market through participatory and culturally sensitive management, such as integrating it into local tourism and community enterprises, can restore both its economic and social functions. This connection shows that asset management guided by cultural values can foster inclusive and sustainable well-being.

Cultural Assets Bantengan: Identity, Character Education, and Creative Economic Opportunities

While Pasar Minggu (Sunday Market) has faded, Bantengan art has shown its vitality. This traditional performing art is still preserved in Klampok Village and passed down to the younger generation. The village head emphasized the sacred aspect of Bantengan:

"Bantengan is more than just entertainment. It contains prayers and spiritual meaning that must be upheld. If it's merely viewed as a spectacle, the spirit of Bantengan itself is lost."

Bantengan contains a religio-magical dimension, as found by Kusdewanti et al. (2014) in their semiotic analysis of Bantengan, which emphasizes the community's spiritual connection to this art form. The opening ritual with prayers and offerings reinforces sacred values, in line with the findings of Sopanah et al. (2024), who integrated Bantengan's cultural values into accounting for preservation in Malang. In addition to its cultural value, Bantengan has creative economic potential as a tourist attraction, as demonstrated by Wahyono et al. (2020), who noted Bantengan's contribution to cultural and economic well-being in Batu. However, the challenge is maintaining a balance between economic and sacred values, as warned by Kusdewanti et al. (2014), who noted the risk of reducing sacred values due to commercialization.

Literature on traditional arts, such as the study by Lubis et al. (2025) shows that cultural performances can increase local income if managed as part of a community-based tourism ecosystem. In Klampok, Bantengan can be included in cultural tourism packages without losing its spiritual significance, through a participatory approach and local capacity building, as implemented in other villages to support character education for the younger generation.

Bantengan exemplifies how cultural heritage functions as both a symbolic and economic asset. Its sacred values encourage community cooperation, intergenerational learning, and identity preservation, while its creative economy potential supports livelihoods. The integration of sacred values into the management of cultural assets ensures that economic development does not undermine moral and spiritual dimensions, reinforcing community well-being in a holistic way.

Historical Assets - Singosari Museum and Kingdom Relics: Tourism Potential

In addition to its natural, economic, and cultural heritage, Klampok Village also boasts historical assets related to the glory of the Singosari kingdom. The Singosari Museum, Singosari Temple, and the Dwarapala statues attract tourists from various regions. However, the economic benefits of these sites have not yet reached the village community. One resident explained:

"Many outsiders come here because of Singosari's history, but the villagers haven't felt much of the benefits."

Centralized management under district/provincial governments limits contributions to village revenue, as found by Anisah et al. (2024) in their evaluation of the Singhasari Special Economic Zone (SEZs), which highlighted the low local economic benefits from cultural tourism. Amiruddin et al. (2021) also noted the lack of awareness among the Klampok community of Singosari's heritage potential, highlighting the need for local involvement. Involving village-owned enterprises (BUMDes) or community groups can ensure historical assets contribute to well-being, as demonstrated by Ariyani and Fauzi (2024) in their work on heritage-based rural tourism in Indonesia. Titisari et al. (2025) offer a sustainable planning strategy for Sumberawan Temple in Malang, emphasizing village collaboration to maximize tourism benefits. Integrating the Singosari Museum with local initiatives, such as tour guides or crafts, can redirect profits to the village, supporting the Nusantara Paradigm's vision of holistic well-being.

The management of historical assets in Klampok reveals that economic benefits can be maximized when local participation and cultural awareness are integrated into tourism governance. By involving community institutions such as BUMDes, historical heritage

becomes a living asset that links cultural identity, collective pride, and local prosperity. Thus, heritage-based asset management strengthens the connection between cultural values, economic empowerment, and social well-being.

DISCUSSION

Community Participation and Human Resource Capacity: Foundation and Challenge

The common thread that unites all village assets is community participation. Mutual cooperation remains a crucial social asset, but modernization has diminished participation, especially among the younger generation. The Neighbourhood Association (RW) Head explained:

"Without community cooperation, it's difficult to protect water sources or keep markets alive. Mutual cooperation still exists, but today's younger generation is busy with the modern world, so the challenges are greater."

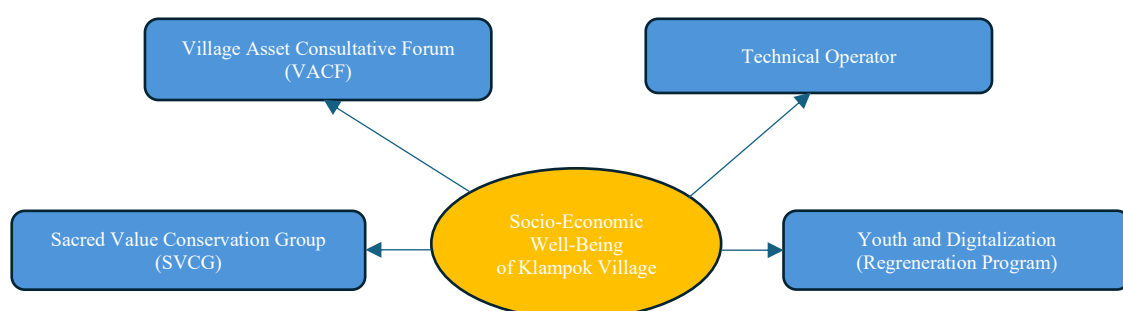
A resident added:

"We are still used to working together, for example cleaning water sources or helping with the Bantengan event."

These findings align with Wahyuningrat and Harsanto (2025), who demonstrated that village funds enhance community empowerment if supported by participation, but human resource challenges such as digital literacy hinder this. Wahyuningrat et al. (2024) found that human resource management in rural tourism requires coaching to increase youth engagement, relevant to Klampok. Sara et al. (2021) emphasized that strategic planning and human resource development address corruption and low capacity, supporting effective asset management. Hermawan (2019) also noted that empowerment through village funds strengthens the rural economy through community participation, such as mutual cooperation in Klampok. Strategies such as digitizing tourism promotions or training village-owned enterprise can maintain youth engagement, ensuring the sustainability of village assets.

Collaborative Model for Klampok Village Asset Management

The empirical findings of Klampok Village confirm that local assets function within a mutually supportive matrix: springs provide basic needs and spiritual legitimacy; markets serve as points of economic distribution and social interaction; Bantengan preserves cultural memory and educates generations; and Singosari's heritage opens the door to historical tourism. Within the Nusantara Paradigm framework, well-being encompasses material, social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions, with asset management taking sacred values into account, as emphasized by the Sacred Framework. This research strengthens previous literature by highlighting the role of the sacred dimension in asset management, while proposing a collaborative model involving the community to ensure sustainable socioeconomic well-being (see Figure 1).



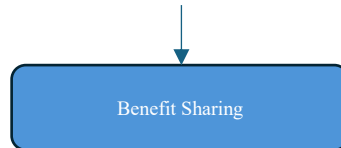


Figure 1: The Collaborative Asset Management Model For Klampok Village

The Collaborative Asset Management Model for Klampok Village is built on the recognition that socioeconomic well-being cannot be achieved solely through economic mechanisms, but must also incorporate the cultural, social, and spiritual dimensions that underpin the community's identity. At the center of the model is the primary objective: the socioeconomic well-being of Klampok Village, achieved through the synergy of five core components. First, the Village Asset Consultative Forum (VACF) serves as a participatory deliberation space, where village officials, traditional leaders, artists, traders, youth, and women's representatives collaborate to formulate asset management policies. The VACF ensures that strategic decisions are not driven solely by economic interests but also align with local and sacred values held dear by the community. Second, the Village-Owned Enterprise, as the technical operator, is responsible for managing managerial and financial aspects, such as the management of the Sunday Market, cultural tourism packages, and the distribution of clean water from springs. Remaining under the supervision of the VACF, the Village-Owned Enterprise ensures economic sustainability, while its policy direction remains grounded in community consensus.

Third, the Sacred Values Conservation Group (SVCG) ensures that assets with religious-magical dimensions, such as springs and Bantengan art, are not treated merely as commodities. The SVCG oversees the implementation of traditional rituals and norms, ensuring that economic management does not erode the sacredness of the assets that form the foundation of village identity. Fourth, the Village-Owned Enterprise is designed to strengthen the involvement of the younger generation. Through entrepreneurship training, digital marketing, and cultural documentation, young people are encouraged to become agents of transformation, connecting tradition with the modern context. This ensures social and cultural regeneration, while also opening up new, relevant job opportunities for them. Fifth, the Benefit-Sharing Scheme ensures the equitable distribution of economic benefits. Revenue from asset management is allocated to four sectors: village development, social programs (health, education, scholarships), cultural preservation (rituals, Bantengan art), and environmental conservation (spring maintenance, cleanliness of historical sites). This scheme is designed to ensure that communities directly experience the benefits, thus ensuring their participation. Overall, this collaborative model positions communities as the primary subjects of development, not merely objects. By integrating formal institutions (village government, Village-Owned Enterprises) and informal ones (traditional leaders, artists, youth communities), this model creates a balance between material and immaterial dimensions. Within the framework of the Nusantara Paradigm, this model emphasizes the importance of holistic and sustainable local value-based development, while also aligning with the Sacred Framework, which respects the sacred dimension of village assets.

Compared with earlier studies, this research extends the understanding of village asset management by emphasizing the cultural and sacred dimensions that have often been overlooked. While Manaf et al. (2018) and Ichwanto et al. (2025) highlighted community participation as a driver of welfare improvement, they did not deeply explore how sacred and cultural meanings shape participation itself. Similarly, Diartho et al. (2025) discussed cultural integration in traditional villages, but the present study expands this by examining hybrid villages experiencing modernization. Furthermore, unlike Sukaris and Kirono (2025), who focused on digital efficiency in asset management, this study demonstrates that technological

adoption must be rooted in local values to be socially sustainable. Therefore, the uniqueness of this study lies in integrating cultural, spiritual, and participatory dimensions within a single holistic model the collaborative village asset management model based on the Nusantara Paradigm and Sacred Framework.

The findings offer both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study contributes to the decolonization of rural development discourse by showing that asset management must incorporate sacred and cultural values as integral components of social welfare. Practically, the proposed collaborative model provides a framework for local governments and communities to design asset management policies that combine participation, cultural preservation, and economic equity. At the policy level, village governments could institutionalize participatory forums such as the Village Asset Consultative Forum (VACF), while at the community level, strengthening youth engagement and sacred value preservation can ensure intergenerational sustainability. Through these measures, the integration of cultural values and participatory governance can enhance socioeconomic well-being and maintain the cultural integrity of hybrid villages like Klampok.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the potential of Klampok village assets as drivers of Regional Original Income and socioeconomic well-being amidst the modernization transition. The findings confirm that the village assets are interconnected and mutually supportive. Together, they provide basic needs, stimulate economic activity, preserve cultural identity, and create tourism opportunities. However, these assets face several challenges, including limited human resources, low participation, and the erosion of cultural values. Despite these obstacles, mutual cooperation and local wisdom remain strong resilience mechanisms. These results affirm that integrating sacred and participatory values enhances sustainable community well-being. Theoretically, this research contributes to the socioeconomic literature by integrating the Nusantara Paradigm and the Sacred Framework. It offers a holistic and decolonizing perspective on hybrid village asset management. The findings show that spiritual and cultural dimensions play a crucial role in moderating community resilience to globalization. Practically, this study provides guidance for village practitioners to improve asset transparency through participatory forums such as the Village Asset Deliberation Forum. Regionally Owned Enterprises can apply benefit-sharing schemes to ensure equitable distribution of benefits. At the national level, policymakers are encouraged to design village fund regulations that support digital training and cultural preservation. These measures collectively reinforce the vision of strong village, strong nation. Limitations include limited time for data collection and reliance on interview data without official village documents. Future research suggestions: longitudinal studies for the evaluation of collaborative models.

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THE SOCIO-CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN FACING THE TIDE OF MODERN GLOBALIZATION (CASE STUDY OF BALINESE SOCIETY)

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ABSTRACT Globalization has significantly transformed the social and cultural structures of local communities, including those in Bali. This article examines how Balinese society faces the transformation of values, social structures, and cultural identities as global forces penetrate through tourism, digital media, and modernization. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation involving various elements of the local community. The findings reveal a shift in family roles, a decline in younger generations' participation in traditional life, and the rise of consumerism and individualistic lifestyles. Nevertheless, Balinese society has not been entirely eroded by globalization. Through adaptive strategies such as local value-based education, preservation of traditional wisdom, and cultural digitization, Balinese people continue to sustain their socio-cultural integrity. The study underscores the importance of community engagement, customary institutions, and cross-generational collaboration in maintaining cultural identity amid global dynamics.

Keywords: Globalization, Balinese society, social change, local culture, cultural identity, tradition preservation

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has become a dominant force that affects not only the world's economic and technological order but also penetrates the social and cultural fabric of local communities in subtle and systematic ways. The global integration process through information flow, communication technology, and cross-border cultural exchange has led universal values to intertwine with the daily practices of traditional societies. This process does not occur destructively but through gradual cultural adaptation mechanisms. As Sari and Nugraha (2022) note, these subtle changes create a new, complex social reality that often goes unnoticed by those who live within it.

Local communities today stand at a crossroads between preserving long-held cultural values and embracing new norms brought by modernity. Social interactions have shifted in communication patterns, relational structures, and everyday norms. Communal values, once the foundation of social cohesion, now compete with individualism and modern efficiency. The

younger generation, as Rahmawati (2023) highlights, is the group most rapidly and deeply exposed to global values. This shift influences intergenerational relationships, social roles, and cultural authority traditionally maintained by families and customary institutions.

Culture, as a system of values, symbols, and practices, is not immune to the pressures of modernity. The process of *cultural hybridization* the blending of local and global elements produces both new cultural forms and identity ambiguities. Traditions that once held deep spiritual meaning have been reinterpreted through a commercial lens, especially within the tourism sector. Widodo and Dewi (2021) explain that traditional ceremonies and arts increasingly serve global market expectations rather than solely cultural preservation. This phenomenon has been analyzed through the lens of *cultural commercialization* or *staged authenticity* (Zhang, Yin & Peng, 2021), where culture becomes commodified to satisfy tourist demands, risking the dilution of authentic meaning and altering social relations. Balinese society epitomizes a local community negotiating between cultural preservation and modernization. Supported by strong customary institutions and a distinctive religious system, Balinese culture now faces reconstruction within a global context. Its cultural richness, while a valuable tourism asset, is vulnerable to reinterpretation driven by external narratives and market imagery (Yuliani, 2020).

Cultural preservation in Bali occurs within a dynamic socio-ideological space rather than a neutral one. Communities engage in adaptive compromises to stay relevant while retaining their identity. As Maulida (2024) observes, religious rituals, local languages, traditional village structures, and performing arts are being repackaged through digital and social media. This dual identity rooted in tradition yet open to global expression demonstrates the creative resilience of Balinese culture. Rather than passive recipients of globalization, Balinese communities act as adaptive agents who reinterpret and redirect cultural transformation consciously.

This phenomenon holds strong relevance to social science and social studies education, where the interaction between social structure, cultural identity, and symbolic power can be examined critically. Understanding these transformations requires analyzing how value shifts, social interaction patterns, and intergenerational relationships evolve within the context of globalization. Thus, this study aims to critically explore how Balinese society responds to socio-cultural changes driven by globalization, focusing on three aspects: transformation of social structures, local cultural adaptation, and strategies for reconstructing collective identity. Through a qualitative case study, the article seeks to portray how local communities not only survive but also creatively transform to sustain their existence amid global pressures.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative case study approach to explore in depth the socio-cultural dynamics of Balinese society in the face of globalization. The qualitative method was chosen because it aligns with the research objective to understand the meanings, processes, and subjective experiences of communities toward social and cultural change in everyday contexts.

The study was conducted in several Balinese villages that exhibit strong cultural characteristics and active interaction with global influences through tourism. The research sites were purposively selected based on their exposure to globalization and visible socio-cultural transformation. Informants were also chosen purposively, consisting of traditional leaders,

religious figures, artists, youth representatives, housewives, and tourism actors who possess relevant experiences and insights.

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews allowed informants to express personal perspectives on cultural change, while participatory observation enabled the researcher to witness and engage directly in community activities, such as Banjar meetings (gatherings of a Balinese neighbourhood association), traditional ceremonies, and temple festivals. Documentation included field notes, photos, videos, and cultural archives such as local manuscripts and community records.

The researcher served as the main research instrument, maintaining sensitivity to the local context and building rapport with informants. Data were analyzed using an interactive model of qualitative analysis, involving data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. The findings were triangulated through cross-verification among different data sources and informant categories to ensure validity and credibility. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of Balinese socio-cultural transformation not merely as surface change, but as a deep, lived experience reflecting the community's efforts to preserve cultural identity amid modernization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Changes in Social Structure and Values of Balinese Life

Balinese society, known for its rich cultural heritage and strong communal structure, is currently experiencing significant transformations due to globalization. These transformations have affected various aspects of social organization and value systems. Traditionally, Balinese families operate under a patrilineal system, where men play central roles as heads of households and custodians of customary duties. However, as globalization expands economic opportunities, many Balinese men now pursue careers in cities or abroad, resulting in a shift of family roles and responsibilities.

Through interviews with local leaders in Gianyar and Tabanan, it was revealed that women increasingly participate in both domestic and public spheres, taking on roles previously dominated by men. This shift has introduced a more egalitarian pattern within Balinese family life, though it also creates tension between traditional expectations and modern realities.

At the community level, participation of the younger generation in traditional activities such as temple ceremonies, village rituals, and collective work (*gotong royong*) has decreased. As noted by Sahrul et al. (2022), this generational disengagement often stems from greater access to education, employment, and digital media that prioritize individualism over communal obligations. During field observations, several youths admitted that they “prefer digital engagement over physical ritual participation,” illustrating a growing disconnect from traditional identity.

Globalization has also introduced consumerist and individualistic lifestyles, particularly among urban Balinese youth. Exposure to social media and global advertising has reshaped notions of status and success. Perdana Oskar et al. (2022) found that material

possession and online self-expression have become markers of prestige, contrasting with traditional Balinese values emphasizing simplicity, harmony, and community solidarity. Similar observations emerged in interviews with three youth informants in Denpasar who described the pursuit of branded goods and “Instagrammable lifestyles” as symbols of modern success.

This consumerism parallels the decline of traditional collective participation, contributing to weakening social cohesion. As Sumerta and Sujana (2022) emphasize, when youth lose connection with local norms, communities risk erosion of *desa kala patra* the contextual wisdom that guides harmony in Balinese life.

Nevertheless, there are efforts to bridge generational gaps. Education has become a strategic means of cultural preservation. Schools in Bali have begun integrating local content curricula that teach Balinese language, dance, and customary values. Community initiatives such as art workshops, traditional dance training, and cultural literacy programs are also effective in revitalizing youth engagement (Widiastuti et al., 2022).

From observation and informant narratives, it is evident that collaborative action between elders and youth represents a hybrid adaptation model combining modern learning approaches with traditional wisdom. These efforts signify that Balinese society continues to navigate globalization not by rejecting it, but by embedding its values within new socio-cultural realities.

Adaptation of Local Culture to Globalization

Globalization has brought profound implications for the evolution of local culture in Bali. As a society deeply rooted in traditional customs, religion, and communal life, the Balinese experience modernization in a dynamic negotiation between cultural preservation and global adaptation. The island’s expanding tourism sector has intensified this process, acting as both a catalyst for cultural exposure and a pressure point for cultural transformation (Suyasa et al., 2024).

From interviews with cultural leaders in Ubud and Karangasem, it was evident that the tourism industry functions as a *double-edged sword*. On one hand, it generates substantial economic growth and increases international recognition of Balinese art, architecture, and rituals. On the other, it risks reducing sacred traditions into commodified performances designed to meet tourist expectations. For instance, the adaptation of traditional ceremonies into stage festivals and cultural parades often alters ritual meanings. This aligns with the notion of *cultural commercialization*, wherein local traditions are transformed into economic commodities, potentially leading to “staged authenticity” (Zhang et al., 2021).

However, this adaptation process in Bali is not entirely negative. Local communities, *desa adat* institutions, and cultural figures engage in active mediation to maintain balance between preservation and innovation. One cultural practitioner interviewed explained that “modern packaging helps traditions survive, but the essence must not be lost.” In response, Balinese villages have begun to formalize cultural preservation initiatives that blend authenticity with accessibility for example, through regulated cultural tourism events that maintain ritual protocols while allowing visitor participation (Khair Amal et al., 2024).

Education plays a crucial role in this adaptive process. Local value-based learning, supported by both formal schools and informal institutions, ensures that modernization does not uproot cultural identity. Nurjaya (2022) emphasizes that sustainable cultural preservation must begin with value-based education aligned with community customs. In several schools observed in Gianyar and Buleleng, teachers incorporate Balinese epics, local ethics (*tatwa*), and ceremonial arts into classroom activities. This educational integration reinforces cultural pride and social cohesion among youth.

Digital transformation has also emerged as a significant channel for cultural adaptation. Communities now utilize social media and digital archives to document, share, and promote Balinese traditions globally. Through platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, young Balinese artists disseminate ritual performances, storytelling, and craftsmanship, transforming traditional culture into a living and interactive experience. The OECD (2018) reports that digital tourism trends foster intercultural collaboration and strengthen local branding, particularly for regions with strong cultural heritage like Bali.

Nonetheless, the consequences of unchecked commercialization remain. Studies by Agung et al. (2020) and Sendra et al. (2023) caution that overdevelopment of tourism infrastructure near temples and *subak* irrigation systems has disrupted ecological and spiritual balance. Therefore, sustainable tourism policies must emphasize cultural integrity and environmental harmony.

The key to successful cultural adaptation lies in maintaining equilibrium between preservation and innovation. Strengthening customary institutions, promoting cultural education, and encouraging participatory governance enable Balinese culture to remain resilient. Globalization, thus, is not solely a threat but also an opportunity to amplify local identity provided it is approached consciously, collectively, and ethically.

Bali's experience demonstrates that when communities act as co-creators of cultural transformation rather than passive subjects, globalization can become a platform for empowerment and renewal of tradition rather than its erosion.

The Impact of Globalization on Cultural Identity and Local Wisdom

Globalization has profoundly influenced cultural identity and local wisdom within Balinese society. The increasing penetration of foreign cultures, modern lifestyles, and digital communication has reshaped how individuals understand and express their cultural belonging. These transformations create a dynamic interplay between global values and local traditions, often leading to identity negotiation and reinterpretation (Budiarto, 2020).

Interviews with young Balinese informants in Denpasar and Gianyar revealed that globalization often manifests through westernized lifestyles seen in fashion, entertainment, and digital expression that sometimes contradict traditional norms. This creates a subtle identity crisis, as youth navigate between global modernity and local expectations. Similar findings were reported by Astari et al. (2024), who argue that exposure to westernization requires an integrative educational approach to reinforce cultural rootedness.

At the same time, globalization has fostered new awareness about the value of local wisdom as a cultural asset. Balinese communities are increasingly aware that maintaining traditional knowledge and practices is not only about heritage preservation but also about

resilience and adaptability in the global arena. Qomarrullah (2024) asserts that education programs grounded in local wisdom strengthen cultural awareness and social pride. This observation was echoed by one community leader interviewed in Gianyar, who emphasized that “global trends come and go, but local values are what sustain our identity.”

Local wisdom in Bali manifested in arts, rituals, and communal philosophy such as *Tri Hita Karana* functions as a moral compass guiding the community toward balance between humans, nature, and the divine. In villages like Keramas, the preservation of performing arts such as Arja demonstrates how culture can evolve creatively without losing its essence. According to Agra Adiaya et al. (2024), revitalizing traditional art forms through community participation not only preserves cultural identity but also enhances local economic vitality through cultural tourism.

The use of digital media has further expanded the scope of cultural preservation. Arifin (2023) notes that digital platforms serve as effective tools for disseminating local traditions to both domestic and international audiences. In Bali, initiatives such as virtual performances, cultural documentaries, and online exhibitions have been embraced by the younger generation as innovative methods of sustaining tradition in the digital era. During field observations, youth cultural groups (*sanggar seni*) were seen livestreaming temple festivals, illustrating how modern technology can coexist with sacred traditions.

However, these advancements coexist with challenges. The widespread influence of western culture and the dominance of global entertainment have sometimes marginalized local expressions. Firmansyah and Dewi (2021) warn that uncontrolled cultural diffusion risks eroding Pancasila values and the moral foundation of Indonesian society. Therefore, continuous cultural education from an early age is crucial to nurture a generation that values and understands the depth of local identity.

Art and creative expression also serve as strategic mediums for cultural resilience. Yasmin et al. (2023) argue that integrating traditional narratives into new media, such as animation and digital storytelling, can increase young people’s interest in cultural learning. This approach was observed in Denpasar, where youth art communities create digital art content inspired by Balinese mythology, reflecting a synthesis of traditional philosophy and contemporary creativity.

As Yulianti et al. (2022) emphasize, globalization should not be viewed merely as a force of cultural homogenization but also as a space for cultural innovation. The revival of local culture amid global influences demonstrates that the Balinese are not passive subjects of change; rather, they are active agents of cultural transformation, selectively adopting global elements while maintaining their philosophical roots.

In conclusion, the interaction between globalization and Balinese local wisdom illustrates a dual process of cultural adaptation and identity reaffirmation. Through education, digital engagement, and creative reinvention, Balinese society continues to safeguard its cultural identity while embracing the opportunities of global connectivity.

Balinese Strategies in Maintaining Socio-Cultural Sustainability

The resilience of Balinese society in the era of globalization is not a spontaneous process but a result of deliberate strategies designed to preserve socio-cultural sustainability. These strategies

operate through multiple dimensions such as institutional, educational, communal, and creative, ensuring that the transmission of cultural values remains continuous across generations.

A primary mechanism of cultural preservation in Bali is the role of traditional villages (*desa adat*), which function as both custodians of custom and facilitators of modernization. Through field observation in Ubud and Klungkung, it was found that *desa adat* institutions actively integrate cultural preservation with economic initiatives, such as community-based tourism and traditional crafts markets. Rahardian et al. (2023) note that cooperation between local governments and traditional leaders has led to the design of digital applications that promote and document Balinese cultural tourism, enhancing accessibility while preserving authenticity.

Another key strategy is educational integration. Embedding local wisdom in both formal and informal learning fosters cultural appreciation from an early age. Senjawati et al. (2020) emphasize that the introduction of cultural content in school curricula such as traditional music (*gamelan*), dance, and ritual practice can strengthen cultural literacy among students. During the study, several schools in Gianyar and Tabanan were observed incorporating *Balinese language and ceremonial arts* into extracurricular programs, allowing children to experience cultural traditions firsthand. These efforts demonstrate a strong link between education and the sustainability of local identity.

The collaboration between government, community, and youth also forms an essential pillar of sustainability. Wiagustini et al. (2024) found that youth centered cultural training programs such as art camps, village festivals, and entrepreneurship projects based on traditional crafts play an important role in connecting modern creativity with ancestral values. Local government support through cultural grants and annual festivals such as the *Bali Arts Festival* reinforces these initiatives, creating sustainable avenues for both expression and economic empowerment.

Cultural institutions, including village libraries and community centers, also contribute to intergenerational learning. Dani and Mu'aيمانah (2024) highlight how optimizing such institutions can improve cultural literacy and awareness, especially in remote areas. In Bali, these centers serve as repositories of oral traditions, folk narratives, and local history, acting as bridges between elders and youth. Similarly, Khofsah et al. (2023) report that local festivals serve not only as celebratory events but also as educational platforms that connect heritage with tourism.

Leadership remains vital in maintaining cultural continuity. Community leaders (*tokoh adat* and *pemangku*) act as mediators between government policy and local traditions. Saefullah et al. (2023) underscore that the exemplary role of local leaders fosters community participation in maintaining ritual practices and moral values. Through their guidance, cultural preservation becomes not merely a ritual obligation but a collective moral commitment.

Interviews with *bendesa adat* (village heads) further revealed that cultural sustainability in Bali depends on collective participation and adaptive policy frameworks. They emphasized that government support through favourable cultural preservation policies such as the *Perda Adat Bali* empowers local communities to maintain authority over cultural matters. As IPSD and Dwijendra (2023) argue, sustainable cultural management requires inclusive cooperation

between communities, the state, and private sectors. Overall, Balinese strategies illustrate how local wisdom, education, and participatory governance operate synergistically to preserve cultural identity. This model shows that socio-cultural sustainability is achievable when modernization is grounded in tradition and when communities remain central actors in shaping their cultural future.

CONCLUSION

Globalization has brought both opportunities and challenges for the socio-cultural life of Balinese society. The island's traditional structures once anchored in communal values and spiritual norms now coexist with modern lifestyles characterized by mobility, consumerism, and individualism. Despite these pressures, Balinese society continues to demonstrate remarkable adaptive capacity.

Through education, institutional collaboration, cultural innovation, and digital transformation, the Balinese people have shown that cultural identity can be maintained without rejecting modernization. The transformation of rituals into cultural tourism, the digitization of heritage, and the strengthening of local value-based education illustrate a creative negotiation between global and local forces.

The findings of this study reaffirm that the preservation of socio-cultural sustainability depends on three interrelated elements:

- (1) the active participation of local communities and traditional institutions;
- (2) the transmission of cultural values through education; and
- (3) policy and technological support that empower cultural expression without commodifying its essence.

Therefore, Balinese society is not merely an object of globalization but an active cultural actor capable of directing social change consciously and sustainably. Their experience serves as an exemplary model for other local communities in maintaining identity and cultural vitality amid the currents of global transformation.

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BETWEEN TRADITION AND THE CAPITALISM: DIALECTICAL FORMATION OF WELL-BEING IN INDONESIAN INDIGENOUS PEOPLE COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT This paper aims to demonstrate the dialectical process within indigenous communities regarding their aspiration for socioeconomic well-being and the necessity of preserving their customary values. This study is based on research conducted in the Marena indigenous people community in Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, in 2024. The findings reveal that indigenous communities often face a dilemma. On one hand, they seek to improve their standard of living through economic opportunities shaped by market systems and capitalism; on the other hand, they feel compelled to maintain their unique cultural values that form the foundation of their collective identity. This tension creates a dynamic interplay where traditional norms serve both as a moral compass and as a limitation to full integration into capitalist structures. While participation in the market economy system offers material benefits, it frequently risks eroding the social cohesion and cultural distinctiveness of the community. The research highlights that the Marena community navigates this tension through selective adaptation, combining customary practices with strategic engagement in market activities. Such a hybrid approach enables them to achieve a degree of economic improvement while safeguarding their cultural heritage. This dialectic illustrates the broader challenge faced by many indigenous groups in the globalized era, where the pursuit of well-being often intersects with the pressures of cultural preservation and the transformative forces of capitalism.

Keywords: Indigenous People, well-being, capitalism, cultural preservation, Marena community

INTRODUCTION

Studies on indigenous communities in Indonesia reveal the complex relationship between cultural continuity and socio-economic transformation. In the context of globalization and the growing dominance of capitalist market systems, many indigenous groups face challenges in sustaining their livelihoods while simultaneously preserving their traditions (Li, 2014; Tsing, 2005). The Marena community in Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia, serves as a significant example for understanding this dialectical process.

Modernization is often perceived as an inevitable process in societal development, marked by the shift from traditional values toward rationality, efficiency, and market orientation (Giddens, 1990). It is inseparable from the logic of capitalism, which emphasizes economic growth, capital accumulation, and the penetration of market relations into diverse aspects of social life (Harvey, 2005). For indigenous communities, this situation produces a profound dilemma. On the one hand, modernization expands access to resources, education, and economic opportunities and on the other hand, it risks eroding the socio-cultural foundations that sustain collective identity (Eisenstadt, 2000).

The economic orientation of everyday life has increasingly been shaped by the principles of capitalism and the market, where competition, consumption, and productivity become the main indicators of well-being (Polanyi, 2001). For communities such as Marena, engagement with the market offers the potential to improve household income, yet it simultaneously carries the risk of marginalization when market mechanisms disregard communal values and traditional solidarity (Scott, 1976). Thus, research on indigenous peoples must critically examine how they negotiate the forces of modernization and capitalism without fully abandoning customary heritage, which remains central to their social sustainability.

This paper seeks to demonstrate how the Marena community negotiates two simultaneous imperatives: the pursuit of material well-being and the preservation of customary practices. By highlighting their selective adaptations, this study contributes to academic debates on indigenous resilience, hybrid modernities, and the politics of cultural preservation (Escobar, 2011; Kahn, 2017).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Modernization is widely regarded as an inevitable trajectory of social development. It is marked by structural transformations in the social, economic, and cultural spheres, oriented toward rationality, efficiency, and material growth (Giddens, 1990). In classical modernization theory, this transition toward modern society is considered a universal path to progress and prosperity (Rostow, 1960). However, such processes are believed to have profound implications for indigenous communities. Modernization entails not only technological and economic transformations but also the penetration of individualistic values and market competition, which may gradually displace the communal principles that underpin indigenous life (Eisenstadt, 2000). This tendency is inseparably linked to capitalism, which is often perceived as the driving force behind modernization.

Capitalism as the foundation of modernization, operates through the logic of capital accumulation, market expansion, and the commodification of everyday life (Harvey, 2005). Within this framework, well-being tends to be defined by material achievements, consumption, and participation in market mechanisms (Polanyi, 2001). Consequently, lifestyles undergo significant changes as community needs become increasingly shaped by global market forces rather than local norms or subsistence practices. At this juncture, indigenous peoples face a profound dilemma: while modernization offers improved access to material welfare, it simultaneously threatens the erosion of communal values due to the dominance of capitalist logic (Li, 2014).

This dilemma may produce several consequences. First, intergenerational tensions may arise when younger members of the community adopt individual economic aspirations over collective traditions, thereby widening the generational gap (Appadurai, 1996). Second, cultural fragmentation may occur as consumerist values and modern lifestyles undermine the legitimacy of customary institutions as sources of social norms (Tsing, 2005). Third, the penetration of markets and commodification of local resources can create economic dependency on external actors, ultimately weakening indigenous sovereignty over land and natural resource

management (Harvey, 2003). Such dynamics may also spark internal conflicts when some community members prioritize material gains while others remain committed to cultural sustainability.

This situation reflects a broader shift in modes of livelihood. As Scott (1976) demonstrated, agrarian societies traditionally prioritized moral economies based on solidarity and subsistence security rather than profit maximization. By contrast, modern capitalism increasingly erodes subsistence-oriented practices, replacing them with the rationality of efficiency, productivity, and competition. Parallel to this shift, dominant development discourses have equated well-being with capitalist indicators such as economic growth, consumption, and global market integration (World Bank, 1997; Stiglitz, 2002).

Such perspectives position capitalism and markets as the primary instruments of prosperity, often stigmatizing non-market ways of life as backward. Escobar (2011), however, critiques this paradigm, arguing that capitalist development has monopolized the definition of well-being while marginalizing locally rooted alternatives. Similarly, Tsing (2005) and Kahn (2017) highlight that indigenous communities are not merely passive victims of capitalist logic; rather, they selectively appropriate market mechanisms to sustain their livelihoods without fully abandoning communal values. Thus, the dialectic between capitalism and indigenous worldviews demonstrates an enduring tension. On one side, capitalism and markets are celebrated as the dominant path to welfare; on the other, indigenous societies highlight alternative conceptions of well-being rooted in solidarity, ecological balance, and socio-cultural continuity. This debate is crucial for understanding how communities such as the Marena negotiate welfare under modernization shaped by the pervasive logic of capitalism.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method, focusing on the Marena indigenous community in Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi. A qualitative approach was chosen as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the dialectical dynamics between economic needs and the preservation of customary values within the community. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with seven key informants from customary leaders, community members, and local stakeholders. The interviews results with historical records and customary regulations became the important data to be analyzed.

The data were analyzed using a thematic approach to identify patterns in the dialectic between community engagement in capitalist market mechanisms and their commitment to maintaining cultural identity. To strengthen the analytical framework, this study adopts the perspective of political ecology, which emphasizes the interconnections between power, political economy, and local cultural practices in the context of modernization (Bryant & Bailey, 1997). In addition, legal pluralism theory is employed to examine how customary norms and formal capitalist mechanisms coexist and negotiate with one another (Sukri, 2018; Merry, 1988).

Furthermore, the concept of hybrid modernity (Eisenstadt, 2000; Kahn, 2017) is applied to analyze the Marena community's selective adaptation strategies in combining customary practices with market participation. This theoretical framework highlights that indigenous communities are not entirely dominated by the logic of capitalism but are able to create autonomous spaces through the reinterpretation of customary values within the modern economic context. The validity of data was ensured through triangulation of sources, methods, and time, thereby producing a comprehensive understanding of the adaptive strategies that enable the Marena community to balance material well-being with the preservation of cultural identity.

RESULTS

The analysis of the Marena indigenous community reveals that their understanding of well-being is not solely measured by material attainment or income increase, as assumed within the capitalist logic. For them, well-being encompasses the continuity of customary values, the preservation of social harmony, and the safeguarding of environmental sustainability. This perspective resonates with Escobar's (2010) argument that indigenous peoples often conceptualize development differently from the dominant narrative of global capitalism, where social relations, cosmology, and nature are seen as inseparable components of well-being. In this context, the Marena community seeks to maintain their value system while selectively adopting external economic opportunities. As one of the Marena elder mentions,

"...dalam kondisi saat ini kebutuhan masyarakat semakin banyak sehingga kami membutuhkan biaya besar untuk membiayai kebutuhan sehari hari. Karena itu masyarakat disini biasanya bekerja termasuk menjadi karyawan pada pertanian bawang merah dan lainnya agar mendapatkan tambahan penghasilan. Tapi kami juga harus tetap menjaga nilai nilai orang marena meski kami butuh uang untuk membiayai kehidupan sehari hari termasuk membiayai sekolah anak anak (In the current situation, the community's needs are increasing, so we need money to cover our daily needs. Therefore, people here usually work, including as employees on onion farms and others, to earn extra income. But we must also maintain the values of the people because we need money to cover our daily living expenses, including our children's school fees)."

Furthermore, efforts to sustain the continuity of traditional customs in Marena face additional challenges, as younger generations increasingly prioritize formal education and employment to meet their livelihood needs. Consequently, many young people devote less attention to certain customary values and practices. Moreover, the elder says,

"...memang, kita menghadapi situasi yang cukup sulit karena saat ini banyak anak muda kita yang memilih bekerja dan bersekolah di luar daerah karena tuntutan ekonomi untuk hidup lebih baik, yang tampaknya tidak lagi terlalu memperhatikan adat istiadat (indeed, we are facing a rather difficult situation, as many of our young people are now choosing to study and work outside the region in response to economic pressures for a better livelihood, and they appear to be paying less attention to local customary traditions)."

Based on that, the thematic analysis identified a distinct dialectical pattern between the economic pressures experienced by the Marena indigenous community and their sustained commitment to cultural identity preservation. The first issue, selective integration into market mechanisms, illustrates how community members have increasingly engaged in market-based economic activities such as the commercialization of agricultural produce and cultural tourism while continually negotiating the conditions of participation to prevent conflicts with customary norms. The second issue, normative tension, captures the dilemmas that arise when urgent economic needs risk reorienting priorities away from customary obligations, particularly regarding the scheduling of ritual events and the allocation of labor for collective activities. The third issue, cultural reproduction strategies, demonstrates how the Marena community actively reinterprets and adapts customary practices including ceremonial traditions, kinship symbols, and systems of cooperation to ensure their continued relevance and coherence within a shifting economic environment that tends closed to the capitalism.

A dilemma emerges when capitalism, embedded in daily life, positions money as the primary symbol of well-being. For the Marena, money is indeed important as a medium of

exchange and a means of fulfilling basic needs, but it is not entirely equated with happiness or social honour. Honor is instead determined by adherence to customary rules, social solidarity, and the ability to balance individual needs with communal sustainability. This finding aligns with Tsing's (2005) research showing that indigenous communities worldwide experience global market interaction as both an opportunity and a threat to their social bonds and traditions.

Environmental sustainability also plays a central role in the Marena's notion of well-being. Natural resources are viewed not merely as instruments of economic production but as inherited legacies that must be preserved for future generations as part of a philosophy of living in harmony with nature. In interviews, customary leaders emphasized that "the condition of nature is part of the philosophy and fundamental values of life and must always be protected." This perspective contrasts with the capitalist logic that commodifies nature, while for the Marena, the environment represents their living space and existential foundation. Thus, environmental sustainability is not only an ecological concern but also a moral and spiritual imperative, echoing Dove's (2011) observations on indigenous ecological adaptation practices.

The Marena community's strategies reveal practices of hybridity, such as maintaining ritual traditions within agricultural production or using market-generated income to support collective village activities. Here, customary rules function as a "filter" that limits the full penetration of capitalism while directing economic activities toward collective welfare. In other words, well-being is not understood as individual accumulation but as the preservation of social harmony. This pattern suggests that the Marena community is constructing an alternative interpretation of modernity open to change yet firmly rooted in local values.

In the long term, the dialectical tension between pursuing modern economic welfare and preserving traditional cultural values may generate several possible outcomes. First, if capitalist pressures intensify and indigenous communities fail to develop balanced adaptive mechanisms, gradual cultural erosion may occur. This is evident in the phenomenon of "cultural commodification," where traditions are retained only in symbolic form for tourism markets or identity politics, while their philosophical and social meanings weaken or even disappear (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009). Second, if the Marena successfully manage this dialectic selectively, they may construct a model of cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1994), where traditional values remain the moral foundation while engagement in the modern economy is strategically directed toward collective welfare. In this scenario, indigenous communities not only survive but also emerge as actors capable of articulating alternative, locally grounded, and sustainable development models. Third, internal tensions may also arise. Younger generations exposed to modern economic systems may increasingly embrace materialistic notions of well-being, while older generations remain committed to traditional values. If unmanaged, these differences could generate social fragmentation and undermine the cohesion that has long characterized the community (Geertz, 1973).

Therefore, the long-term implications of this dialectical process may range from threats to cultural sustainability to opportunities for constructing more inclusive social spaces, depending on how the Marena community and external actors (state, market, NGOs) interact in managing the dynamics between tradition and modernity. In certain scenarios, economic modernization within indigenous communities could weaken traditional solidarity if capitalist logic dominates social relations (Li, 2014). However, if communities successfully negotiate cultural adaptation, modernity can instead serve as a medium to strengthen collective identity by creating new spaces for youth participation, the advancement of women's rights, and economic diversification rooted in local knowledge (Sahlins, 1999; Tsing, 2005).

DISCUSSION

The dialectical condition experienced by the Marena indigenous community reflects broader dynamics faced by many indigenous groups globally when navigating between cultural sustainability and the pressures of capitalist modernization. This situation demonstrates that tradition and modernity should not be conceived as binary opposites but rather as interrelated fields of negotiation (Sahlins, 1999). The Marena experience highlights three critical implications: socio-cultural resilience, economic adaptation, and theoretical contribution.

First, at the socio-cultural level, the persistence of customary values signifies that *adat* serves not only as an inherited tradition but also as a social mechanism for regulating community interactions with external forces. This role of *adat* affirms Gaonkar's (2001) notion of "alternative modernities," where modernity in indigenous contexts is shaped through the blending of local wisdom and global demands. The Marena's emphasis on solidarity and collective ethics illustrates that local modernity does not necessarily follow a Western trajectory, but rather can evolve into indigenous modernities (Clammer, 2012).

Second, from the economic dimension, the Marena community demonstrates selective participation in the market system. This strategy represents an adaptive mechanism to avoid the exploitative tendencies of capitalist markets while preserving social cohesion. Their economic involvement functions as a pragmatic necessity, not as full integration into capitalist logic. In this regard, the Marena present an alternative model of development rooted in community values, ecological sustainability, and social justice, aligning with Sen's (1999) critique of narrow growth-centered paradigms. Such practices resonate with Escobar's (1995, 2010) call for post-development thinking, where well-being is measured not by GDP or individual accumulation but by community-based ethics and ecological harmony.

Third, at the theoretical level, the Marena case confirms the relevance of legal pluralism and cultural hybridity in analyzing indigenous experiences (Merry, 1988; Sukri, 2018). The coexistence of customary rules and capitalist norms creates an arena of continuous negotiation. This hybridity supports Bhabha's (1994) notion that cultural identity in globalized contexts is produced through ambivalence and negotiation, rather than fixed boundaries. It also demonstrates that indigenous peoples are not passive victims of globalization, but active agents reshaping modernity according to their values.

Nevertheless, the dialectical process also contains ambivalent possibilities. On one hand, access to modern economic opportunities may enhance material welfare, education, and political bargaining power. On the other hand, rapid adaptation to capitalist systems risks accelerating cultural erosion, particularly if consumerism and individualism displace communal ethics (Li, 2007; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009). Moreover, generational differences may exacerbate this tension: while younger generations are more exposed to modern economic systems and thus lean toward materialistic views of well-being, older generations maintain strong commitments to traditional values. If not managed properly, this divergence may generate social fragmentation and weaken the very cohesion that sustains indigenous identity (Geertz, 1973).

In the long run, the outcomes of this dialectic may vary. If capitalist pressures dominate without effective negotiation, gradual cultural commodification may occur, reducing *adat* to symbolic performances for tourism or identity politics. Conversely, if the Marena succeed in selectively managing hybridity, they may develop a culturally grounded and sustainable model of indigenous modernity that not only preserves identity but also provides alternative pathways for development (Tsing, 2005). Thus, the long-term trajectory depends not only on internal community strategies but also on the quality of interactions with external actors, state, market, NGOs, and broader society (Li, 2014).

Ultimately, the Marena experience highlights that indigenous well-being cannot be reduced to material prosperity alone. Instead, it must be understood as a holistic integration of culture, ecology, and community solidarity. This offers valuable insights for rethinking development paradigms beyond growth metrics and toward inclusive, locally rooted forms of modernity.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the Marena indigenous community lives within a dialectical condition between the necessity to engage in capitalist economic systems to improve material well-being and the commitment to preserve cultural values as the foundation of their collective identity. While modernization and capitalist market penetration provide access to economic opportunities, education, and resources, they simultaneously pose risks of cultural erosion, weakened solidarity, and threats to social and ecological harmony. The findings demonstrate that the Marena are not passive recipients of capitalist logic but active agents who selectively adapt by integrating customary practices into modern economic activities. This adaptive strategy illustrates the creation of an alternative modernity that does not entirely submit to capitalism but instead blends local wisdom with global demands. The implications of this dialectical condition are the emergence of new social spaces where tradition and modernity are not viewed as opposing binaries but as productive arenas of negotiation. However, the sustainability of the Marena's existence depends on their capacity to maintain this balance. If preserved, they may serve as a model of resilience and locally rooted sustainable development. If not, they risk experiencing double marginalization losing their cultural values while failing to compete in the global capitalist system. In conclusion, the Marena case underscores the importance of recognizing indigenous peoples not merely as cultural legacies but as active agents in shaping hybrid modernities and advancing development pathways that are just, sustainable, and consistent with their identities.

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PERALIHAN DARIPADA JAMINAN KESELAMATAN KEPADA ALAT KELANGSUNGAN HIDUP: PERUBAHAN PERANAN KUMPULAN WANG SIMPANAN PEKERJA (KWSP) DALAM KALANGAN PEKERJA DI MALAYSIA SEMASA KRISIS

FROM SAFETY NET TO SURVIVAL TOOL: THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE EMPLOYEES PROVIDENT FUND (EPF) AMONG EMPLOYEES IN MALAYSIA DURING TIMES OF CRISIS

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ABSTRAK Pandemik COVID-19 telah mengubah secara drastik peranan Kumpulan Wang Simpanan Pekerja (KWSP) di Malaysia. Walaupun KWSP pada asalnya ditubuhkan sebagai skim simpanan persaraan, peranannya telah berubah buat sementara waktu kepada sumber kewangan kecemasan melalui skim khas seperti i-Lestari, i-Sinar, i-Citra dan Pengeluaran Khas semasa pandemik COVID-19. Walaupun KWSP pada asalnya ditubuhkan sebagai skim simpanan persaraan, peranannya telah berubah buat sementara waktu kepada sumber kewangan kecemasan melalui skim khas seperti i-Lestari, i-Sinar, i-Citra dan Pengeluaran Khas semasa pandemik COVID-19. Kajian ini meneliti peranan signifikan KWSP yang berkembang pesat semasa krisis, dengan memberi tumpuan khusus kepada pekerja sektor hospitaliti di Kuching, Sarawak yang merupakan salah satu pusat pelancongan utama di Borneo yang terjejas teruk akibat pandemik. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif berbentuk kajian kes, dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa tekanan ekonomi, ketegangan emosi, dan kewajipan budaya yang berakar dalam komuniti tempatan merupakan faktor utama yang mempengaruhi keputusan pengeluaran awal. Keutamaan jangka pendek untuk kelangsungan hidup mengatasi matlamat simpanan jangka panjang, sekali gus mencabar andaian bahawa pekerja sentiasa merancang kewangan secara rasional. Penekanan terhadap konteks Sarawak memberikan dimensi baharu kepada literatur yang selama ini lebih banyak berfokus di Semenanjung Malaysia, serta menegaskan keperluan untuk rangka kerja KWSP yang lebih adaptif, inklusif, dan sensitif terhadap variasi sosial-budaya antara wilayah. Walaupun kajian ini terhad kepada saiz sampel kecil dan sektor hospitaliti, ia membuka ruang untuk penyelidikan lanjutan merentas sektor, negeri, dan wilayah lain di Malaysia Timur.

Kata Kunci: Kumpulan Wang Simpanan Pekerja (KWSP), COVID-19, pengeluaran awal, Sarawak, perlindungan sosial

ABSTRACT – *The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the role of the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) in Malaysia. Although the EPF was originally established as a retirement savings scheme, its role temporarily shifted into an emergency financial resource through special schemes such as i-Lestari, i-Sinar, i-Citra, and Special Withdrawals during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study examines the significant role of the EPF that rapidly evolved during the crisis, with a specific focus on employees in the hospitality sector in Kuching, Sarawak, which is one of the major tourism centres in Borneo that was severely affected by the pandemic. Using a qualitative case study approach, the findings show that economic pressure, emotional stress, and culturally familial obligations within local communities are the main factors influencing early withdrawal decisions. Short-term survival priorities outweighed long-term savings objectives, while also challenging the assumption that employees always plan their finances rationally. The emphasis on the Sarawak context provides a new dimension to the literature, which has largely focused on Peninsular Malaysia, and highlights the need for an EPF framework that is more adaptive, inclusive, and sensitive to socio-cultural variations across regions. Although this study is limited by a small sample size and the hospitality sector, it opens space for further research across sectors, states, and other regions in East Malaysia.*

Keywords: *Employees Provident Fund (EPF), COVID-19, early withdrawals, Sarawak, social protection*

PENGENALAN

Pandemik COVID-19 telah mentakrifkan semula peranan sistem keselamatan sosial di seluruh dunia, mendedahkan kerentanan struktur dan mencabar andaian tentang tahap kesiapsiagaan kewangan. Di Malaysia, Kumpulan Wang Simpanan Pekerja (KWSP) yang secara umumnya dianggap sebagai mekanisme simpanan persaraan, mengalami perubahan ketara semasa krisis. Hakikat yang mana ramai individu di Malaysia yang bergelut dari aspek kewangan semasa krisis menjadi peringatan bahawa ramai rakyat yang tercicir daripada jaring perlindungan sosial negara dan sehingga menyebabkan peralihan penggunaan KWSP sebagai mekanisme simpanan persaraan kepada sumber kewangan kecemasan (PNB Research Institute, 2021; Jiton & Ibrahim, 2024). Keadaan ini telah membawa kepada wujudnya jurang rangsangan yang ketara, didorong oleh kekangan dari segi liputan dan pembiayaan. Peranan tradisional KWSP yang mendokong sistem keselamatan sosial telah mengalami satu anjakan perubahan iaitu berfungsi untuk membantu para pekerja yang terkesan dengan pandemik tersebut. Peralihan ini mencerminkan keperluan mendesak untuk mengimbangi kelangsungan hidup jangka pendek dengan jaminan persaraan jangka panjang, terutamanya untuk pekerja dalam sektor-sektor pekerjaan tidak menentu seperti perhotelan.

Penularan pandemik COVID-19 serta pelaksanaan langkah-langkah pembendungan telah membentuk semula struktur ekonomi dan kehidupan sosial di Malaysia. Diisytiharkan sebagai krisis kesihatan global oleh Pertubuhan Kesihatan Sedunia pada Mac 2020, COVID-19 menular dengan cepat di Malaysia, mendorong kerajaan untuk menguatkuasakan pelbagai fasa Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan (PKP) untuk membendung penularan (Salim et al., 2020). Sekatan ini, walaupun perlu dilakukan telah melumpuhkan aktiviti ekonomi, sehingga mengakibatkan gangguan kepada perniagaan secara meluas, menyebabkan kehilangan pekerjaan dan pengurangan gaji yang dilaporkan merentas industri (Nga et al., 2021). Sektor yang bergantung kepada pelancongan dan hospitaliti merupakan antara yang paling terjejas kerana sekatan pergerakan telah mengekang permintaan pelanggan dan menjejaskan kelestarian operasi. Seperti yang dinyatakan oleh Khan dan Hashim (2020), sektor pelancongan

dan perjalanan merupakan tulang belakang ekonomi global, namun pandemik COVID-19 telah menghentikan kesinambungan peranan tersebut. Keutamaan kerajaan ialah melindungi rakyat daripada virus berbahaya, namun keberhasilan usaha ini memerlukan kerjasama penuh rakyat dalam mematuhi arahan kerajaan bagi memutuskan rantai COVID-19 secara menyeluruh (Sitinurbayu Mohd Yusoff et al., 2021).

Di Sarawak, negeri terbesar di Malaysia, kematian pertama COVID-19 direkodkan pada Mac 2020. Walaupun penularan secara relatifnya terkawal sepanjang 2020, lonjakan kes pada awal 2021 memberi tekanan yang besar kepada kedua-dua sistem penjagaan kesihatan dan pasaran buruh (Chuong Hock, Joo Siang & Siok Wan, 2022; Phang, Labadin & Abd Rahman, 2022). Sekatan perjalanan dan Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan (PKP) di Malaysia atau perintah berkurung di negara lain telah memburukkan lagi pengangguran dan ketidakjaminan pendapatan sehingga memaksa ramai pekerja menggunakan simpanan persaraan mereka untuk mendapatkan kelegaan segera.

Berdasarkan latar belakang ini, kerajaan Malaysia memperkenalkan langkah yang belum pernah dilakukan sebelum ini dengan membenarkan pengeluaran awal dana daripada KWSP untuk mengurangkan tekanan kewangan isi rumah. Walaupun OECD (2020) memberi amaran bahawa dasar sedemikian boleh menjejaskan kecukupan persaraan jangka panjang, inisiatif itu dilihat sebagai talian hayat yang perlu dalam menghadapi pengangguran besar-besaran dan ketidakpastian ekonomi. Oleh itu, peranan KWSP tidak lagi terhad kepada memastikan jaminan keselamatan selepas bersara tetapi diperluaskan kepada alat kelangsungan hidup semasa krisis.

Walaupun isu pengeluaran awal KWSP telah banyak dikaji di peringkat nasional, tumpuan kajian masih dominan di Semenanjung Malaysia. Seperti yang dinyatakan oleh Kimiyagahlam, Safari dan Mansori (2019), kajian mengenai tingkah laku perancangan persaraan di Malaysia seharusnya diperluas ke lokasi lain bagi mendapatkan gambaran yang lebih menyeluruh dan kontekstual. Sebaliknya, konteks Borneo, khususnya Sarawak, jarang diteliti walaupun negeri ini mempunyai struktur ekonomi dan sosial yang berbeza, dengan kebergantungan yang tinggi terhadap sektor pelancongan dan hospitaliti. Maka, kajian ini memberikan sumbangan baharu melalui penerokaan pengalaman pekerja hotel di Kuching, Sarawak, sekali gus memperluas pemahaman tentang dinamika kewangan pekerja dalam konteks Malaysia Timur. Pendekatan ini menegaskan kepentingan memahami variasi wilayah dalam membentuk dasar perlindungan sosial yang lebih inklusif dan responsif.

Kajian ini mengkaji fungsi KWSP dengan tumpuan kepada pekerja sektor hospitaliti di Kuching, Sarawak. Berpandukan Teori Kitaran Hayat dan Teori Tingkah Laku Terancang, kajian ini menyiasat bagaimana tekanan ekonomi, tekanan emosi, dan kewajipan budaya mempengaruhi keputusan untuk mengeluarkan simpanan lebih awal. Dengan menyoroti peralihan daripada jaminan keselamatan jangka panjang kepada alat kelangsungan hidup semasa kecemasan, kajian ini menyumbang kepada perbincangan yang lebih luas mengenai kebolehsuaian sistem perlindungan sosial serta daya tahan pekerja dalam menghadapi krisis pada masa hadapan. Namun, kajian berkaitan KWSP dalam konteks Sarawak masih terhad, khususnya melibatkan pengalaman pekerja sektor hospitaliti.

SOROTAN LITERATUR

Kajian mengenai pengeluaran simpanan persaraan awal semasa pandemik COVID-19 menunjukkan bahawa walaupun langkah ini memberikan kelegaan kewangan jangka pendek,

tetapi ia juga menjejaskan keselamatan kewangan jangka panjang (Lorca, 2020; Lim et al., 2021; Bosch et al., 2020). Di Malaysia, KWSP ditubuhkan sebagai skim simpanan persaraan wajib untuk pekerja sektor swasta (World Bank Group, 2018). Bagaimanapun, pandemik telah mengubah sedikit peranan KWSP melalui inisiatif khas seperti i-Lestari, i-Sinar, i-Citra, dan Pengeluaran Khas yang membenarkan pencarum mengakses awal kepada dana persaraan mereka sebagai strategi kelangsungan hidup (Kumpulan Wang Simpanan Pekerja, 2022).

Perubahan peranan KWSP ini turut mencetuskan pelbagai persoalan tentang mengapa sebahagian besar pencarum memilih untuk mengeluarkan simpanan mereka lebih awal, meskipun sedar akan implikasi jangka panjang terhadap persaraan. Sehubungan itu, kajian-kajian terdahulu telah mengenal pasti beberapa faktor utama yang mempengaruhi keputusan pengeluaran awal, termasuk faktor ekonomi, demografi, literasi kewangan serta pengaruh sosial dan dasar institusi.

Faktor Ekonomi

Keadaan ekonomi, terutamanya kejutan akibat daripada perubahan dalam pendapatan dan pengangguran, telah menjadi pemacu utama (Argento et al., 2014; Jusoh @ Hussain et al., 2020; Bateman et al., 2023). Kejutan pendapatan semasa COVID-19 memberi kesan besar kepada isi rumah di Malaysia akibat kehilangan pekerjaan dan pengurangan gaji, sekali gus mengurangkan penggunaan serta meningkatkan kebergantungan kepada pengeluaran awal (Jusoh @ Hussain et al., 2020; Lee & Hanna, 2020). Kajian menunjukkan isi rumah berpendapatan rendah lebih cenderung membuat pengeluaran ketika mengalami kejutan pendapatan (Argento et al., 2014), dan di Malaysia, kumpulan B40 bergantung kuat kepada PRIHATIN, i-Lestari dan pengurangan caruman sebagai bantuan kewangan (Zulfaka & Kassim, 2020). Kehilangan pendapatan juga boleh mendorong individu menuntut keselamatan sosial lebih awal, menjejaskan simpanan persaraan (Rappaport & Siegel, 2020; Zheng et al., 2024). Walaupun golongan berpendapatan rendah sering membuat pengeluaran awal, Bateman et al. (2023) mendapati bahawa golongan berpendapatan tinggi di Australia turut membuat pengeluaran maksimum. Akan tetapi, Lorca (2020) melaporkan bahawa pekerja berpendapatan tinggi di Chile kurang melakukannya kerana mempunyai simpanan alternatif.

Kenaikan kos sara hidup semasa pandemik menambah tekanan kepada isi rumah, terutama dengan peningkatan kos makanan, perumahan dan utiliti, menyebabkan sebahagian menggunakan pengeluaran dana persaraan untuk keperluan segera (Bateman et al., 2021; Bank Negara Malaysia, 2022). Kejutan kewangan mempengaruhi pengeluaran awal terutamanya dalam konteks Barat (Bateman et al., 2021; Lee & Hanna, 2020), namun kesannya di Malaysia masih kurang difahami.

Pengangguran dan ketidaktentuan pekerjaan turut mencetuskan pengeluaran awal, terutamanya ketika kehilangan pekerjaan dan pemberhentian kerja secara tidak sukarela (Butrica et al., 2010; Blanchett et al., 2020). Di Malaysia, kehilangan pendapatan dalam kalangan Perniagaan Kecil Sederhana (PKS) meningkatkan kadar pengangguran dan pengeluaran KWSP (Khalid, 2021), namun bukti masih terhad untuk menentukan sama ada pengeluaran didorong semata-mata oleh pengangguran atau juga oleh pemotongan gaji dan ketidaktentuan dalam kalangan pekerja yang masih bekerja.

Faktor Demografi

Faktor demografi juga membentuk tingkah laku yang mengakibatkan keputusan untuk mengeluarkan wang simpanan persaraan lebih awal (Awang et al., 2020; Shariff & Isah, 2019;

Lee & Hanna, 2020). Umur merupakan faktor demografi penting yang mempengaruhi keputusan membuat pengeluaran awal simpanan persaraan. Pekerja yang lebih muda mempunyai lebih banyak masa untuk menggantikan semula simpanan mereka berbanding pekerja yang lebih tua, sekali gus menunjukkan hubungan negatif antara umur dan kecenderungan membuat pengeluaran. Lee dan Hanna (2020) menyatakan bahawa individu muda dengan toleransi risiko yang lebih tinggi mungkin menjangka pulangan pelaburan yang lebih besar kerana masih ada masa yang panjang untuk terus mencarum maka lebih cenderung membuat pengeluaran berbanding mereka yang kurang toleran risiko. Jeszeck et al. (2019) pula mendapati bahawa pengeluaran awal lebih tinggi dalam kalangan mereka berumur 45 hingga 54 tahun berbanding kumpulan umur 25 hingga 34 dan 35 hingga 44. Golongan muda juga biasanya mempunyai simpanan yang minimum dan mungkin membuat pengeluaran untuk meningkatkan pendapatan boleh guna atau bersedia untuk keperluan masa depan (Folk, 2019).

Faktor Peribadi

Kurangnya pendidikan kewangan turut mempengaruhi kecenderungan membuat pengeluaran awal simpanan persaraan. Awang et al. (2020) mendapati tahap pendidikan dan pendapatan yang lebih tinggi berkait dengan simpanan KWSP yang lebih besar, manakala Clark et al. (2006) menunjukkan bahawa kurangnya pendidikan kewangan menyebabkan pekerja menyimpan terlalu lewat. Bateman et al. (2023) pula mendapati bahawa individu yang tidak mengetahui kesan pengeluaran awal lebih cenderung membuat keputusan tanpa pertimbangan, berbanding mereka yang mempunyai literasi kewangan lebih tinggi. Walaupun penasihat kewangan wajar dirujuk, majoriti individu lebih bergantung pada keluarga, rakan atau pengiraan sendiri (Bateman et al., 2023). Di Malaysia, 71% ahli KWSP memilih pengeluaran sekaligus dan 50% kehabisan simpanan dalam lima tahun (World Bank Group, 2018), menunjukkan tahap kesedaran yang rendah.

Dalam keadaan ketidaktentuan, ramai membuat pengeluaran sebagai langkah berjaga-jaga untuk menampung hutang, kehilangan pendapatan, atau perbelanjaan mendesak (GAO, 2019; Lim et al., 2021; Bateman et al., 2023). Pengangguran dan kejutan pendapatan juga mendorong peningkatan pengeluaran awal semasa pandemik (Blanchett et al., 2020; Derby et al., 2020; Jusoh @ Hussain et al., 2020).

Faktor sosial turut memainkan peranan penting, khususnya dalam budaya Timur di mana tanggungjawab filial terhadap ibu bapa lebih dominan (Yee et al., 2009). Individu mungkin membuat pengeluaran untuk membantu keluarga atau mengikut pengaruh rakan dan media sosial, termasuk berita berkaitan COVID-19 (Bateman et al., 2023; Jo López & Rosas, 2022). Namun, sedikit kajian meneliti bagaimana faktor ini dialami secara peribadi, khususnya dalam kalangan pekerja hotel di Malaysia.

Faktor Institusi dan Polisi

Pandemik COVID-19 mendorong banyak negara, termasuk Malaysia, untuk melaksanakan pelbagai dasar bagi menyokong individu yang terjejas. Di Malaysia, sekatan pergerakan menyebabkan penutupan sektor bukan penting, mengakibatkan cuti tanpa gaji, pemberhentian pekerja dan pengurangan pendapatan. Bagi mengurangkan kesan ini, kerajaan memperkenalkan bantuan tunai (BPN, BPR, BKC), moratorium pinjaman, subsidi upah, program bakul makanan, diskaun utiliti dan pelepasan cukai. Paling penting bagi kajian ini, kerajaan membenarkan pengeluaran awal simpanan KWSP melalui i-Lestari, i-Sinar, i-Citra dan Pengeluaran Khas, yang membawa kepada jumlah pengeluaran RM145.5 bilion antara 2020 hingga 2022 (BERNAMA, 2022; Mohd Arshad & Md Nor, 2023).

Negara lain turut mengambil langkah serupa. Chile meluluskan tiga pusingan pengeluaran yang sebelumnya tidak dibenarkan, melebihi US\$50 bilion (Jo López & Rosas, 2022). Australia, Peru, Mexico, Kosovo dan Amerika Syarikat (AS) juga membenarkan pengeluaran awal sementara, termasuk penghapusan penalti 10% untuk pengeluaran awal di AS pada tahun 2020 (Derby et al., 2024; Bateman et al., 2023).

Walaupun langkah ini memberi kelegaan jangka pendek, kebimbangan timbul terhadap kecukupan simpanan persaraan jangka panjang. Di Malaysia, 3.2 juta ahli berumur bawah 55 tahun kini mempunyai kurang daripada RM1,000 dalam simpanan (Mohd Shahar Abdullah, 2022). Keputusan kerajaan membenarkan pengeluaran awal turut menormalkan penggunaan simpanan persaraan sebagai langkah krisis (Bateman et al., 2023), sekali gus menimbulkan persoalan tentang keselamatan kewangan masa depan dan kelestarian KWSP sebagai institusi persaraan.

Kelebihan dan Kelemahan Pengeluaran KWSP semasa Pandemik COVID-19

Pengeluaran awal wang simpanan persaraan semasa pandemik atau krisis telah terbukti memberi faedah dan kelebihan kepada individu dalam jangka pendek. Pengeluaran tersebut bukan setakat menyediakan aliran tunai segera, malahan menghalang individu daripada menanggung hutang baharu, dan membantu isi rumah menampung keperluan penting semasa krisis (Lim et al., 2021; Jusoh @ Hussain et al., 2020). Walau bagaimanapun, faedah ini turut diiringi dengan risiko. Pengeluaran awal wang simpanan persaraan mengurangkan baki persaraan keseluruhan, mengehadkan pulangan pelaburan masa depan, dan meningkatkan risiko kemiskinan hari tua (Jeszeck et al., 2019; Razi, 2021).

a. Kesan Pengeluaran KWSP Semasa COVID-19

Kesan daripada pengeluaran semasa pandemik telah mulai nampak di Malaysia. Data KWSP menunjukkan bahawa berikutan pengeluaran khas COVID-19, lebih 6.1 juta ahli mempunyai kurang daripada RM10,000 dalam akaun mereka, manakala 3.6 juta mempunyai kurang daripada RM1,000 sehingga menempatkan mereka pada risiko serius ketidakpastian kewangan semasa bersara (Razi, 2021).

Beberapa kerangka teori menyediakan lensa yang berguna untuk memahami tingkah laku ini. Teori Kitaran Hayat mencadangkan bahawa individu merancang simpanan dan pengeluaran untuk melancarkan penggunaan sepanjang hayat mereka (Ando & Modigliani, 1963). Walau bagaimanapun, krisis yang tidak dijangka seperti pandemik mengganggu perancangan ini, sehingga memaksa pelarasan tingkah laku, termasuk melakukan pengeluaran awal wang simpanan persaraan (Onwuka, 2021). Teori Tingkah Laku Terancang menawarkan pandangan lebih mendalam, menunjukkan bagaimana sikap, norma subjektif, dan kawalan tingkah laku yang dirasakan boleh membentuk keputusan pengeluaran awal wang simpanan persaraan (Ajzen, 1991). Realitinya, tekanan emosi, jangkaan sosial dan kewajipan budaya sering diutamakan berbanding perancangan kewangan jangka panjang yang rasional (Bateman et al., 2023; Shariff & Isah, 2019).

Oleh itu, sorotan kajian lepas membuktikan bahawa pengeluaran awal berfungsi sebagai mekanisme jangka pendek yang penting untuk menghadapi krisis, namun ia mewujudkan risiko jangka panjang terhadap kecukupan persaraan (Feher & de Bidegain, 2020; Jackson & Inglis, 2021). Walaupun kajian global dan Malaysia telah meneliti pamacu pengeluaran dari segi ekonomi, demografi, dan dasar, masih terdapat jurang dalam memahami bagaimana tekanan

ekonomi, ketegangan psikologi, pengaruh sosial, dan kewajiban budaya berinteraksi dalam membentuk keputusan ini dalam sektor tertentu. Kajian ini menangani jurang tersebut dengan meneliti pengalaman sebenar pekerja hospitaliti di Kuching, Sarawak, semasa pandemik COVID-19. Namun, kebanyakan kajian ini berfokus pada faktor ekonomi dan demografi, sedangkan peranan pengaruh sosial, emosi, dan budaya masih kurang diteliti.

METODOLOGI

Kajian ini berlandaskan paradigma konstruktivis dengan ontologi relativis yang melihat realiti sebagai subjektif, pelbagai, dan dibentuk oleh pengalaman individu (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Dalam konteks pengeluaran awal KWSP, keputusan kewangan difahami bukan semata-mata pembuatan kewangan yang rasional tetapi dipengaruhi oleh faktor budaya, emosi, dan situasi. Epistemologi interpretivis menempatkan pengetahuan sebagai sesuatu yang terbina melalui interaksi penyelidik dan peserta (Creswell, 2007), manakala pendekatan konstruktivis menekankan proses penciptaan makna dengan mengakui bahawa tingkah laku terbentuk secara sosial dan tafsiran turut dipengaruhi oleh perspektif penyelidik (Charmaz, 2006).

Maka, kajian berbentuk kualitatif dengan reka bentuk kajian kes pelbagai digunakan bagi membolehkan kajian mendalam terhadap proses membuat keputusan yang kompleks dan tidak dapat diukur secara kuantitatif (Creswell, 2009). Dua buah hotel yang bertaraf antarabangsa dan tempatan telah dipilih untuk merungkai kepelbagaian perspektif dalam sektor hospitaliti yang terkesan teruk disebabkan oleh pemotongan gaji, pemberhentian kerja, dan penutupan semasa pandemik COVID-19 (BERNAMA, 2020; Karim et al., 2020). Pemilihan Sarawak juga mengisi jurang geografi dalam penyelidikan simpanan persaraan yang kebanyakannya tertumpu di Semenanjung Malaysia (Kimiyaahgalam et al., 2019).

Pensampelan bertujuan digunakan bagi memilih 21 orang pekerja hotel (10 dari Hotel Huntington, 11 dari Hotel Wellington) serta seorang pakar akademik berkaitan dengan simpanan persaraan di Malaysia, yang mana semua pekerja hotel mempunyai pengalaman langsung dengan skim i-Lestari, i-Sinar, i-Citra atau pengeluaran khas. Kepelbagaian dari segi umur, jantina, etnik, status perkahwinan, tanggungan, pendidikan, pendapatan, dan tempoh perkhidmatan dipertimbangkan untuk memberi kepelbagaian perspektif (Palinkas et al., 2015). Saiz sampel akhir ditentukan melalui titik ketepuan tema yang mana semua peserta kajian telah menyatakan perkara yang sama dan hasil temubual telah menjadi tepu (Guest et al., 2006). Pemilihan peserta mengambil kira kepelbagaian dari segi umur, jantina, etnik, tahap pendidikan, pendapatan, status perkahwinan, dan tempoh perkhidmatan bagi memastikan variasi perspektif. Profil demografi peserta ditunjukkan dalam Jadual 1.

Jadual 1: Profil Demografi Peserta Kajian (N=21)

Ciri Peserta	Kategori	n	%
Hotel	Huntington	10	47.6
	Wellington	11	52.4
Umur	< 30 tahun	3	14.3
	30–39 tahun	9	42.9
	40–49 tahun	7	33.3
	≥ 50 tahun	2	9.5
Jantina	Perempuan	11	52.4
	Lelaki	10	47.6
Etnik	Iban	9	42.9

	Bidayuh	7	33.3
	Melayu	4	19.1
	Cina	1	4.8
Status Perkahwinan	Bujang dengan tanggungan	9	42.9
	Berkahwin dengan tanggungan	11	52.4
	Lain-lain	1	4.8
Tahap Pendidikan	SPM	7	33.3
	Diploma	3	14.3
	Ijazah	7	33.3
	Lain-lain (PMR, sijil, Std. 6)	4	19.1
Julat Pendapatan	RM1500–2500	15	71.4
	≥ RM2500	6	28.6
Tempoh Perkhidmatan	< 5 tahun	11	52.4
	5–10 tahun	6	28.6
	≥ 10 tahun	4	19.0
Tempoh Caruman KWSP	< 10 tahun	7	33.3
	10–20 tahun	6	28.6
	> 20 tahun	8	38.1
Status Semasa Pandemik	Jam kerja berkurang / pendapatan menurun	20	95.2
	Menganggur	1	4.8

Jadual 1 menunjukkan profil demografi peserta kajian. Sebahagian besar peserta terdiri daripada pekerja Hotel Wellington (52.4%) dan selebihnya dari Hotel Huntington (47.6%). Dari segi umur, majoriti berada dalam lingkungan 30–39 tahun (42.9%), manakala 33.3% berumur 40–49 tahun. Peserta lelaki dan perempuan hampir seimbang (47.6% dan 52.4%). Dari segi etnik, kumpulan terbesar ialah Iban (42.9%) diikuti oleh Bidayuh (33.3%) dan Melayu (19.1%). Lebih separuh daripada peserta (52.4%) adalah berstatus berkahwin dengan tanggungan, dan majoriti berpendapatan antara RM1500–RM2500 (71.4%). Sebilangan besar peserta juga mengalami pengurangan jam kerja dan pendapatan semasa pandemik COVID-19.

Data dikumpul antara Jun hingga November 2023 melalui temu bual separa berstruktur selama 45–90 minit, dijalankan secara bersemuka dan dalam talian. Kebenaran rasmi diperoleh daripada pihak pengurusan hotel, dan peserta memberikan persetujuan selaras dengan Akta Perlindungan Data Peribadi (PDPA 2010). Temu bual dirakam secara audio, ditranskrip secara verbatim, dan diterjemah antara Bahasa Sarawak, Bahasa Melayu, dan Inggeris jika diperlukan. Panduan temu bual disusun berasaskan soalan kajian, disemak oleh pakar dalam bidang simpanan persaraan, dan diuji melalui temu bual rintis (McGrath, Palmgren & Liljedahl, 2018).

Analisis data menggabungkan analisis naratif dan analisis tematik. Analisis naratif menelusuri perjalanan pembuatan keputusan dalam kalangan peserta kajian, termasuk emosi, kewajiban budaya, dan pengalaman peribadi, manakala analisis tematik berasaskan model enam fasa Braun dan Clarke (2006) mengenal pasti corak rentas kes seperti tingkah laku berjaga-jaga, tekanan kewangan, tekanan emosi, dan strategi penyesuaian diri terhadap situasi. Pengkodan manual (Saldaña, 2021) menghasilkan kod terbuka (cth. panik, tekanan keluarga, penyesalan) yang digabungkan ke dalam tema lebih luas berasaskan Teori Kitaran Hidup dan Teori Tingkah Laku Terancang. Memo refleksif digunakan bagi mendokumentasi kedudukan penyelidik dan pengaruh tafsiran, manakala analisis dokumen (pengumuman kerajaan, laporan KWSP) menambah konteks dan triangulasi (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Kepercayaan dan kesahan ditingkatkan melalui triangulasi peserta dan sumber data,

analisis berulang, jurnal refleksif, serta semakan rakan sebaya untuk mengukuhkan kebolehpercayaan dan kesahan (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021). Langkah-langkah etika merangkumi penyertaan secara sukarela, hak untuk menarik diri, penggunaan pseudonim, kerahsiaan yang ketat, serta pelaksanaan temu bual yang peka budaya bagi meminimumkan tekanan emosi (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Temu bual dijalankan dengan empati, kepekaan budaya, dan rasa hormat kepada peserta kajian bagi mengurangkan risiko tekanan emosi (Mohd Arifin, 2018). Kajian ini mendapat kelulusan daripada Fakulti Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, dan penghargaan dalam bentuk saguhati diberikan kepada peserta. Walaupun reka bentuk kualitatif kajian kes memberi kefahaman mendalam, ia tidak membenarkan generalisasi kepada semua sektor atau lokasi.

DAPATAN KAJIAN

Konteks Kajian dan Situasi Pekerja Hotel Semasa Pandemik

Bahagian ini membincangkan hasil kajian daripada dua kajian kes pekerja hotel iaitu Hotel Huntington dan Hotel Wellington di Kuching, Sarawak mengenai pengalaman mereka dengan pengeluaran awal dana Kumpulan Wang Simpanan Pekerja (KWSP) semasa pandemik COVID-19. Kedua-dua hotel menghadapi gangguan operasi yang teruk, pengurangan gaji dan palarasan tenaga kerja, yang secara langsung membentuk keputusan kewangan dan tingkah laku pengeluaran pekerja. Pandemik COVID-19 telah mengganggu operasi sektor hospitaliti dengan teruk kerana sekatan ke atas perjalanan sehingga menyebabkan kekurangan pendapatan dalam sektor pelancongan. Sebagai tindak balas, kedua-dua Hotel Huntington dan Wellington melaksanakan pemotongan gaji, mengurangkan waktu kerja dan menguatkuasakan cuti tanpa gaji. Namun begitu, beberapa hotel telah dijadikan sebagai pusat kuarantin pesakit atau orang yang terdedah kepada COVID-19. Langkah-langkah ini meletakkan pekerja di bawah tekanan kewangan yang teruk, menjadikan pengeluaran KWSP sebagai mekanisme kelangsungan hidup yang penting. Jadual 2 berikut mengilustrasikan profil informan.

Jadual 2: Profil Informan

Kod	Nama Samaran	Jantina	Umur	Jawatan / Peranan	Status Pekerjaan	Tarikh Temu Bual	Tempat Bertugas
H1	Paula	Perempuan	51	<i>F&B Service</i>	Sepenuh masa	5 Jun 2023	Hotel Huntington
H2	Shah	Lelaki	32	<i>Sous Chef</i>	Sepenuh masa	5 Jun 2023	Hotel Huntington
H3	Elia	Perempuan	40-an	<i>Front Office</i>	Sepenuh masa	5 Jun 2023	Hotel Huntington
H4	Roy	Lelaki	32	<i>Duty Manager</i>	Sepenuh masa	5 Jun 2023	Hotel Huntington
H5	Paul	Lelaki	51	<i>Front Office Assistant Manager</i>	Cuti tanpa gaji	29 Mei 2023	Hotel Huntington

H6	Zana	Perempuan	33	<i>Sales Officer (Government Accounts)</i>	Sepenuh masa	20 Mei 2023	Hotel Huntington
H7	Nam Gil	Lelaki	30	<i>Chef</i>	Sepenuh masa	5 Mei 2023	Hotel Huntington
H8	Kevin	Lelaki	30-an	Operasi Hotel	Sepenuh masa	Jun 2023	Hotel Huntington
H9	Arnold	Lelaki	40-an	Operasi Hotel	Sepenuh masa	Jun 2023	Hotel Huntington
W1	Nawi	Perempuan	49	<i>Supervisor Steward</i>	Sepenuh masa	1 Julai 2023	Hotel Wellington
W2	Ros	Perempuan	44	<i>Housekeeping</i>	Sepenuh masa	1 Julai 2023	Hotel Wellington
W3	Sheila	Perempuan	44	<i>Housekeeping</i>	Sepenuh masa	1 Julai 2023	Hotel Wellington
W4	Wie	Perempuan	42	<i>Demi Chef</i>	Sepenuh masa	1 Julai 2023	Hotel Wellington
W5	Ali	Lelaki	40-an	Operasi Hotel	Sepenuh masa	Julai 2023	Hotel Wellington

Tekanan Ekonomi sebagai Pendorong Utama Pengeluaran

Tekanan ekonomi adalah faktor dominan yang mendorong pengeluaran awal wang simpanan persaraan dalam kalangan peserta kajian ini. Pemotongan gaji, cuti tanpa gaji dan ketidakjaminan pekerjaan telah mendorong pekerja untuk melihat simpanan KWSP sebagai aset cair yang boleh digunakan bagi menjamin kesinambungan hidup mereka. Pemotongan gaji, cuti tanpa gaji dan ketidakjaminan pekerjaan menyebabkan pekerja menjadikan simpanan KWSP sebagai aset cair untuk kesinambungan hidup. Kenaikan kos sara hidup semasa pandemik meningkatkan lagi tekanan, terutamanya bagi pekerja berpendapatan rendah dan sederhana yang bergelut dengan perbelanjaan harian, pembayaran balik pinjaman dan bil perubatan. Ramai peserta menekankan bahawa tanpa mengakses simpanan mereka, keperluan harian tidak dapat ditampung.

“Waktu ya, kamek orang nang banyak la benda yang tergendala macam motor, rumah, macam pande sik cukup bah duit. Gaji dah kenak potong. Jadi, sik cukup lah duit nampung perbelanjaan hari-hari.”

(Pada waktu itu, banyak perkara yang tergendala seperti bayaran kereta dan rumah kerana wang dirasakan tidak mencukupi. Gaji telah dipotong, jadi wang memang tidak cukup untuk menampung perbelanjaan harian). (Nawi, Hotel Wellington)

“Betul betul nang sik ada gaji lah. Nak harapkan sidak PERKESO pun sik dapat. Sekali 2 jak ya pun 600... untuk family di kampung... keperluan

dapur.”

(Memang langsung tidak ada gaji. Hendak bergantung kepada PERKESO pun tidak dapat. Bantuan yang diterima hanya sekali dua berjumlah RM600... itu pula digunakan untuk keluarga di kampung... untuk keperluan dapur.) (Paula, Hotel Huntington)

Keadaan ini menunjukkan bagaimana KWSP menjadi alat kelangsungan hidup bagi pekerja dalam sektor hospitaliti, terutamanya setelah berhadapan dengan keadaan cuti tanpa gaji dan pemotongan gaji serta peningkatan mendadak dalam kos sara hidup.

Pengaruh Polisi Kerajaan terhadap Keputusan Pengeluaran

Polisi kerajaan yang membenarkan pengeluaran wang simpanan persaraan yang berkaitan dengan pandemik sangat mempengaruhi keputusan pengeluaran dalam kalangan peserta kajian ini. Walaupun peserta kajian mengalu-alukan inisiatif seperti i-Lestari, i-Sinar, i-Citra, dan pengeluaran khas, ada yang menyatakan kebimbangan mengenai kemampuan langkah tersebut dan kemungkinan yang membawa kepada lanjutan umur persaraan.

“Kamek nangka peluang yang ada lah... government advertise... so kamek applylah...”

(Saya mengambil peluang yang ada... kerajaan mengiklankan permohonan tersebut... jadi saya pun memohon...)(Shah, Hotel Huntington)

“Mcm kinek tok kan berdolak dalih jak government mok berik sik maok berik nak... enforce 65 years old... mana yang larat la.”
(Seolah-olah pada masa kini kerajaan berdolak-dalih sama ada mahu memberi atau tidak... kerajaan mahu menguatkuasakan umur persaraan 65 tahun... tetapi persoalannya, siapa yang mampu bertahan sehingga umur itu.) (Elia, Hotel Huntington)

Faktor Peribadi: Literasi Kewangan, Motif Berjaga-jaga dan Pengaruh Sosial

Tahap literasi kewangan juga berbeza-beza dalam kalangan peserta kajian. Literasi kewangan membawa maksud keupayaan memahami konsep dan risiko kewangan serta menggunakan pengetahuan, kemahiran dan sikap tersebut untuk membuat keputusan kewangan yang bijak demi meningkatkan kesejahteraan individu dan masyarakat (OECD, 2022). Dalam konteks kajian ini, perbezaan tahap literasi kewangan mempengaruhi cara peserta menilai peranan KWSP dan kegunaannya semasa pandemik. Seseengah pekerja menganggap KWSP hanya sebagai skim simpanan persaraan dan melihat dana tersebut sebagai simpanan jangka panjang yang tidak sepatutnya digunakan kecuali selepas bersara. Manakala yang lain menganggapnya sebagai jaringan keselamatan yang fleksibel semasa kecemasan, menyebabkan mereka lebih bersedia untuk mengakses simpanan tersebut apabila berdepan ketidakstabilan pendapatan.

Motif berjaga-jaga juga jelas, kerana informan kajian mengeluarkan dana dengan menjangkakan pemberhentian kerja atau ketidakjaminan dalam pekerjaan semasa pandemik. Faktor ini menjadikan pengeluaran awal KWSP sebagai langkah pencegahan bagi mengurangkan risiko masa depan, terutamanya apabila mereka melihat keadaan ekonomi yang tidak menentu dan kemungkinan hilang kerja pada bila-bila masa. Pengaruh sosial, terutamanya nasihat daripada rakan sebaya dan jangkaan daripada keluarga, memperkukuhkan lagi keputusan pengeluaran awal dana KSWP. Dalam beberapa kes, keputusan individu dipengaruhi

oleh persekitaran sosial yang normalisasi tindakan pengeluaran tersebut, terutamanya apabila rakan sekerja atau ahli keluarga juga melakukan tindakan sama.

Kewajipan keluarga, seperti menyara anak atau ibu bapa yang lebih tua, sering disebut sebagai faktor yang mempengaruhi keputusan melakukan pengeluaran semasa pandemik. Tanggungjawab kewangan tambahan ini menambahkan lagi tekanan kepada peserta untuk mengakses simpanan mereka. Majoriti informan kajian ini melihat KWSP sebagai jaminan persaraan dan juga sebagai alat kelangsungan hidup semasa kecemasan, menjadikan dana tersebut berfungsi dua peranan: sebagai perlindungan masa depan dan sebagai penyelamat kewangan jangka pendek dalam situasi kecemasan seperti pandemik COVID-19.

Hal ini menunjukkan keperluan untuk meningkatkan tahap literasi kewangan bagi membantu individu mengenal pasti keperluan jangka pendek dan matlamat kewangan jangka panjang. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa tahap literasi kewangan dalam kalangan informan kajian adalah tidak sekata, kerana walaupun mereka memahami peranan KWSP sebagai skim simpanan persaraan, terdapat perbezaan dalam cara mereka mentafsir dan menggunakan dana tersebut semasa pandemik. Sebahagian informan menganggap KWSP semata-mata sebagai simpanan jangka panjang untuk persaraan, manakala sebahagian lagi melihatnya sebagai jaringan keselamatan fleksibel yang boleh digunakan pada bila-bila masa dalam situasi kecemasan. Perbezaan pemahaman ini menggambarkan jurang dalam pengetahuan kewangan asas, terutamanya berkaitan risiko pengeluaran awal dan kesannya terhadap jaminan persaraan.

Tambahan pula, keputusan informan untuk membuat pengeluaran awal lebih banyak dipengaruhi oleh tekanan ekonomi, nasihat rakan sebaya, dan tuntutan keluarga berbanding pertimbangan kewangan jangka panjang. Situasi ini menunjukkan bahawa walaupun informan mengetahui kewujudan KWSP dan memahami fungsi asasnya, mereka tidak mengaplikasikan pengetahuan kewangan secara menyeluruh ketika membuat keputusan. Oleh itu, walaupun informan dalam kajian ini memahami peranan KWSP secara umum, tekanan ekonomi dan kewangan telah mempengaruhi mereka untuk membuat pengeluaran awal KWSP tanpa menilai sepenuhnya implikasi jangka panjang terhadap simpanan persaraan mereka.

Justeru, pendidikan kewangan yang lebih berkesan perlu diperkenalkan bagi membantu individu membuat keputusan yang lebih bijak mengenai simpanan KWSP mereka supaya mereka dapat menilai kebaikan dan keburukan pengeluaran awal dengan lebih teliti. Dapatan ini jelas menunjukkan bahawa tahap literasi kewangan peserta mempengaruhi cara mereka mentafsir fungsi KWSP dan membuat keputusan kewangan semasa krisis.

Kebanyakan informan tidak mendapatkan nasihat daripada institusi kewangan atau pakar kewangan sebelum membuat keputusan untuk melakukan pengeluaran KWSP semasa pandemik, dan dapatan ini merupakan salah satu penemuan yang membimbangkan. Sebaliknya, mereka bergantung pada pertimbangan sendiri atau perbualan kasual dengan ahli keluarga. Tingkah laku ini mencerminkan tahap literasi kewangan yang rendah, khususnya dalam aspek mencari sumber nasihat kewangan yang sah sebelum membuat keputusan penting berkaitan simpanan jangka panjang. Ali berkongsi pengalamannya:

“Selalu kita dengar berita, sidak wartawan mudah untuk demi kelangsungan hidup lah. Untuk cover kita pun bajet. Kalau mun income kita macam, orang yang besar-besar income, 5 thousand, 6 thousand a month, ya sik kesah gilak, sik berasa bah, tapi mun macam yang golongan yang gaji minimum memang terasa.”

(Kita selalu mendengar dalam berita apabila wartawan menyebut bahawa pengeluaran dilakukan demi kelangsungan hidup. Ia membantu menampung bajet kita juga. Jika pendapatan seseorang tinggi, seperti lima atau enam ribu sebulan, mereka mungkin tidak terasa kesannya. Tetapi bagi golongan berpendapatan minimum, kesannya memang sangat dirasakan.)

Begitu juga Wie yang mengakui tidak mendapatkan nasihat kewangan sebelum membuat pengeluaran.

“Memang sik ada. Sebab kamek ingat jangka masa pandemik tok lamak, and anak kamek pun maok pake telefon semua, belajar time ya, tiga-tiga, paksa aku belilah.”

(Memang tidak ada wang. Saya ingat tempoh pandemik ini akan berlarutan, dan anak-anak saya pula perlu menggunakan telefon untuk belajar ketika itu, ketiga-tiganya. Jadi saya terpaksa membelinya.)

Situasi ini menunjukkan bahawa peserta yang mempunyai pengetahuan kewangan yang terhad cenderung membuat keputusan segera tanpa mempertimbangkan kesan jangka panjang kepada simpanan persaraan mereka. Tambahan pula, ramai peserta tidak menilai kesan seperti kehilangan dividen masa hadapan atau kekurangan dana persaraan, yang sekali lagi menggambarkan jurang dalam literasi kewangan mereka. Keputusan-keputusan ini lebih bersifat reaktif dan bersandarkan keperluan mendesak, bukannya berdasarkan prinsip perancangan kewangan.

Walau bagaimanapun, kebanyakan peserta menunjukkan pemahaman asas tentang tujuan utama KWSP sebagai dana simpanan persaraan. Ada kalangan informan yang menekankan kepentingan KWSP sebagai simpanan hari tua, terutamanya bagi pekerja sektor swasta. Ini menunjukkan bahawa informan mempunyai pengetahuan asas, tetapi pemahaman asas ini tidak semestinya diterjemahkan kepada keupayaan membuat keputusan kewangan jangka panjang menjadi satu indikator penting dalam literasi kewangan yang lebih mendalam.

Sebahagian informan pula melihat KWSP sebagai jaringan keselamatan semasa kecemasan apabila dilihat sebagai “pelampung kecemasan” yang bukan sahaja untuk persaraan tetapi juga dalam situasi mendesak. Persepsi ini menunjukkan literasi kewangan berfungsi yang lebih tertumpu kepada keperluan jangka pendek, berbanding pemahaman mendalam tentang kesan jangka panjang terhadap kecukupan dana persaraan. Ini dikongsikan oleh Elia sebagaimana berikut.

“Masa ya neyda kita expect covid ya macam tok. Efek bah. Because this is the first time we jadi macam tok nak. so kita every month sik tauk next month ya apa, sik tauk bah.” (Pada masa tersebut, kita tidak jangka COVID akan jadi seperti apa yang telah kita lalui. Disebabkan pertama kali, kita menjadi seperti ini. Setiap bulan kita tidak tahu apa yang akan berlaku pada bulan berikutnya.)
(Elia, 29 Mei 2023)

Pandangan yang hampir sama turut dikongsi oleh Paul, yang melihat pengeluaran KWSP sebagai satu keperluan untuk kesinambungan hidup semasa tempoh ketidakpastian pekerjaan.

“Bila cuti tanpa gaji, sikda pilihan lain. KWSP jak yang boleh tampung keluarga masa ya.” (Bila kita cuti tanpa gaji, hanya KWSP yang boleh menampung keluarga pada masa tersebut). (Paul, 29 Mei 2023)

Elia pula menekankan fungsi KWSP sebagai mekanisme kecemasan dalam keadaan mendesak dan ketidakpastian dasar kerajaan. Elia berpendapat sebagaimana berikut,

“KWSP ya bukan lagi pasal hari tua jak. Masa pandemik, ya jadi duit kecemasan. Mun sik keluar, sik tauk macam mana nak hidup.” (KWSP bukan lagi mengenai hari tua sahaja. Semasa pandemic, ia menjadi duit kecemasan. Kalau tidak dikeluarkan, tidak tahu macam mana nak hidup).
(Elia, 5 Jun 2023)

Persepsi ini menunjukkan literasi kewangan yang lebih bersifat fungsional dan tertumpu kepada keperluan jangka pendek, berbanding pemahaman mendalam tentang kesan jangka panjang terhadap kecukupan dana persaraan.

Sebaliknya, informan seperti Shah menunjukkan pemahaman yang lebih kukuh terhadap fungsi KWSP sebagai instrumen perancangan kewangan jangka panjang. Shah, misalnya, menegaskan bahawa walaupun pengeluaran membantu dalam jangka pendek, implikasi masa depan perlu dipertimbangkan.

“Kamek rasa mun ada peluang tok lagik, kamek mungkin sik ngeuarkan mun ekonomi dengan gaji kamek stabil sebab untuk bidang swasta sikda pencen, EPF ya saving untuk hari tidak bekerja agik lah.”. (Saya rasa, kalau ada lagi peluang pengeluaran, saya mungkin tidak akan membuat pengeluaran lagi kalau ekonomi dan gaji saya sudah stabil kerana untuk pekerja di bidang swasta yang tidak ada pencen, KWSP merupakan simpanan untuk hari bila kita tidak lagi bekerja) (Shah, 5 Jun 2023)

Pandangan hibrid turut dikenal pasti dalam kalangan informan seperti Paula, yang melihat KWSP sebagai dana persaraan dan juga dana kecemasan.

“Tujuan EPF tok bagus memang bagus la. Macam orang yang betul-betul memerlukanlah macam masa pandemic memang perlu gilaklah. Bagus juak sikda ya ngeluar time macam ya tapi mun sik perlu gilak, macam sik, I mean dapat di nokya sik perlu la. Bagus la untuk hari tua lah..” (Tujuan KWSP ini memang baik. Ia sangat diperlukan terutamanya oleh mereka yang benar-benar memerlukan, seperti semasa pandemik dahulu apabila ia menjadi sangat penting. Adalah baik sekiranya pengeluaran tidak dibuat pada waktu seperti itu, namun jika seseorang benar-benar tidak memerlukan, maka pengeluaran tersebut sebenarnya tidak perlu dilakukan. Pada asasnya, KWSP adalah simpanan untuk hari tua.)
(Paula, 5 Jun 2023)

Gabungan pandangan ini menunjukkan bahawa walaupun peserta memahami fungsi asas KWSP, perbezaan cara mereka menggunakan dan mentafsir maklumat tersebut mencerminkan variasi tahap literasi kewangan dalam kalangan pekerja hospitaliti semasa pandemik COVID-19.

Perbezaan pandangan ini memperlihatkan tahap literasi kewangan yang tidak seragam. Ada informan yang mempunyai pemahaman lebih tinggi yang memperlihatkan KWSP sebagai komponen penting dalam perancangan kewangan jangka panjang. Ini menunjukkan kewujudan tahap literasi yang lebih baik dalam kalangan informan tertentu. Sebaliknya, ada pula kalangan informan yang menekankan kepentingan menggunakan sepenuhnya KWSP semasa pandemik

yang menunjukkan corak pemikiran yang lebih praktikal dan bergantung kepada keperluan segera. Walaupun informan memahami tujuan KWSP, keutamaan mereka tetap tertumpu pada kelangsungan hidup jangka pendek, sekali gus mencerminkan kekurangan kemahiran pengurusan kewangan jangka panjang.

Informan melihat KWSP sebagai dana persaraan dan juga dana kecemasan. Walaupun persepsi ini menunjukkan bahawa informan memahami fungsi asas KWSP, perbezaan cara mereka menggunakan maklumat tersebut menggambarkan tahap literasi kewangan yang berbeza. Bagi sesetengah informan, pandangan ini menunjukkan kemampuan merancang masa depan, manakala bagi pandangan lain, ia menggambarkan pergantungan kepada KWSP kerana kekurangan simpanan lain membuktikan satu lagi tanda literasi kewangan yang terhad.

Secara keseluruhan, dapatan menunjukkan bahawa walaupun informan memahami peranan umum KWSP, ramai yang masih kekurangan kemahiran literasi kewangan yang lebih mendalam seperti menilai risiko jangka panjang, mencari nasihat profesional, atau mengurus simpanan alternatif. Tekanan ekonomi dan kewangan semasa pandemik mempengaruhi mereka membuat pengeluaran awal, tetapi cara keputusan itu dibuat melalui pertimbangan sendiri, nasihat rakan atau keluarga, dan keutamaan keperluan segera dan memperlihatkan jurang literasi kewangan yang signifikan dalam kalangan informan.

Oleh itu, terdapat keperluan untuk meningkatkan pendidikan kewangan agar individu dapat membuat keputusan yang lebih tepat mengenai simpanan KWSP mereka, termasuk kemampuan menilai implikasi jangka pendek dan jangka panjang sebelum melakukan pengeluaran awal.

Kesan Jangka Pendek dan Jangka Panjang Pengeluaran

Pengeluaran KWSP dalam jangka pendek telah memberikan kelegaan yang penting kepada kesinambungan hidup para informan. Mereka menggunakan dana untuk mengekalkan penggunaan, menampung perbelanjaan untuk makanan, sewa, utiliti, pinjaman dan juga penjagaan kesihatan. Mereka juga secara konsisten melaporkan bahawa tanpa pengeluaran, mereka tidak akan dapat bertahan dengan pemotongan gaji atau cuti tanpa gaji.

Namun dalam jangka panjang, para informan mengakui kesan pengeluaran yang ketara. Mereka yang hampir bersara melahirkan rasa kesal kerana hanya mempunyai masa yang terhad untuk membina semula dana yang telah digunakan, manakala pekerja yang lebih muda dan dalam pertengahan kerjaya mengimbangi keperluan dengan kesedaran tentang risiko masa depan. Selain itu, wujud juga kesan psikologi dan sosial kepada informan kajian. Pengeluaran yang dilakukan boleh menghilangkan kegusaran berkaitan dengan kewangan buat sementara waktu tetapi akhirnya membawa kepada tekanan dan penyesalan tentang jaminan persaraan yang telah berkurangan. Informan kajian juga menggambarkan konflik dalaman antara menangani keperluan segera dan jaminan kesejahteraan masa depan. Tanggungjawab sosial mengukuhkan keputusan ini, kerana pengeluaran sering dikaitkan dengan menampung tanggungan seperti anak-anak, ibu bapa dan ahli keluarga dan rakan yang memerlukan.

Penemuan ini selari dengan Teori Kitaran Hayat (LCT) kerana keutamaan adalah berbeza-beza merentasi peringkat kehidupan. Informan awal kerjaya memfokuskan kelangsungan hidup serta-merta, informan pertengahan kerjaya mengimbangi keperluan semasa dan masa depan, manakala informan menghampiri persaraan merasakan penyesalan paling besar. Teori Tingkah Laku Terancang (TPB) turut menjelaskan tingkah laku pengeluaran melalui sikap, norma sosial dan kawalan tingkah laku yang dirasakan.

“Takut kamek jadi kedak mak kamek... sik cukup... imagine tinggal 20 ribu, 50 ribu jak... 10 years akan datang.” (*Saya takut menjadi seperti ibu saya... wang simpanannya tidak mencukupi... bayangkan jika hanya tinggal RM20 ribu atau RM50 ribu sahaja... bagaimana pula dalam 10 tahun akan datang.*) (Zana, Hotel Huntington)

“Actually, I regret... dividend smaller... you have to replace back the money you withdraw.”
(*Sebenarnya, saya menyesal... dividen yang diterima menjadi lebih kecil... dan kita perlu menggantikan semula wang yang telah dikeluarkan.*) (Roy, Hotel Huntington)

Cadangan Strategi daripada Perspektif Informan

Beberapa strategi telah dicadangkan berdasarkan hasil temubual bersama informan kajian untuk meningkatkan peranan KWSP dalam menjaga keselamatan persaraan. Yang pertama adalah untuk meningkatkan lagi tahap literasi kewangan dalam kalangan pekerja di Malaysia dengan memberi kesedaran tentang kesan jangka panjang pengeluaran. Yang kedua adalah dengan memberikan insentif caruman iaitu dengan memperkenalkan skim padanan majikan atau faedah cukai untuk menggalakkan simpanan. Ketiga adalah melanjutkan penyertaan tenaga kerja lanjutan dengan meningkatkan umur persaraan dan pada masa yang sama menyediakan peluang kemahiran semula dan peningkatan kemahiran untuk membantu pekerja menggantikan atau menambah dana simpanan persaraan yang telah banyak digunakan. Yang keempat adalah jaringan perlindungan sosial yang lebih luas, termasuk perlindungan kepada pekerja gig dan tidak formal melalui caruman mandatori atau progresif.

Pengalaman Kedua-dua Hotel

Pengalaman peserta kajian dari Hotel Huntington dan Wellington menunjukkan bagaimana pengeluaran awal KWSP berfungsi sebagai alat kelangsungan hidup semasa krisis COVID-19 tetapi pada masa yang sama mendedahkan kelemahan jangka panjang dalam sistem jaminan persaraan. Hasil kajian ini memperkukuhkan lagi ketidakseimbangan antara kelangsungan hidup jangka pendek dan perancangan persaraan yang mampan. Campur tangan polisi yang memfokuskan kepada tahap literasi kewangan, mekanisme caruman secara inklusif, lanjutan penyertaan tenaga kerja, dan tahap perlindungan sosial yang lebih kukuh adalah penting untuk memastikan daya tahan sistem KWSP dalam krisis masa depan.

PERBINCANGAN

Perbincangan ini menyepadukan penemuan daripada Hotel Huntington dan Wellington untuk mengkaji dinamik pengeluaran awal Kumpulan Wang Simpanan Pekerja (KWSP) semasa pandemik COVID-19. Dengan meletakkan pengalaman hidup peserta dalam kerangka kerja teori dan literatur sedia ada, analisis tersebut memperkukuhkan lagi penyelidikan terdahulu dan pandangan baharu khusus untuk sektor hospitaliti di Sarawak.

Kedua-dua hotel telah mengalami gangguan operasi yang teruk akibat pelaksanaan perintah kawalan pergerakan dan sekatan perjalanan, yang membawa kepada pemotongan gaji, cuti tanpa gaji, serta pemberhentian pekerja yang menyebabkan kesusahan kewangan yang serius. Pekerja di Hotel Huntington banyak menumpukan kepada kelangsungan hidup serta-merta, manakala informan kajian di Hotel Wellington juga mencerminkan perasaan risau akan

ketidakjaminan persaraan jangka panjang. Hasil kajian ini mengukuhkan kajian lepas yang mengenal pasti kesan tidak seimbang pandemik terhadap pekerja sektor perkhidmatan (Lim et al., 2021) dan juga kenyataan Razi (2021) yang menyatakan bahawa lebih enam juta ahli KWSP mempunyai simpanan di bawah RM10,000, menggambarkan kelemahan sosioekonomi yang semakin ketara dalam kalangan pekerja hotel.

Kejutian pendapatan turut muncul sebagai punca utama pengeluaran awal dana simpanan persaraan dilakukan, selaras dengan bukti bahawa kehilangan pendapatan secara tiba-tiba adalah faktor dominan di sebalik pengeluaran awal (Alkhawaja & Albait, 2020; Lim et al., 2021). Walau bagaimanapun, kajian ini juga mendedahkan pengaruh kuat kewajipan sosial dan budaya kerana informan kajian mengeluarkan dana untuk menyara tanggungan dan memenuhi jangkaan keluarga. Perkara ini selari dengan Yee et al. (2009) yang mengaitkan tingkah laku kewangan di Malaysia dengan norma budaya.

Polisi kerajaan yang membenarkan akses kepada simpanan KWSP melalui skim seperti i-Lestari dan i-Sinar, sejajar dengan Bateman et al. (2023), yang menekankan peranan reka bentuk institusi dalam membentuk keputusan persaraan. Gabungan tekanan ekonomi, kewajipan budaya, dan polisi yang membenarkan akses pengeluaran dana KWSP telah mewujudkan perasaan yang kuat untuk melakukan pengeluaran awal, walaupun dalam kalangan pekerja yang pada asalnya melihat KWSP sebagai satu mekanisme simpanan jangka panjang.

Dalam jangka pendek, pengeluaran bertindak sebagai talian hayat untuk menjaga kelangsungan, menampung kos perubatan dan membayar bil dan komitmen sedia ada. Ini menguatkan kenyataan Nurhisham Hussein (2021) bahawa pengeluaran KWSP memberikan kelegaan segera semasa krisis. Namun, peserta juga mengakui kesan jangka panjang, terutamanya mereka yang hampir bersara yang tidak mempunyai masa yang mencukupi untuk membina semula simpanan. Ini sejajar dengan Lorca (2020), Slavov (2023), Jamaluddin et al. (2021) dan, Feher dan de Bidegain (2020), yang memberi amaran bahawa akses pramatang boleh menjejaskan kecukupan persaraan.

Peserta kajian yang lebih muda mempunyai kurang kekesalan berbanding dengan peserta yang hampir bersara tetapi masih mengakui risiko di masa hadapan, mencerminkan hujah Lusardi dan Mitchell (2023) yang menyatakan bahawa tahap literasi kewangan yang rendah menyumbang kepada pembuatan keputusan jangka pendek. Di kedua-dua hotel, peserta menggambarkan ketegangan dalaman antara memenuhi keperluan semasa dan melindungi keselamatan masa depan sehingga menekankan lagi kesan seperti beban psikologi dalam menangani krisis kewangan dengan jaringan keselamatan yang terhad.

Dapatan ini sejajar dengan Teori Kitaran Hayat (LCT), yang menjelaskan perbezaan tingkah laku pengeluaran berdasarkan peringkat kehidupan. Peserta muda mengutamakan keperluan segera, peserta di pertengahan kerjaya cuba menyeimbangkan keperluan kini dan masa depan, manakala peserta yang hampir bersara menzahirkan penyesalan yang mendalam. Corak ini selaras dengan Skinner (2007), Bateman et al. (2023) dan, Awang et al. (2020) yang menekankan perbezaan generasi dalam tingkah laku persaraan.

Teori Tingkah Laku Terancang (TPB) turut memberikan penjelasan yang signifikan di mana keputusan pengeluaran pekerja dipengaruhi oleh sikap mereka terhadap KWSP, norma sosial yang dibentuk oleh keluarga dan rakan sebaya, serta persepsi kawalan ketika berdepan ketidakpastian kewangan. Dinamik tingkah laku ini sejajar dengan Goda et al. (2019) yang menegaskan pentingnya faktor psikologi dan sosial dalam pilihan kewangan kerana kehilangan

pekerjaan akibat faktor penawaran dan permintaan semasa COVID-19 telah menjejaskan pekerja dengan serius serta memberi kesan besar terhadap pasaran buruh.

Antara strategi yang dicadangkan informan bagi membina semula serta melindungi simpanan termasuklah peningkatan literasi kewangan, galakan kepada caruman sukarela tambahan, dan sokongan majikan melalui caruman padanan atau insentif lain yang boleh menarik perhatian pekerja. Cadangan ini sejajar dengan perbincangan dalam literatur yang menekankan peri pentingnya pendidikan persaraan dan kecekapan kewangan (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2023).

Hasil kajian turut sejajar dengan cadangan dasar Jiton dan Ibrahim (2024), yang menegaskan pentingnya sistem keselamatan sosial yang lebih kukuh bagi melindungi golongan berpendapatan rendah. Antara keutamaan utama yang dikenal pasti ialah memperluas liputan KWSP kepada pekerja tidak formal dan gig serta memperkukuh dasar perlindungan sosial negara, bagi mengurangkan pergantungan kepada simpanan persaraan sewaktu krisis. Dapatan tersebut menggambarkan ketegangan antara fleksibiliti dan kemampuan dalam dasar simpanan persaraan. Walaupun pengeluaran yang dibenarkan kerajaan mengurangkan kesusahan kewangan serta-merta, ia juga mempercepatkan ketidakjaminan persaraan. Rangka kerja KWSP yang lebih adaptif diperlukan yang boleh memberikan bantuan krisis tanpa menjejaskan kecukupan jangka panjang.

Kes Hotel Huntington dan Wellington menunjukkan bahawa pengeluaran awal KWSP berperanan sebagai alat kelangsungan hidup namun turut membawa implikasi sebagai liabiliti kepada masa depan persaraan. Kajian ini mengesahkan dapatan kajian lepas mengenai risiko dan faedah pengeluaran awal, di samping memperluas perbincangan dengan menonjolkan dimensi budaya, sosial dan psikologi dalam proses membuat keputusan kewangan. Oleh itu, tindak balas dasar yang holistik iaitu berteraskan tahap literasi kewangan yang tinggi, mekanisme sumbangan yang lebih inklusif, lanjutan penyertaan tenaga kerja, serta perlindungan sosial yang kukuh adalah penting bagi mengimbangi keperluan kelangsungan hidup semasa dengan jaminan persaraan masa hadapan.

Sebagai langkah ke hadapan, disarankan agar KWSP membangunkan Pelan Pengurusan Strategik Bencana yang dapat diaktifkan semasa krisis ekonomi atau kesihatan awam pada masa hadapan. Pelan ini perlu berasaskan pengalaman pandemik COVID-19 dengan menekankan aspek daya tahan sistem, keberkesanan komunikasi risiko, dan strategi pemulihan simpanan selepas krisis. Selain itu, penyelidikan masa depan boleh meneliti perbandingan antara sektor seperti perkilangan, peruncitan dan pelancongan, bagi memahami variasi tingkah laku pengeluaran serta kesannya terhadap kesejahteraan sosial dan ekonomi pekerja. Pendekatan longitudinal juga wajar dipertimbangkan untuk menilai impak jangka panjang pengeluaran awal terhadap kestabilan persaraan dan kepercayaan terhadap institusi keselamatan sosial negara.

KESIMPULAN

Pandemik COVID-19 telah mendedahkan keterbatasan dalam rangka kerja perlindungan sosial Malaysia, khususnya peranan dwi Kumpulan Wang Simpanan Pekerja (KWSP) sebagai jaminan persaraan dan alat kelangsungan hidup semasa kecemasan. Walaupun skim khas seperti i-Lestari, i-Sinar, i-Citra dan pengeluaran khas berjaya memberikan kelegaan jangka pendek yang penting, ia juga mewujudkan cabaran terhadap kecukupan persaraan dalam jangka panjang.

Kajian ini mendapati bahawa keputusan pengeluaran awal bukan sahaja dipacu oleh faktor ekonomi, tetapi turut dipengaruhi oleh pengaruh sosial, kewajipan budaya, serta reaksi psikologi seperti ketakutan dan tekanan. Penemuan ini memperkayakan perbincangan teori, khususnya dengan memperluaskan penerapan Teori Kitaran Hayat (LCT) dan Teori Tingkah Laku Terancang (TPB), apabila realiti sosial dan emosi terbukti memainkan peranan penting dalam keputusan kewangan semasa krisis. Dengan mengintegrasikan LCT dan TPB, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa norma sosial dan emosi boleh mengatasi rasionaliti ekonomi dalam keputusan kewangan, satu dimensi yang jarang ditekankan dalam kajian terdahulu.

Sehubungan itu, hasil kajian ini menunjukkan keperluan untuk penambahbaikan dasar KWSP yang lebih adaptif dan inklusif, agar sistem persaraan mampu menyeimbangkan keperluan kelangsungan hidup segera dengan keselamatan kewangan jangka panjang. Antara cadangan utama termasuklah memperkukuh literasi kewangan, memperkenalkan mekanisme perlindungan bersyarat ketika krisis tanpa menjejaskan simpanan persaraan, serta menyesuaikan komunikasi dasar dengan mengambil kira faktor sosial dan budaya. Selain itu, dapatan kajian ini menambah nilai kepada literatur sedia ada dengan menonjolkan pengalaman pekerja di Sarawak, seterusnya membuka ruang untuk perbandingan dengan konteks Sabah dan wilayah lain di Malaysia Timur yang masih kurang dikaji.

Melalui langkah sebegini, Malaysia berpeluang membina sistem persaraan yang lebih berdaya tahan, responsif terhadap krisis, serta mampu melindungi kesejahteraan pekerja pada semua peringkat kerjaya. Walau bagaimanapun, keterbatasan kajian ini dari segi saiz sampel dan fokus kepada sektor hospitaliti perlu diakui. Penyelidikan di masa hadapan boleh menggunakan pendekatan campuran (*mixed-method*) dengan data kuantitatif KWSP sebenar bagi menguji pola yang ditemui, selain membuat perbandingan antara Sabah, Sarawak dan Semenanjung Malaysia.

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**STRATEGI DAKWAH KRISTIANISASI MUBALIGH DI BORNEO
UTARA TERHADAP PENDUDUK PERIBUMI, 1881-1963**
**CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY EVANGELISM STRATEGIES IN NORTH
BORNEO TOWARDS INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, 1881-1963**

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ABSTRAK Artikel ini mengulas strategi dakwah Kristianisasi oleh mubaligh Kristian yang telah bertapak di Borneo Utara dari tahun 1881 hingga tahun 1963. Apabila mubaligh Kristian mengetahui bahawa Borneo Utara didiami penduduk peribumi yang masih pagan, mereka melihat bahawa keadaan penduduk peribumi di Borneo Utara perlu diubah melalui penyebaran agama Kristian. Penulisan ini menggunakan analisis sejarah dan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif yang melibatkan analisis buku, jurnal, laporan kerajaan seperti *Colonial Office Report* dan sumber lisan daripada penduduk peribumi. Objektif penulisan ini adalah meninjau strategi dakwah Kristianisasi di Borneo Utara dari tahun 1881-1963. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa mubaligh Kristian menggunakan beberapa strategi untuk menyebarkan ajaran agama Kristian termasuklah meninjau kawasan misi, pelaksanaan sakramen pembaptisan dan mewujudkan institusi pendidikan. Pendidikan menjadi strategi ampuh dalam menyebarkan ajaran agama Kristian. Namun begitu, strategi minor seperti peninjauan kawasan misi dan sakramen pembaptisan turut memainkan peranan penting dalam penyebaran agama Kristian. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa strategi yang digunakan oleh mubaligh Kristian berjaya menarik minat masyarakat Kadazandusun dan Rungus untuk memeluk agama Kristian.

Kata Kunci: Strategi, Dakwah Kristianisasi, Mubaligh Kristian, Borneo Utara, Penduduk Peribumi

ABSTRACT: This article discusses the Christianization strategies employed by Christian missionaries in North Borneo from 1881 to 1963. Upon discovering that the indigenous people in North Borneo predominantly adhered to pagan beliefs, the missionaries recognized the need for transformation through the propagation of Christianity. This study adopts a qualitative historical analysis approach, utilizing primary and secondary sources such as books, journals, government reports (*Colonial Office Report*), and oral accounts from indigenous people. The main objective of the study is to examine the strategies used in the Christianization process in North Borneo during the specified period. The findings reveal that key strategies included mission area exploration, the administration of the sacrament of baptism, and the establishment of educational institutions. Education emerged as the most effective tool in attracting the interest of indigenous people to Christianity. However, minor strategies such as mission area exploration, and the sacrament of baptism also played significant roles in the Christianization strategies. Overall, the study demonstrates that the strategies employed successfully drew the Kadazandusun and Rungus community interest in embracing Christianity.

Keywords: *Strategy; Evangelism; Christian missionaries; North Borneo; Indigenous population*

PENGENALAN

Sebelum kedatangan mubaligh Kristian ke Borneo Utara (kini Sabah), majoriti penduduk peribumi tidak menganuti agama-agama besar seperti Islam atau Kristian khususnya penduduk Kadazandusun dan Rungus. Lazimnya mereka menetap di kawasan pantai barat Borneo Utara (Yusry & Bilcher, 2020:135). Walaupun penduduk Kadazandusun dan Rungus telah lama mendiami Borneo Utara, *Interpretation (Definition of Native) Ordinance* (Sabah Cap. 64) tidak menyebut secara jelas etnik-etnik di atas dalam definisinya. Istilah peribumi ini adalah merujuk kepada: a) seseorang yang kedua-dua ibu bapanya adalah atau pernah menjadi ahli daripada kaum pribumi Sabah; b) seseorang yang bermastautin di Sabah serta hidup sebagai ahli dalam komuniti pribumi, yang sekurang-kurangnya salah seorang daripada ibu bapa atau nenek moyangnya adalah atau pernah menjadi pribumi sebagaimana yang dimaksudkan dalam perenggan; c) seseorang yang bermastautin di Sabah, suku Suluk, Kagayan, Simonol, Sibutu atau Ubian atau daripada kaum peribumi Negeri Sarawak atau Brunei, telah hidup sebagai dan menjadi ahli dalam komuniti peribumi untuk tempoh berterusan selama tiga tahun sebelum tarikh tuntutannya sebagai peribumi, mempunyai akhlak yang baik sepanjang tempoh tersebut dan tempoh tinggalnya di Sabah tidak dihadkan di bawah mana-mana peruntukan Akta Imigresen, 1959/63 [Akta 155]. Sarjana berpandangan bahawa tafsiran peribumi seperti disebut di atas adalah terlalu umum dan perlu lebih jelas seperti tafsiran peribumi atau *natives* di Sarawak (Shaari et.al, 2022).

Penduduk peribumi yang tidak menganuti agama Islam atau Kristian khususnya masyarakat Kadazandusun dan Rungus mengamalkan sistem kepercayaan animisme iaitu kepercayaan bahawa wujudnya roh atau semangat yang hadir di sekeliling mereka. Mereka percaya bahawa roh atau semangat tersebut mendiami kawasan hutan, kawasan sungai dan batu-batuan (Norsuhaila & Asmiaty, 2019: 97-108). Hal ini menunjukkan bahawa penduduk peribumi ini percaya kepada sesuatu yang bersifat *supernatural*. Selain itu, tahap kesihatan penduduk peribumi di Borneo Utara adalah pada tahap yang rendah. Penyakit seperti cirit-birit, malaria, demam kepialu kerap menyerang mereka. Keadaan penduduk peribumi khususnya Kadazandusun dan Rungus dikatakan semakin menggusarkan kerana gaya hidup yang tidak sihat diamalkan oleh mereka seperti minum sehingga mabuk (Lees, 2013:66). Mubaligh Kristian melihat perkara ini sebagai peluang bagi menyebarkan ajaran agama Kristian kepada penduduk peribumi yang masih pagan. Bagi memastikan agama Kristian diterima dengan baik, maka pelbagai strategi telah dirangka yang bersesuaian dengan selera dan cita rasa tempatan. Strategi tersebut diambil untuk memastikan kumpulan sasaran mengalami perubahan dan menganuti ajaran agama Kristian.

Walaupun mubaligh Kristian berhadapan dengan pelbagai cabaran dalam pelaksanaan strategi dakwah kristianisasi di Borneo Utara, mereka dilihat tidak berputus asa. Hal ini menimbulkan persoalan penting: Apakah strategi yang digunakan oleh mubaligh Kristian untuk menyampaikan ajaran Kristian kepada penduduk peribumi di Borneo Utara? Kajian ini penting untuk memahami bagaimana agama Kristian mula berkembang di Borneo Utara dan bagaimana strategi mubaligh Kristian berjaya menarik minat masyarakat peribumi terhadap agama ini. Kajian ini bukan sahaja memberikan pandangan sejarah tentang proses Kristianisasi malah turut menyumbang kepada literatur akademik berkaitan penyebaran agama di Asia Tenggara, khususnya di kawasan yang menjadi tanah jajahan kuasa kolonial. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan

untuk menganalisis strategi dakwah Kristianisasi oleh mubaligh Kristian di Borneo Utara dari tahun 1881 sehingga 1963.

SOROTAN LITERATUR

Terdapat beberapa kajian lepas yang menumpukan dakwah Kristianisasi oleh para mubaligh Kristian di beberapa buah negara yang menjadi rujukan bagi penulisan ini. Penulisan oleh sarjana lepas telah mengetengahkan bahawa pendidikan merupakan strategi berkesan dalam dakwah Kristianisasi. Mohan (2021) menekankan usaha mubaligh Kristian dalam menuangkan pendidikan dalam kalangan wanita di Andhradesa, India. Pendidikan dijadikan sebagai alat pemerkasaan golongan wanita di Andhradesa. Kerajaan kolonial tidak memberikan penekanan terhadap pendidikan wanita maka mubaligh Kristian mengambil pendekatan untuk memperkasa pendidikan di negara tersebut bagi mewujudkan kesedaran sosial dalam kalangan wanita dan masyarakat yang tertindas.

Sarjana lain turut berhujah tentang pendidikan sebagai alat pemerkasaan wanita. Sarah Paddle (2023) membincangkan tentang peranan mubaligh wanita seperti Amy Moore, mubaligh Australia dalam memperkasa pendidikan dalam kalangan wanita di China. Melalui strategi pendidikan yang dilakukan oleh Moore, beliau berjaya menjadikan wanita tahu membaca dan menulis bagi membolehkan China melahirkan pemimpin gereja wanita pada masa hadapan. Lankina dan Getachew (2013) dalam kajian mereka meneroka kesan jangka panjang aktiviti mubaligh Kristian Protestan di Kerala, India. Mubaligh Kristian membuka sekolah untuk semua kumpulan agama yang memberi impak jangka panjang terhadap pendidikan wanita pada era pasca kolonial. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa usaha mubaligh membantu mengurangkan jurang pendidikan antara lelaki dan wanita, menjadikan pendidikan lebih inklusif dan berkesan.

Olatunbosun (2013) dalam kajiannya menyatakan bahawa salah satu kesan jangka panjang aktiviti mubaligh adalah mengurangkan jurang pendidikan antara lelaki dan perempuan di Nigeria malah pendidikan mubaligh turut memberi impak kepada komuniti Muslim. Tambahan lagi, impak aktiviti mubaligh dikatakan lebih ketara dalam kalangan suku utara dan umat Islam berbanding suku selatan. Ternyata, beberapa kumpulan mubaligh banyak memberikan tumpuan kepada aspek pendidikan di kawasan misi. Olatunbosun (2013) dalam kajiannya menyatakan bahawa salah satu kesan jangka panjang aktiviti mubaligh adalah mengurangkan jurang pendidikan antara lelaki dan perempuan di Nigeria malah pendidikan mubaligh turut memberi impak kepada komuniti Muslim. Tambahan lagi, impak aktiviti mubaligh dikatakan lebih ketara dalam kalangan suku utara dan umat Islam berbanding suku selatan. Ternyata, beberapa kumpulan mubaligh banyak memberikan tumpuan kepada aspek pendidikan di kawasan misi.

Kajian-kajian lepas yang berfokuskan kepada beberapa negara luar di atas perlu diakui mempunyai konteks masa dan ruang yang berbeza dengan proses Kristianisasi di Borneo Utara. Namun begitu, wujud persamaan khususnya dari aspek strategi yang digunakan oleh mubaligh Kristian di negara tersebut termasuklah melalui pendidikan. Kajian sarjana di atas memberikan fokus kepada strategi pendidikan yang ampuh dalam usaha penyebaran agama Kristian manakala strategi-strategi lain seperti sakramen pembaptisan dan tinjauan kawasan misi tidak dibincangkan.

Beberapa kajian tempatan juga disorot untuk menulis kajian ini. Antara kajian yang telah disorot termasuklah kajian oleh Pugh-Kitingan dan On (2015) mengukuhkan bukti

bahawa kehadiran agama Kristian dalam kalangan masyarakat peribumi di Sabah telah membawa penolakan terhadap amalan dan kepercayaan tradisional dalam kegiatan pertanian setelah masyarakat tersebut menerima agama Kristian. Kajian tersebut menggariskan beberapa gereja yang telah membawa perubahan tersebut termasuklah *Seventh Day Adventist Mission*, gereja Roman Katolik, Basel dan Sidang Injil Borneo. Walau bagaimanapun, kajian ini tidak menjelaskan secara terperinci berkenaan strategi yang dimainkan oleh para mubaligh dalam mengikis amalan-amalan tradisional masyarakat peribumi khususnya semasa pentadbiran Syarikat Borneo Utara British dan Koloni Mahkota British.

Seterusnya, kajian oleh Mat Zin (2003) menekankan tentang sejarah dan perkembangan gereja mazhab utama iaitu Roman Katolik, Anglikan, Sidang Injil Borneo dan *Protestant Church in Sabah* (PCS) serta strategi-strategi yang digunakan di dalam dakwah Kristianisasi sekitar tahun 1881 hingga 1994. Manakala kajian oleh Maureen dan Clinson (2020) memberi tumpuan kepada peranan PCS dalam penyebaran agama Kristian serta impaknya terhadap pendidikan dan kesihatan masyarakat Rungus. Penemuan utama menunjukkan bahawa PCS memainkan peranan signifikan dalam memperkenalkan pendidikan formal kepada masyarakat Rungus. Sebelum kedatangan mubaligh PCS, masyarakat ini kurang terdedah kepada pendidikan moden kerana faktor geografi dan sistem sosial tradisional yang berasaskan animisme. Suraya Sintang (2003) membincangkan tentang penganutan masyarakat Kadazandusun terhadap agama Islam dan Kristian serta faktor penerimaan agama Kristian berbanding agama Islam. Penulisan ini hanya berkisar terhadap faktor penerimaan agama Kristian dalam kalangan masyarakat Kadazandusun dan tidak menyentuh tentang strategi dan pendekatan dakwah Kristianisasi dengan lebih dekat.

Berdasarkan kepada sorotan ini, didapati bahawa penulisan lepas menekankan tentang strategi pendidikan yang memainkan peranan penting dalam dakwah Kristianisasi. Strategi minor seperti tinjauan kawasan misi dan sakramen baptisan pula sama sekali tidak disentuh di dalam penulisan mereka.

METODOLOGI

Kajian ini dilakukan menggunakan pendekatan disiplin sejarah dengan menganalisis data secara kualitatif. Sumber-sumber yang digunakan merangkumi sumber primer seperti jurnal mubaligh Kristian yang telah dibukukan seperti Forshner dan dokumen kerajaan seperti *Colonial Office Report*. Tidak dilupakan juga sumber gereja seperti *Diocese of Sabah Silver Jubilee, 1962-1987* dan dokumenteri sejarah Gereja PCS 70 tahun oleh Gereja PCS Malaysia. Manakala sumber sekunder pula merangkumi buku, artikel jurnal dan internet (laman rasmi gereja). Dokumen-dokumen ini dianalisis secara sistematik untuk mendapatkan pemahaman dan membuat kesimpulan daripada dokumen (Oranga & Matere, 2023). Data juga diperolehi melalui temubual bersama dengan pemimpin gereja melalui telefon mudah alih untuk melakukan penilaian mendalam terhadap sesuatu topik. Temu bual mendalam adalah kaedah untuk mengumpul data tentang perspektif peribadi, sejarah, dan pengalaman individu, terutamanya semasa meneroka topik sensitif (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Soalan-soalan yang diberikan kepada informan adalah bersifat terbuka.

DAPATAN

Tinjauan kawasan misi

Mubaligh Kristian melakukan tinjauan kawasan misi untuk melihat sendiri keadaan kawasan dan masyarakat sasaran mereka. Hal ini akan membantu mubaligh Kristian untuk mengenali masyarakat sasaran mereka dengan lebih dekat. *Borneo Evangelical Mission* (BEM) atau Sidang Injil Borneo (SIB) menghantar Hudson Southwell dan Staford Young ke Borneo Utara untuk mengesahkan laporan Reverend (Rev.) Joseph Clemens yang menyatakan bahawa penduduk Kadazandusun di sekitar kaki Gunung Kinabalu terbuka hati untuk mempelajari ajaran agama Kristian. Keterbukaan ini ditandai dengan kesudian mereka untuk mendengar perkongsian dakwah oleh mubaligh Kristian. Hasilnya, penduduk kadazandusun menerima agama Kristian, misalnya ketua Kampung (K.K) Rendegung iaitu K.K Sinit Gimbaran memeluk agama Kristian pada tahun 1937 (Sempuruh, 1999:32, Suraya, 2003:71). Mubaligh Mission Basel juga menggunakan pendekatan yang sama untuk meninjau keadaan masyarakat Rungus di sekitar kawasan Pinangsoo, Bak-Bak, Tamalang, Bandau dan Pitas. Proses tinjauan disertai dengan tindakan menyampaikan ajaran agama Kristian kepada ketua-ketua rumah panjang (Jadual 1). Tindakan ini dilakukan oleh Pastor Hanz Bienz dibantu oleh Wong Khiam Fuk sebagai penterjemah. Proses ini agak perlahan kerana Wong juga tidak fasih berbahasa Melayu. Menurut Pendeta Majimil, Tuorong iaitu ayahnya meminta supaya Bienz mencari mubaligh yang boleh berbahasa Melayu dalam tempoh tiga bulan supaya datang kembali untuk menyampaikan dakwah agar mereka lebih faham apa yang disampaikan oleh para mubaligh tersebut. Permintaan Tuorong tersebut menunjukkan bahawa adanya keterbukaan mereka mendengar ajaran Kristian (Dokumentari 70 tahun Gereja PCS, 2023). Selepas beberapa bulan, seorang mubaligh telah datang bersama keluarganya iaitu Pastor Honeggar untuk mengajarkan tentang agama Kristian.

Jadual 1: Senarai Ketua Rumah Panjang yang dilawati Pastor Hanz Bienz

No	Nama Orang Tua	Nama Kampung
1	O.T Kumpani	Kampung Rampai
2	O.T Lagan	Kampung Barambangon
3	O.T Ronsunan	Kampung Marbau
4	O.T Kositum	Kampung Popot
5	O.T Tuorong	Kampung Masangkung
6	Orang Kaya Togunan	Kampung Parapat
7	O.T Tombirog	Kampung Tinutudan
8	O.T Gudang	Kampung Kumbatang

Sumber: Peter Osingko Tenganau (2012)

Mubaligh SIB dan Basel dilihat menggunakan strategi ini untuk meninjau keadaan masyarakat peribumi di Borneo Utara. Mereka menggunakan proses peninjauan ini untuk melihat sendiri kehidupan masyarakat peribumi di sana. Pada masa yang sama, mereka mengambil peluang ini untuk menyampaikan ajaran agama Kristian kepada penduduk peribumi yang mereka temui semasa mereka melakukan peninjauan di kawasan misi. Namun begitu, penyebaran agama Kristian di Borneo Utara bukanlah mudah kerana mereka terpaksa melalui kawasan hutan untuk bertemu dengan masyarakat peribumi di kawasan misi. Tegasnya, strategi ini membantu mubaligh Kristian mendekati penduduk peribumi dan menambat hati mereka untuk memeluk agama Kristian serta menjalani sakramen pembaptisan.

Sakramen pembaptisan

Sakramen pembaptisan merupakan salah satu perkara yang penting dalam ajaran agama Kristian. Semasa para mubaligh Kristian menyebarkan ajaran agama Kristian di Borneo Utara, mereka menggunakan strategi membaptis penduduk peribumi yang sedia memeluk agama Kristian. Signifikannya strategi ini adalah untuk memastikan masyarakat peribumi tidak kembali kepada cara hidup yang lama termasuklah percaya kepada semangat yang tinggal dalam tumbuh-tumbuhan, sungai atau batu-batuan atau melakukan penyembelihan binatang sebagai tanda perdamaian. John Trevor White atau Asang daripada BEM telah melakukan beberapa siri pembaptisan di sekitar daerah Ranau. Pada tahun 1946, terdapat 12 orang penduduk kampung Nampasan telah dibaptis. Pada tahun yang sama, sakramen baptisan diminta oleh penduduk di Kampung Kepangian untuk dilakukan di sana kerana mereka telah bersedia untuk menerima ajaran Kristian. Pada 11 Februari 1947, Asang berada di Kampung Gana-Gana atas tujuan membaptis penduduk di kampung itu. Kemudian pada tahun 1950, satu lagi sakramen baptisan air telah dilaksanakan di Kampung Liwagu. Antara yang dibaptis termasuklah Gindol, Belingkau, Lanag, Kuntobon dan Gopog berserta isteri masing-masing.

Mubaligh Kristian lain seperti Pastor Honegger turut menjalankan sakramen ini dalam kalangan masyarakat Rungus. Pada 23 Disember 1953, Honegger membaptis sebuah keluarga di Kampung Masangkung yang terletak di Sikuati, Kudat. Antara yang dibaptis termasuklah Tuorong, Setia (isteri Tuorong) dan Majimil (anak lelaki Tuorong) dan Sinundihi (menantu Tuorong) serta cucu-cucunya iaitu Nupia dan Masiun. Pada tahun yang sama, pembaptisan dilakukan di sebuah gereja yang terletak di antara Perkampungan Lodung dan Pilang (Forscner, 1993:36). Mubaligh daripada gereja Katolik juga melaksanakan sakramen yang sama kepada mereka yang bersedia menerima agama Kristian. Pada tahun 1887, Father (Fr.) Prenger telah mengajarkan agama Kristian di kawasan perkampungan Kadazandusun yang terletak di Inobong.

Beliau mendapati bahawa segelintir masyarakat di kampung tersebut tertarik untuk mengetahui dan mendalami ajaran agama Kristian (Laman Rasmi St. Michael Penampang Parish, History of St. Michael's Parish Penampang). Hasil daripada usahanya menyebarkan ajaran agama Kristian di kampung tersebut, maka pada sambutan perayaan Paskah iaitu 10 April 1887, empat orang lelaki telah dibaptis. Pada Mei 1887, seorang lagi telah dibaptis oleh Prenger dan 14 orang lagi dibaptis pada 25 Disember 1887 (Jadual 2). Hal ini memperlihatkan keberkesanan dakwah Kristianisasi dalam kalangan penduduk peribumi di Borneo Utara. Keadaan ini mendorong mubaligh Kristian untuk menajamkan lagi pengetahuan penduduk peribumi yang telah memeluk agama Kristian melalui pendidikan teologi dan pendidikan umum.

Jadual 2: Senarai Nama Individu Dibaptis di Stesen Misi Inobong

Tarikh	Nama
10 April 1887	Petrus Moliping, Paulus Satabar, Michael Mohujang & John Tan Kan San
29 Mei 1887	Aloysius Fo Tan
25 Disember 1887	Thomas Bersalik, Anna Sabahan, Agatha Demail, Joannes Tan Kan San, Marcus Labanta, Lucas Damahar, Francis Menjahom, Theodore Malajam, Andreas Sungkipeng, Gabriel Matajak, Augustine Mensala, Maria Dusioy, Cecilia Dingihon & Ludwig Masankim

Sumber: Diubahsuai daripada Laman Rasmi St. Michael Parish Penampang (2024)

Pendidikan Sekolah Mubaligh (*Mission School*)

Mubaligh Kristian di Borneo Utara juga mengambil kesempatan untuk mewujudkan sekolah-sekolah mubaligh bagi tujuan pendidikan. Mubaligh Kristian menyedari bahawa pendidikan melalui sekolah mubaligh merupakan mekanisme yang berkesan untuk menyebarkan ajaran Kristian (Hunt, 1992: 325). Pertumbuhan sekolah mubaligh di Borneo Utara dipacu oleh dasar pemerintah untuk memberikan bantuan geran kepada mubaligh Kristian.

Colonial Office Report 1950 menunjukkan bahawa sekolah-sekolah di bawah seliaan mubaligh Mill Hills adalah sekolah yang terbanyak menerima bantuan geran iaitu sebanyak 27 sekolah, Anglikan dan Basel masing-masing enam buah sekolah (Colonial Office Report 1950) (Jadual 3). Hal ini memperlihatkan bahawa keterlibatan kerajaan atau pemerintah juga mempengaruhi perkembangan pertumbuhan sekolah mubaligh.

Jadual 3: Jumlah Sekolah Mubaligh dengan bantuan dan tanpa bantuan tahun 1950

Kumpulan Mubaligh	Sekolah dengan bantuan	Sekolah Tanpa Bantuan	Jumlah Pendaftaran Pelajar
S.P.G (Anglikan)	6	1	1036
M.H.M (Katolik)	27	9	4792
Basel	6	7	1079
S.D.A	-	3	112
	39	20	7019

Sumber: Diubahsuai daripada Colonial Office Report (1950)

Sekolah mubaligh yang pertama ditubuhkan adalah pada 24 Julai 1883 iaitu Sekolah Saint (St.) Mary. Sekolah ini telah dibuka oleh Monsignor T. Jackson bersama Fr. Prenger. Pada awal pembukaan sekolah ini hanya lima orang sahaja pelajar yang bersekolah di sekolah ini (Perkara 4(ii) Ordinance No.4 1932, NBCA 316). Sekolah mubaligh Anglikan iaitu St. Michael telah ditubuhkan pada 5 Oktober 1888 oleh Rev. William Henry Elton yang merupakan paderi Anglikan pertama Sandakan. Pada awal penubuhan sekolah ini, hanya seorang murid sahaja yang berdaftar dengan sekolah ini namun jumlah pelajar bertambah kepada enam orang selepas tiga bulan pembukaannya (Diocese of Sabah, 1987).

Satu perkara yang perlu diberi tumpuan adalah, penggunaan bahasa Kadazandusun oleh sekolah mubaligh Katolik, Anglikan, Basel dan SDA dalam menarik penduduk peribumi untuk datang belajar ke sekolah mubaligh sekaligus menyebarkan ajaran agama Kristian dalam kalangan penduduk tempatan (Mohd Nor, 1978; 12). Hal ini memperlihatkan usaha mubaligh Kristian untuk menarik hati dan menyesuaikan strategi mereka dengan cita rasa tempatan. Namun begitu, bahasa Inggeris tetap menjadi bahasa pengantar dalam sekolah mubaligh selaras dengan dasar kerajaan pada ketika itu (Clinson & Maureen, 2020:97). Mubaligh Kristian tidak hanya menyampaikan ajaran Kristian melalui sekolah mubaligh tetapi turut mengembangkan ajaran ini melalui pembinaan dan pendidikan sekolah teologi.

Sekolah teologi

Pendidikan teologi adalah salah satu strategi yang ampuh untuk memperkasa penyebaran agama Kristian di Borneo Utara. Mubaligh Kristian menggunakan pendekatan ini untuk melatih penganut Kristian dalam kalangan penduduk tempatan sebagai usaha mempersiapkan mereka menyampaikan ajaran agama Kristian kepada penduduk yang belum menganuti agama Kristian. Beberapa sekolah teologi telah ditubuhkan sebagai langkah memperkasa dakwah

Kristianisasi di Borneo Utara. Gereja Anglikan dan Misi Basel telah mewujudkan Sekolah Latihan Biasa (Lay Training School) (Yong, 1987:123-126). Misi Basel telah membuka sekolah ini di Sikuati pada tahun 1955 untuk melatih mubaligh tempatan mengendalikan aktiviti keagamaan pada hari Ahad. Gereja Anglikan pula menggunakan gereja St. Patrick Tawau bagi melaksanakan sekolah latihan ini untuk melatih penganut Kristian mempelajari *Bible*. Tambahan lagi, perkara ini dilakukan untuk melatih mubaligh melakukan dakwah di luar bandar dan kawasan bandar.

Bagi gereja *Protestant Church in Sabah* (PCS), pada awalnya, pendidikan teologi hanyalah bersifat minor iaitu kursus asas membaca *Bible* kepada masyarakat Rungus. Melihat kepada sambutan yang memberangsangkan oleh masyarakat Rungus, maka Rev. Honegger dan Rev. Hausermann telah membangunkan sekolah latihan pada tahun 1957 (Forshner, 1993:59) Sebelum ini pembelajaran *Bible* dan sambutan terhadap agama Kristian tidak diterima oleh segelintir masyarakat Rungus. Menurut Clarence Mogundal (ditemubual pada 10 Disember 2024), pada awalnya agama Kristian sukar diterima kerana dikhuatiri akan menyebabkan mereka kehilangan “kepandaian” dalam ilmu seperti *sindaat* dan ilmu kebal. Namun, keberkesanan strategi lepas, menyebabkan masyarakat Rungus memilih untuk menganuti agama Kristian dan memasuki sekolah teologi. Sekolah teologi yang pertama oleh PCS ditubuhkan pada tahun 1976 di Bavangazo, Kudat (Mat Zin, 2003: 150). Jelaslah bahawa, pendidikan teologi yang disediakan oleh mubaligh dan gereja adalah untuk memastikan mubaligh tempatan diperkasa bagi tujuan melaksanakan dakwah Kristianisasi dalam kalangan penduduk peribumi yang belum mengenal agama Kristian.

Sinkretisme dalam Dakwah Kristianisasi

Terma sinkretisme merujuk kepada pengadunan atau percampuran antara dua bentuk yang berbeza. Singgih berpandangan bahawa sinkretisme merupakan suatu usaha menyatukan pandangan-pandangan atau kepercayaan yang saling bertentangan (Singgih, 2000). Namun, istilah atau terma ini selalunya membawa konotasi yang negatif dalam kalangan para mubaligh atau agamawan Kristian yang lain. Hal ini bertitik tolak daripada keadaan yang berlaku pada abad ke-17 iaitu tindakan Georg Calixt ingin menyatukan aliran atau mazhab Kristian yang merangkumi gereja Katolik, Lutheran dan Ortodoks setelah berperang sesama sendiri hampir 30 tahun. Usaha ini dianggap oleh kumpulan Lutheran ortodoks sebagai sinkretis (Supradnyana, 2018). Hari ini, istilah ini digunakan untuk merujuk kepada penggabungan atau penyatuan antara agama dan pratik tradisional sehingga menciptakan sesuatu yang baharu.

Sinkretisme dan kontekstualisasi sememangnya elemen yang berhubungan dengan proses penyebaran agama Kristian yang telah dijalankan ke atas masyarakat peribumi di Borneo Utara. Contoh yang jelas adalah seperti penterjemahan *Bible* kepada bahasa masyarakat peribumi untuk menyampaikan ajaran agama Kristian. Para mubaligh menggunakan istilah yang sering digunakan oleh masyarakat peribumi misalnya kata *Kinorohingan*. Sebelum kehadiran agama Kristian, istilah *Kinorohingan* digunakan untuk merujuk Tuhan yang menciptakan segala ciptaan yang ada di muka bumi ini. Setelah agama Kristian hadir di Borneo Utara istilah yang sama digunakan oleh para mubaligh Kristian untuk merujuk *Jesus* atau Yesus agar lebih dekat dengan masyarakat peribumi.

Sinkretisme dalam penyebaran agama Kristian di Borneo Utara juga dapat dilihat melalui pendekatan mubaligh menggunakan elemen tradisi dan menggabungkannya dengan upacara keagamaan Kristian. Hal ini merupakan suatu kebijakan yang ditunjukkan oleh para mubaligh untuk memastikan masyarakat peribumi tidak kekok dengan ajaran agama Kristian.

Sebagai contoh, selepas pesta menuai dilakukan, masyarakat Kadazandusun akan melakukan suatu acara yang dinamakan sebagai *Moginakan*. Menurut mendiang Bobolian Aki Petrus Sator Gadut, *moginakan* diambil daripada dua perkataan bahasa Kadazandusun, iaitu *moginum* (minum) dan *mangkan* (makan). Secara ringkasnya, *moginakan* dapat dimaksudkan sebagai pesta makan (Portal Rasmi Kadazandusun Cultural Association). Semasa pesta ini, masyarakat Kadazandusun akan menyediakan makanan dari rumah masing-masing dan membawa ke pesta untuk dinikmati bersama. Para mubaligh melakukan penyesuaian antara elemen tradisi dan ajaran agama Kristian dalam usaha mendekati masyarakat peribumi. Hal ini dapat dilihat semasa dalam acara pengucapan syukur, perayaan Paskah dan perayaan Natal di gereja di mana ahli gereja yang terdiri daripada masyarakat membawa makanan dari rumah dan dimakan secara bersama selepas ibadah atau acara gereja berakhir.

Mubaligh Kristian juga mendekati masyarakat peribumi menggunakan muzik. Muzik atau lagu kerohanian Kristian dibawa masuk ke kawasan misi dan diperdengarkan kepada kumpulan sasaran mereka. Para mubaligh menyedari bahawa masyarakat peribumi sangat suka menyanyi dalam pesta-pesta. Oleh itu, mubaligh Kristian mengambil kesempatan ini untuk mengajarkan lagu-lagu berunsurkan kerohanian. Namun, lagu-lagu ini diolah kepada bahasa ibunda dan disesuaikan dengan muzik tempatan. Hal ini menunjukkan sebuah sinkretisme di mana lagu kerohanian agama Kristian digabungkan dengan melodi muzik tempatan agar dapat diterima oleh masyarakat peribumi. Sebagai contoh, mubaligh BEM atau SIB mengajar lagu kerohanian Kristian iaitu *Hymn* kepada masyarakat Kadazandusun di Taginambur. Mubaligh yang terlibat adalah Nell Young@Seminah. Menurut Missah (ditemubual pada 29 Oktober 2024), Seminah mengajar masyarakat peribumi di Taginambur menyanyikan *Hymn*. Pada asalnya, *Hymn* dinyanyikan dalam bahasa Inggeris, namun Seminah mengajarkan lagu kerohanian tersebut dalam bahasa Kadazandusun dan disesuaikan dengan selera tempatan agar masyarakat tertarik dan memahami ajaran Kristian melalui lagu tersebut.



Rajah 1: Seminah Young (Nell Young)

Sumber: Elliot (1997)

Boleh dikatakan bahawa ajaran-ajaran Kristian yang terkandung di dalam *Bible* seperti ajaran tentang kasih atau sayang menyayangi dan kesatuan telah disesuaikan dengan konteks masyarakat peribumi di Borneo Utara. Para mubaligh mengetahui bahawa masyarakat peribumi Kadazandusun dan Rungus menjunjung tinggi nilai kesatuan atau *misompuru* dalam masyarakat mereka. Maka dengan itu, mubaligh Kristian mengintegrasikan nilai tersebut dengan konsep kasih Yesus dan kesatuan gereja di dalam ajaran agama Kristian. Hal ini mendorong masyarakat peribumi melihat bahawa ajaran Kristian sangat dekat dengan mereka dan mudah untuk dilakukan.

Faktor pemelukan agama Kristian

Penerimaan agama Kristian oleh masyarakat Kadazandusun dan Rungus didorong oleh beberapa faktor. Pertama adalah disebabkan oleh sifat keterbukaan masyarakat tersebut. Ekoran sifat ini, maka mereka cenderung untuk berasimilasi dengan dunia pengaruh luar (Suraya, 2003:66). Oleh itu, mereka mudah untuk menerima agama lain seperti Kristian mahupun Islam. Seterusnya, pengaruh kuat ketua rumah panjang atau ketua kampung juga mendorong pemelukan agama Kristian. Ketua kampung bukan sahaja berperanan dalam aspek pentadbiran dan sosial, tetapi juga menentukan hala tuju kepercayaan dan budaya masyarakat setempat. Misalnya, O.T Tuorang sebagai ketua rumah panjang telah memeluk agama Kristian kemudian diikuti oleh anaknya iaitu Majimil serta ahli keluarga yang lain (Dokumentari 70 tahun Gereja PCS, 2023).

Agama Kristian juga dianuti ekoran perasaan takut terhadap gangguan kuasa ghaib atau roh di sekeliling mereka. Semasa Pendeta Asang berada di daerah Ranau, beliau melihat penduduk Kadazandusun masih mempunyai perasaan takut kepada roh, semangat dan makhluk ghaib. Sebagai contoh, Kentuni merupakan antara penduduk Kadazandusun di Ranau yang memeluk agama Kristian akibat sering mengalami mimpi buruk pada waktu malam (Hwee, 2013: 80). Begitu juga dengan masyarakat Rungus, mereka juga memilih untuk memeluk agama Kristian apabila satu demi satu keluarga mereka meninggalkan kepercayaan terhadap roh mahupun makhluk ghaib. Menurut Clarence Mogudal (ditemubual pada 10 Disember 2024):

“apabila ada dalam kalangan keluarga mahupun rakan yang sudah menyerah diri kepada Tuhan dan mereka lihat semakin baik kehidupan yang sudah menerima Injil, satu persatu diantara mereka tinggalkan kepercayaan lama dan ada diantara mereka sendiri suruh bakar itu zimat dan mulai mengikuti perkumpulan orang baru menerima Injil”.

Hal ini memperlihatkan bahawa perasaan takut kepada kuasa ghaib dan melihat kehidupan rakan atau keluarga mereka semakin baik setelah mengikuti agama Kristian mendorong mereka untuk memeluk agama Kristian. Tambahan lagi, mubaligh Kristian yang hadir di Borneo utara hadir dengan daya tarik dari aspek pendidikan dan kemahiran. Dari aspek pendidikan, sekolah-sekolah mubaligh disediakan bagi memberikan asas membaca, menulis dan mengira. Mubaligh Kristian terlebih dahulu menyediakan perkhidmatan berbanding pihak SBUB. Antara sekolah yang ditubuhkan oleh mubaligh Kristian termasuklah St. Mary yang ditubuhkan pada 24 Julai 1883 dan sekolah menengah *Sacred Heart* atau lebih dikenali sebagai La Salle pada tahun 1958.

Dari aspek kemahiran, mubaligh Kristian memberikan tunjuk ajar dalam pertukangan kayu moden. Misalnya mubaligh SIB atau BEM telah mengajar Keradi (penduduk tempatan di Ranau) untuk mengendalikan kilang kayu bagi memastikan kerja-kerja kayu dapat dijalankan dengan lebih cepat. Tambahan lagi, kilang kayu ini menggunakan teknologi atau mesin kayu (Izham Waidi, 2015). Hal ini telah membawa masyarakat Kadazadusun mengenali teknologi moden. Maka berlakulah perubahan dari penggunaan teknologi tradisional kepada teknologi moden khususnya dalam pembangunan rumah dan gereja.

PERBINCANGAN

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi dakwah Kristianisasi yang digunakan oleh mubaligh Kristian di Borneo Utara dari tahun 1881 hingga 1963. Pendek kata, penulisan ini membahaskan tentang pendekatan mubaligh dalam mengubah penduduk peribumi yang pada awalnya mengamalkan kepercayaan animisme kepada masyarakat peribumi yang menganuti agama Kristian. Kajian ini penting kerana memberikan pengetahuan mendalam mengenai dakwah Kristianisasi mubaligh Kristian terhadap penduduk peribumi Borneo Utara. Sumbangan utamanya adalah pengungkapan bagaimana strategi pendidikan, sakramen pembaptisan, dan peninjauan kawasan misi digunakan untuk menarik minat penduduk peribumi terhadap agama Kristian

Pelaksanaan sakramen pembaptisan secara berterusan membantu memperkukuhkan kepercayaan masyarakat peribumi kepada agama Kristian dan menghalang mereka daripada kembali ke kepercayaan lama. Penyelidik menegaskan bahawa pelaksanaan sakramen baptisan ini bukanlah paksaan tetapi bersifat sukarela. Sakramen ini tidak boleh dilakukan secara tergesa-gesa semata-mata ingin meningkatkan jumlah penganut Kristian (Steven, 2023). Tambahan lagi, penubuhan sekolah mubaligh dan sekolah teologi terbukti sebagai strategi paling berkesan dalam penyebaran agama Kristian. Hal ini membolehkan masyarakat peribumi menerima pendidikan yang bukan sahaja bersifat umum tetapi juga teologi, memperkasakan mereka untuk menjadi pemimpin gereja tempatan.

Dalam kajian ini, salah satu penemuan yang tidak dijangka adalah strategi minor seperti tinjauan kawasan misi dan sakramen pembaptisan yang turut menyumbang kepada kejayaan penyebaran agama Kristian di Borneo Utara. Walaupun pendidikan dikenal pasti sebagai strategi utama, kehadiran dan interaksi langsung para mubaligh dengan masyarakat peribumi memainkan peranan penting dalam memperkenalkan dan membina kepercayaan terhadap agama Kristian. Penemuan ini mencadangkan bahawa strategi langsung yang mungkin dilihat sebagai kurang penting, boleh memberi kesan besar dalam konteks tertentu. Batasan utama kajian ini adalah kebergantungan kepada sumber sekunder dan keterbatasan dalam mendapatkan maklumat langsung daripada masyarakat peribumi di kawasan pedalaman. Hal ini boleh mempengaruhi kesahan dalaman, kerana data mungkin tidak sepenuhnya mewakili pengalaman semua pihak yang terlibat. Kesahan luaran juga terhad, kerana hasil kajian ini mungkin tidak dapat digeneralisasikan kepada konteks lain tanpa mengambil kira faktor tempatan yang spesifik.

Pada masa depan, penyelidikan berkaitan pengaruh agama Kristian terhadap perubahan budaya dan sosial dalam jangka panjang di kalangan masyarakat peribumi boleh dilakukan bagi memperluas cakupan kajian berkaitan dakwah Kristianisasi. Penyelidikan juga boleh menumpukan kepada perbandingan antara strategi mubaligh Kristian di Borneo Utara dengan wilayah lain untuk memahami bagaimana konteks geografi dan budaya mempengaruhi pendekatan mereka.

KESIMPULAN

Kajian ini telah menelusuri strategi dakwah Kristianisasi yang diterapkan oleh mubaligh Kristian di Borneo Utara dari tahun 1881 hingga 1963. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa strategi seperti pendidikan, tinjauan kawasan misi, dan sakramen pembaptisan memainkan

peranan penting dalam menarik masyarakat peribumi kepada agama Kristian. Walaupun pendidikan terbukti menjadi alat yang paling berkesan, strategi-strategi lain turut memberikan sumbangan yang signifikan dalam konteks setempat. Bagaimanapun, kajian ini tidak terlepas dari beberapa batasan yang memerlukan perhatian lanjut. Kesukaran dalam mendapatkan maklumat daripada pemimpin gereja di kawasan pedalaman menambah cabaran kepada keutuhan data. Batasan-batasan ini berpotensi mempengaruhi kesahihan dalaman dan luaran kajian, sekali gus membuka ruang untuk persoalan mengenai ketepatan dan kebolehpercayaan hasil yang diperoleh. Untuk penyelidik pada masa depan, kajian mendalam tentang impak jangka panjang dakwah Kristianisasi terhadap budaya dan struktur sosial masyarakat peribumi boleh menjadi topik yang menarik. Selain itu, penyelidikan perbandingan antara pendekatan dakwah di Borneo Utara dan wilayah lain boleh memberikan perspektif baharu mengenai strategi mubaligh Kristian dalam pelbagai konteks.

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