

Cultural Fusion in Pesantren: Navigating Islamic Customs and Javanese Traditions in Kediri, Suburban Indonesia

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Abstract: This study examines how Javanese customs integrate with Islamic practices in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) in suburban Kediri, Indonesia, and identifies key influencing factors. We used a phenomenological approach to analyze six *pesantren* students' experiences (gender-balanced, aged 17-23) through in-depth interviews. Findings reveal two main insights: First, cultural fusion manifests through practices like wearing a *sarong* during prayers, using local dialects in recitations, and incorporating *slametan* (communal feasts) into Islamic events, demonstrating Islam's cultural adaptability. Second, this integration is facilitated by inclusive leadership (religious scholars reconciling traditions with Islamic principles) and intergenerational dialogue (elders mentoring youth about ancestral customs). However, tensions emerge from generational divides and community disagreements over certain practices. The study highlights *musyawarah* (consensus-building discussions) as crucial for conflict resolution. These findings advance the understanding of cultural-Islamic hybridity in educational institutions, suggesting that Islamic education policies should formally incorporate local wisdom. Future research could compare urban/rural contexts or examine digital media's role in cultural transmission.

Keywords: Cultural Fusion; Islamic Boarding Schools (Pesantren); Javanese Customs; Religious Adaptation; Suburban Indonesia

1. Introduction

Indonesia is an exceptional nation in terms of culture, language, ethnicity, and religion. Each tribe and religion exhibits its own distinctive traits, with this plurality shaped by the interaction between culture, ethnicity, and religion. As a result, Indonesia is renowned for its ethnic and cultural diversity (Azra, 2018). This dynamic interplay forms a complex social fabric where cultural practices often reflect ethnic traditions guided by religious beliefs in a symbiotic relationship. For example, festivals, rituals, and languages frequently embody overlapping influences, highlighting their interconnectedness. However, this interaction can also lead to tensions when differences are misunderstood or disrespected. Plurality thrives when diversity is inclusively managed and celebrated, contributing to a strong national identity and harmony within the unitary framework of the Republic of Indonesia (Setyono & Widodo, 2019).

Java, in particular, has historically been a center for the rapid growth of diverse religious doctrines and practices shaped by its unique cultural heritage (Noor et al., 2019). Traditions develop as cultural practices are passed down through generations. Studies on religious traditions ingrained in society provide valuable insights. For instance, Karomi et al examined the social significance of the burial customs in the Ponorogo village of Tegalsari. Their research revealed that the tomb tradition persists due to its generational transmission and the binding influence of community engagement (Karomi et al., 2022). Similarly, an interreligious ritual practiced by people of various faiths, concluding that it reflects syncretism and a transcendent unity of beliefs (Maulana et al., 2021).



Further studies explore the interreligious harmony reflected in local rituals. For example, the *sedekah bumi* (earth alms) ritual in a multi-religious society invokes blessings from God while framing ethical values of tolerance and coexistence (Syakur & Khoiroh, 2021). The *abdu* ritual in the Tulehu culture during Eid al-Adha illustrates its role in promoting social cohesion and reinforcing Islamic devotion (Ridwan & Basith, 2021). Additionally, The Bugis-Makassar people's contestation of Islamic identity and local traditions highlighting the cultural and religious significance of the Mount Bawakaraeng pilgrimage (Pabbajah et al., 2021). Previous studies emphasize the significant influence of local knowledge, culture, and religious traditions on society. However, research on specific Islamic traditions fused with local wisdom remains essential (Abdullah, 1997). Such practices, shaped by religious conviction, culture, and freedom of expression, require recognition as a human right. Local wisdom can unite people from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds through shared values like mutual aid (Eko & Putranto, 2019).

While previous studies have examined the relationship between local traditions and religious practices in Indonesia, focusing on interreligious harmony, cultural rituals, and the transmission of religious customs, most research has been limited to specific rituals or rural and urban settings. There remains a gap in understanding how suburban communities integrate local customs with Islamic practices within their unique sociocultural dynamics, where tradition, modernity, and diverse influences intersect. Given the increasing importance of suburban areas as spaces of cultural interaction and transformation, this study is crucial for providing a more nuanced understanding of how these communities balance local traditions with Islamic teachings. By exploring how suburban communities incorporate local traditions into Islamic practices in their daily social and religious lives and identifying the key factors shaping this adaptation and negotiation process, this research offers valuable insights into the evolving nature of cultural and religious identity in Indonesia.

To address gaps, we will detail the study in several aspects of questions, including how suburban communities in Indonesia integrate local customs with Islamic practices in their daily social and religious activities?, and what factors influence the negotiation and adaptation of cultural fusion between local traditions and Islamic practices in suburban Indonesian settings?

2. Literatur Review

2.1. Local Customs in Community Activities as a Reflection of Javanese Culture in Islamic Boarding Schools

Local customs play a significant role in shaping community activities within Javanese Islamic boarding schools or *pesantren*. These traditions often reflect the deep-rooted cultural values of the Javanese people, blending seamlessly with Islamic teachings to create a unique environment for spiritual and social development (Burga & Damopolii, 2022). Rituals such as *slametan* (communal feasts) and *nyadran* (ancestral grave pilgrimages) are commonly practiced, symbolizing a harmonious balance between preserving ancestral heritage and adhering to Islamic principles (Hasan et al., 2023). These activities foster a sense of togetherness and continuity, reinforcing the cultural identity of both the students and the broader community.

Integrating Javanese cultural practices into *pesantren* activities also serves as an educational tool. Students learn religious teachings and gain insight into their local communities' cultural values and social norms. This dual exposure helps them develop a deeper appreciation for their heritage while encouraging them to become agents of cultural preservation and moral guidance. For example, during major Islamic events such as *Maulid Nabi* (the Prophet Muhammad's birthday), *pesantren* often incorporate traditional Javanese art forms like gamelan performances or *wayang kulit* (shadow puppetry), showcasing how religion and culture coexist harmoniously (Afriani & K.A., 2020).

By reflecting Javanese culture through community activities, Islamic boarding schools contribute to the preservation of local traditions in an increasingly globalized world. This cultural fusion ensures that the younger generation remains connected to their roots while preparing them to engage with diverse cultural and religious contexts. Furthermore, it highlights the adaptability of *pesantren* as institutions capable of preserving cultural identity

while nurturing a deep commitment to Islamic values, making them vital pillars of Javanese society (Fatahillah et al., 2023).

2.2. Islamic Practices in Islamic Boarding Schools

Islamic boarding schools, or *pesantren*, are centers of education dedicated to instilling Islamic practices and values in their students. Daily routines in these schools are deeply rooted in religious teachings, encompassing prayers, Quran recitation, and the study of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Activities such as performing the five daily prayers in congregation, engaging in *zikr* (remembrance of God), and attending regular *ta'lim* (religious lessons) are integral to student life (Ma'ruf, 2018). These practices aim to cultivate strong spiritual discipline and a deep understanding of Islamic principles, preparing students to lead lives guided by faith and piety.

Beyond personal devotion, *pesantren* emphasizes communal Islamic practices that strengthen student and community bonds. Events such as *Maulid Nabi* (the Prophet Muhammad's birthday), *tahlilan* (communal prayer for the deceased), and tarawih prayers during Ramadan are enthusiastically celebrated. These collective acts of worship foster a sense of unity and shared purpose, reinforcing the Islamic concept of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood) (Azizah et al., 2023). The active participation of students in these practices also equips them with the skills to lead religious activities within their communities after graduation.

Islamic practices in *pesantren* extend beyond rituals to inculcate ethical and moral values. Students are taught to embody qualities such as humility, honesty, and compassion, which are emphasized in Islamic teachings (Anam et al., 2019). Through structured guidance and mentorship, *pesantren* aim to produce individuals who are not only knowledgeable in religious matters but also committed to upholding Islamic ethics in their daily interactions (Mujib et al., 2021). This holistic approach ensures that *pesantren* graduates are well-prepared to become role models and leaders in their communities, contributing positively to both religious and social life.

3. Methods

This research applies a phenomenology technique in qualitative research to portray the integration between local customs and Islamic practices in their daily social and religious activities and factors that influence the negotiation and adaptation of cultural fusion. A phenomenological approach is chosen to investigate the individual lecturers' or students' life experiences using the qualitative research method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Phenomenology is a deeply descriptive research method that explores how everyday and inter-subjective experiences are formed by analyzing the perspectives of multiple participants (Denzin K., 2018). The participants of this study are six students from an Islamic boarding school in Pesantren, Kediri, Indonesia (Giorgi, 1997), selected using purposive sampling based on their accessibility and usefulness (Poth, 2018). Individuals are selected as study participants because they can provide meaningful insights into the research problem and the central phenomenon being examined (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). At least three participants are needed, and the number has ranged between 3 and 15 in descriptive phenomenological studies (Giorgi, 2008).

Participants were selected based on four key criteria: gender composition, age range, educational background, and religious knowledge. For gender composition, the study included an equal number of male and female participants, ensuring balanced representation. In terms of age range, all participants were between 17 and 23 years old, maintaining a consistent generational perspective. Regarding educational background, all participants were third-semester undergraduate students, ensuring a similar academic level. For residential background, the male participants were primarily from Islamic communities (two individuals), while one was a local resident. In contrast, all female participants were local residents and did not live in Islamic communities. Lastly, regarding religious knowledge, participants were categorized into different levels based on their self-reported understanding of Islam, with scores ranging from 60 to 90, representing varying degrees of religious comprehension. These criteria ensured a diverse sample that captured different perspectives on cultural and religious experiences.

In this study, one-to-one interviews are delivered to all participants after their interaction for three months in an Islamic boarding school to get the data. Interviews focus on amplifying participants' voices, allowing them to share their opinions and experiences firsthand. This method emphasizes individuals' lived experiences, ensuring their perspectives are accurately conveyed (Poth, 2018). Some reasons why one-to-one interviews are used in this study are as follows: a. Rich data: Interviews enable researchers to obtain rich and nuanced data directly from participants. They can explore participants' thoughts, opinions, experiences, and emotions in depth, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the research topic; b. Flexibility: Interviews provide flexibility to adapt the questions and probe further based on the participant's responses. Researchers can ask follow-up questions to clarify or explore specific areas of interest, which may lead to valuable insights; c. Contextual understanding: Interviews offer an opportunity to understand participants' perspectives within their unique context. Researchers can explore the social, cultural, and personal factors influencing participants' experiences and viewpoints; and d. Participant voice: Interviews prioritize the participants' voices, allowing them to express their opinions and experiences directly. This approach values the lived experiences of individuals, ensuring their perspectives are adequately represented (Poth, 2018).

The data in this study is reliable as it was obtained through a systematic and transparent research process, ensuring consistency in data collection and analysis. Moreover, it is valid because it accurately represents participants' experiences, perspectives, and social realities, as verified through triangulation and member checking.

Data are analyzed using descriptive phenomenology steps as follows: 1) Phenomenological reduction, 2) Description, and 3) Search for the essence (Clark Moustakas, 1994b). They contain seven ways: (1) Concrete descriptions are raw data of the phenomenon through an interview, (2) Sense of the whole (and bracketing) is reading for the whole of phenomenological reduction to get a holistic understanding, (3) Meaning units are that every transition in meaning from within the attitude focused on the phenomenon is marked, (4) Transformation – reduction and intuition are transforming the data through a method of free imaginative variation into expressions that are more relevant, (5) Constituents and Structure are the final expressions from the transformations through another stage of free imaginative variation to identify an essential structure of the phenomenon, (6) Communication of the findings is clarification and discussion of the data through the identified constituents and their interrelationships to form the structure or essence, and (7) The findings are discussed with the existing relevant literature in order to interpret the structure and constituent parts (Applebaum, 2016; Broomé, 2013; Giorgi, 1997; Wertz, 2010).

Phenomenological reduction entails setting aside prior knowledge of a phenomenon to encounter and describe it as it occurs and appropriately examine the phenomenon (Jackson et al., 2018). It also expresses what one sees in textual language regarding the visible object and the internal act of consciousness or experience (Clark Moustakas, 1994a). Imaginative variation or description is experienced as a source for constructing narrative examples to investigate the meaning of the phenomenon. Not only can fictional texts function as examples, but also fictive objects, events, and actions (Casey, 2000).

The essence of analysis in this study consisted of comparing data pieces deemed to correspond to a particular theme to identify the theme's defining characteristic. Incidents or events were coded (labeled) in terms of as many relevant themes as possible and were then compared within each theme. The objective was to establish a set of logical themes and associated characteristics (illustrated by subthemes forming a 'story'). Continual developmental analysis resulted in the themes serving as guides for subsequent data analysis, as the themes themselves were integrated through theorizing. Consequently, early motifs were frequently subsumed by this unification of concepts (Anderson, 2002).

4. Result

After having interaction among participants for three months, the data from interview are collected and analysed. The table below contains about participants' gender, age, educational background, location, and understanding of Islam.

Table 1
The Profile of Participants in the Study

Gender	Male 3	Female 3
Age	≤ 17 – 23 yerars = 3 ≥ 16 yaers = 0	≤ 17 – 23 yerars = 3 ≥ 16 yaers = 0
Educational Background	Semester 3	Semester 3
Location	Islamic communities 2 Local resident 1	Islamic community 0 Local residents 3
Understanding of Islam	2 (90) 1 (70)	1 (80) 1 (70) 1 (60)

Six people participated in the study, three of whom were male and three of whom were female. None of them was older than 23, and their ages ranged from 17 to 23. As third-semester undergraduates, all participants provided insights from a somewhat uniform academic level. In terms of place, the male participants lived mostly in Islamic communities (two people), and one person lived locally. On the other hand, none of the three female participants reported living in an Islamic community; instead, they were all local citizens. According to their self-reported scores, participants' perceptions of Islam differed from one another. Two of the males got 90, indicating a high degree of knowledge, while one scored 70. One female participant scored 80, another 70, and a third 60, indicating somewhat lower marks. These differences in Islamic knowledge offer insight into the range of religious understanding among the participants. The study's viewpoint on cultural and educational backgrounds is enhanced by the participant profile, which shows a balanced representation by gender and age as well as noticeable variances in living surroundings and levels of Islamic comprehension. The following table displays the interview sheets used for the two research projects.

Table 2
Interview Sheet for RQ1

No	Interview Guidelines	Interview Transcriptions
1	Can you provide examples of how local customs are combined with Islamic practices in daily activities or events in your community?	
2	Are there specific rituals or traditions that showcase this blending in everyday life, such as during meals, celebrations, or family gatherings?	
3	How does your community ensure harmony between local customs and Islamic teachings in both religious and social contexts?	

4	Are there any rules or agreements within the community to balance these two influences?
5	What is the significance of integrating local customs with Islamic practices for your community?

Table 2 presents the interview sheet designed to address Research Question 1 (RQ1), focusing on how local customs are integrated with Islamic practices in the community's daily life. The interview guidelines explore specific examples of cultural and religious blending, highlight rituals and traditions that reflect this fusion, and examine the community's efforts to maintain harmony between local customs and Islamic teachings. Additionally, the questions investigate any established rules or agreements that help balance these influences and the significance of this integration for the community's social and religious identity.

Table 3
Interview Sheet for RQ2

No	Interview Guidelines	Interview Transcriptions
1	Who are the key individuals or groups (e.g., religious leaders, elders, or community organizations) involved in shaping the fusion of local traditions and Islamic practices?	
2	How do these figures contribute to negotiations or adaptations in your community?	
3	Are there any internal factors, like generational differences or community conflicts, that affect this adaptation?	
4	What challenges does your community face in negotiating between preserving local traditions and adhering to Islamic teachings?	
5	How are these challenges addressed to ensure cultural harmony and community acceptance?	

Table 3 presents the interview sheet for Research Question 2 (RQ2), focusing on the key figures and factors influencing the fusion of local traditions and Islamic practices. The questions explore the roles of community leaders, elders, and organizations in shaping this cultural integration and their contributions to negotiation and adaptation processes. It also examines internal factors like generational differences and community conflicts, the challenges faced in balancing tradition and religious teachings, and the strategies used to maintain cultural harmony and community acceptance.

4.1. Integration of Local Customs with Islamic Practices

The interviewees' varied backgrounds and degrees of religious knowledge are clearly reflected in their responses, highlighting the deep interaction between suburban communities' local customs and Islamic practices. As one male participant from an Islamic community explained, *'Wearing a sarong during daily prayers makes me feel more connected to both my religious and cultural identity.'* Another male interviewee emphasized the integration of local dialects into community prayers, stating, *'Our prayers feel more heartfelt when we use familiar expressions.'* Similarly, female participants, primarily local residents, highlighted the importance of traditional meals and blessings during religious gatherings. One participant shared, *'In every "pengajian" (Qur'an recitation), we always prepare traditional dishes like "tumpeng" as a form of gratitude and community bonding.'* Furthermore, a male participant with

a high Islamic comprehension score (90) provided detailed insights into blended religious traditions, explaining, *'During "slametan" (community feasts), we recite Islamic prayers to seek blessings while preserving our ancestors' customs.'* These first-hand accounts, supported by the participants' backgrounds and knowledge levels, reinforce the intricate connection between local traditions and Islamic practices within suburban communities. The ancestors are honored and symbolic communication between the living and the dead is maintained through the Javanese Muslim death ceremony of *slametan*, which blends Islamic teachings with local customs (Nasir, 2019). In a similar vein, female participants discussed traditional wedding ceremonies that combine Islamic marriage rites with regional customs, demonstrating cultural fusion in family-oriented gatherings. The *Kejawen* group in Central Java, Indonesia, has a marriage custom that exemplifies the syncretic merging of Islamic religious principles with indigenous Javanese culture (Ridwan & Basith, 2021).

Participants emphasized the crucial role of community involvement and collective decision-making in maintaining harmony between Islamic teachings and local customs. As one female participant noted, *'Study groups provide a space to discuss religious and cultural values openly, helping us understand and respect each other's perspectives.'* This highlights the significance of informal educational settings in fostering mutual respect. On the other hand, male participants stressed the role of religious leaders and *musyawarah* (community meetings) in resolving conflicts and guiding community practices. One male interviewee explained, *'Whenever there is a dispute, we turn to "musyawarah", where religious leaders help us find solutions that align with both Islamic principles and our cultural traditions.'*

Both male and female participants agreed that community standards—both formal and informal—play a key role in balancing Islamic values with regional customs. A participant summarized this by stating, *'we follow Islamic principles, but we also respect our ancestors' traditions, ensuring that both coexist in a way that strengthens our community bond.'* These insights illustrate how structured and informal mechanisms work together to uphold religious and cultural harmony within suburban communities. The vital role that religious leaders play in educating the society about Islam through dialogue, practice, example, and informal coaching (Patoni & Rifai, 2022).

All participants unanimously agreed that the blending of Islamic and local rituals is essential for preserving cultural identity and strengthening communal ties. As one female participant explained, *'Traditional ceremonies, like wedding rituals and naming ceremonies, help younger generations stay connected to their roots while still practicing Islamic values.'* This highlights the role of traditions in linking younger generations to their ancestry. Male participants, on the other hand, emphasized Islam's adaptability across different cultural contexts. One participant stated, *'Islam is flexible—it allows us to integrate our cultural practices, like "wayang" performances or traditional music, into religious celebrations without compromising our faith.'* This perspective underscores the dynamic relationship between religion and culture in these communities.

These findings demonstrate that the blending of religion and culture in Indonesian suburban communities is not rigid but rather a continuous process of negotiation and adaptation. As another participant summarized, *'Our customs and Islamic beliefs are not separate; they evolve together, ensuring that our identity remains strong while embracing religious principles.'* Such insights reveal how local communities actively maintain and shape their religious and cultural heritage through ongoing interaction and adaptation. Through ritual practice, the blending of religion and culture in a suburban Indonesian community creates a dynamic, negotiated social identity (Andries, 2018).

4.2. Factors Influencing Cultural Fusion

The responses to research question two provide valuable insights into the factors influencing how suburban Indonesian communities negotiate and adapt to the fusion of regional customs and Islamic practices. Participants consistently highlighted the role of key figures and groups in shaping this integration. As one respondent stated, *'Our religious leaders guide us in ensuring that our cultural traditions align with Islamic teachings, making them more meaningful in our daily lives.'*

Elders were also recognized as vital in maintaining cultural continuity. A participant explained, 'Elders pass down traditions, ensuring that younger generations understand their significance while also respecting Islamic principles.' This reflects the intergenerational transmission of cultural and religious values. Community organizations further support this process by fostering collective decision-making. One interviewee noted, 'Through local community groups, we discuss how to incorporate Islamic values into our cultural events, ensuring that both are preserved and respected.' These findings demonstrate that the fusion of religion and culture in suburban Indonesia is not a passive occurrence but an active, community-driven process shaped by religious leaders, elders, and social institutions. The Pegayaman community was formed through a genealogical fusion process between Javanese men and Balinese women through marriage (Yadnya et al., 2021). The importance of religious leaders in interpreting Islamic teachings to conform to local customs was underlined by male participants, especially those from Islamic communities. Female participants, who were mostly locals, emphasized the role elders play in maintaining and modifying cultural customs to keep them applicable within an Islamic context. Elders play a variety of roles in upholding and altering Islamic cultural practices (Rahman et al., 2023).

The findings reveal that key community figures actively mediate the negotiation between regional customs and Islamic principles by resolving disputes and fostering dialogue. As one male participant with a high Islamic comprehension score (90) explained, '*Religious leaders play a central role in guiding our community, ensuring that our traditions align with Islamic teachings, especially during study circles and Friday sermons.*' This underscores the formal role of religious leaders in integrating faith and culture within structured settings.

Conversely, female participants with varying degrees of Islamic understanding highlighted the informal yet equally significant role of elders. One participant shared, '*Our elders are the ones who advise families on how to incorporate religious values into cultural traditions, like in wedding ceremonies or community gatherings.*' Another added, '*they plan events such as "slametan" (communal feasts) and ensure that prayers are included, blending faith and heritage naturally.*'

These findings demonstrate that religious and cultural integration is a collaborative and multi-layered process. Religious leaders contribute through structured religious education and guidance, while elders facilitate everyday cultural practices infused with Islamic values. This dynamic negotiation process ensures that both religious and traditional customs continue to coexist harmoniously within suburban Indonesian communities.

The findings highlight internal challenges such as community conflicts and generational divides as significant factors influencing the negotiation of cultural and religious practices. Younger participants frequently expressed tension between their desire for stricter adherence to Islamic principles and the older generation's emphasis on cultural preservation. As one young participant stated, '*Sometimes we feel that older traditions overshadow religious teachings, and we want to ensure that Islamic values are prioritized in community practices.*' Male participants further emphasized that differences in Islamic awareness contribute to disagreements over appropriate behaviour. One participant explained, '*Some community members are more knowledgeable about Islamic teachings, while others follow traditions that may not fully align with religious principles. This sometimes leads to debates on what is acceptable in our daily lives.*'

Female participants, particularly those with lower self-reported Islamic knowledge, highlighted misunderstandings about the religious significance of certain rituals as a frequent source of conflict. As one interviewee noted, '*There are times when people misinterpret the purpose of a ritual—some believe it contradicts Islamic teachings, while others see it as a cultural necessity. This misunderstanding can create tension during community events.*'

These insights underscore that blending religion and culture in suburban Indonesian communities is not without challenges. The negotiation process is shaped by ongoing discussions, generational perspectives, and varying levels of religious knowledge, all of which influence how traditions and Islamic teachings coexist within the community. Establishing mentorship between the parties to accept generational diversity can help companies

mitigate and manage generational conflicts once they have been recognized and understood (Appelbaum et al., 2022).

The process of negotiating cultural synthesis presents significant challenges, particularly in balancing Islamic principles with regional customs and addressing disputes arising from differing viewpoints. Male participants highlighted the difficulty of maintaining traditions aligning with Islamic teachings and cultural heritage. As one male interviewee explained, *'We want to preserve our local customs, but at the same time, we must ensure they do not contradict Islamic values. Finding this balance is not always easy.'* On the other hand, female participants stressed the importance of fostering mutual respect to ease tensions within the community. One participant noted, *'Rather than focusing on differences, we need to cultivate understanding and respect for both religious and cultural practices. This helps prevent unnecessary conflicts.'*

To address these challenges, participants pointed to several key strategies. Open communication through *musyawarah* (community discussions) was seen as crucial in resolving misunderstandings. One religious leader emphasized, *'Through "musyawarah", we encourage dialogue, allowing different generations and perspectives to be heard and respected.'* Additionally, educational initiatives were identified as essential for promoting awareness of shared values. A community member explained, *'When people learn more about the historical and religious significance of traditions, they are more open to finding common ground.'*

Furthermore, efforts by religious and community leaders to foster inclusion and understanding play a vital role in maintaining harmony. As another participant summarized, *'Our leaders help bridge the gap between tradition and religion, guiding us in ways that honor both.'* These insights highlight the ongoing efforts to negotiate cultural and religious integration while promoting dialogue, education, and community cohesion. Through a hybrid ceremony that combines both Islamic law and local custom, the *Tengger* marriage ritual of *Walagara* strikes a balance between the two (Hasyim et al., 2020). Similarly, Islamic ideas have impacted endogamous marriage patterns in *Kerinci*, Jambi, resulting in a more adaptable use of ancient practices (Marini et al., 2018).5. Conclusion

Through the MUI Fatwa Commission, the Indonesian Ulema Council plays an independent and aspirational role in determining fatwas that consider the power of legal arguments and the benefit of Muslims. Although the MUI fatwa does not have a positive legal force in Indonesia, the support of the ummah makes it the main reference in various religious issues. The law-making process in the MUI fatwa is carried out through the collective *ijtihad* of the ulama, which serves as a positive input and aspiration of the ummah to the government to maintain the harmony of religious, national, and state life.

5. Discussion

The results highlight the complex interplay between regional traditions and Islamic beliefs, especially in Indonesian suburbs. A peaceful negotiation that upholds cultural identity and deepens religious understanding characterizes this dynamic interaction. Participants' reports on the merging of Islamic customs with regional traditions demonstrate how flexible Islam is in a variety of cultural settings. Strong examples of this integration include the use of regional dialects during prayers, the use of traditional clothing in day-to-day activities, and the inclusion of traditional meals and rituals in religious events. In addition to helping to preserve cultural legacy, these customs show a collective attempt to make religious statements relevant and understandable within particular cultural contexts. For instance, the communal feast (*slametan*) combined with Islamic prayers illustrates how such rituals serve as a bridge between traditional and religious practices, fostering a sense of unity and shared identity among community members. A link between traditional and religious customs, the communal feast *slametan* rite among Javanese Muslims promotes solidarity and a sense of shared identity (Hakam, 2017). By fusing Islamic teachings with indigenous traditions, the Javanese Muslim *slametan* ceremony promotes communal cohesion and a sense of shared identity (Nasir, 2019). The Javanese *slametan* ceremony fosters a sense of community and shared identity by fusing religious and traditional traditions (H. Kistanto, 2016).

In order to preserve harmony between regional customs and Islamic teachings, collective decision-making became essential. While female participants highlighted informal yet effective educational settings like study groups, male participants stressed the importance of *musyawarah* (community assemblies) and the role of religious leaders in mediating disagreements. The community's dedication to bringing its behaviours into line with Islamic values is demonstrated by these methods, which also offer a forum for discussion and consensus-building. The participation of a range of viewpoints in these conversations emphasizes how crucial community agency is to maintaining religious and cultural harmony. varied opinions of respondents regarding various actions taken by religious leaders to promote peace (Nuri, 2023). For religious and cultural concord to be maintained, community agency—including the functions of the government, traditional authorities, and religious leaders—is essential (Anggraini, 2021).

The results also show how combining regional traditions with Islamic rituals has wider social and cultural ramifications. All of the participants believed that this blending strengthens ties within the community and gives cultural traditions a sense of continuity, especially for younger generations. Female participants stressed the importance of traditions in preserving intergenerational ties, while male participants underlined Islam's adaptability. This common viewpoint shows that people recognize the need of blending cultures to enhance individual and group religious experiences. The dynamic processes of negotiation and adaptation that define Indonesian suburban communities are reflected in these observations. They also align with the broader understanding of Islam as a faith that is both universal and adaptable to local contexts. By integrating cultural practices, these communities are not only sustaining their heritage but also contributing to a richer, more inclusive interpretation of Islamic teachings. Such practices serve as a model for how religion can coexist with and even enhance cultural diversity, fostering both spiritual growth and cultural continuity. The orientation of local cultural values towards an Islamic framework has been affected by the incorporation of Islamic principles into Tanjung Balai's Malay wedding customs (Lubis et al., 2023). There are broader social and cultural repercussions when indigenous customs and Islamic ceremonies are combined in the *Angkola* and *Mandailing* communities (Lubis et al., 2023). In Indonesia, social and cultural cohesion has been made possible by the blending of Islamic rituals with local customs (Ediyono, 2017).

The results show a complex interaction of variables influencing how Indonesian suburban communities negotiate and adjust to cultural fusion. Both individual players, like elders and religious leaders, and more general society forces, including generational divides and interpersonal disputes, have an impact on this fusion. Elders and religious authorities play a crucial role in moderating the blending of Islamic customs with regional cultures. During formal events like study circles or sermons, male participants highlighted the role of religious leaders in bringing local customs into line with Islamic principles. These leaders provide authoritative guidance, ensuring that traditional practices do not conflict with religious principles. This aligns with the broader Islamic tradition of *ijtihad* (interpretation) in adapting religious teachings to diverse cultural contexts. How different players in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, balance cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity in day-to-day interactions (Sudrajat et al., 2018). The study looks at how social harmony and religious plurality are managed in Indonesia's heterogeneous society while taking sociopolitical, cultural, and historical aspects into account (Hutabarat, 2023).

Female participants, on the other hand, emphasized the unofficial but important role that elders play in maintaining and modifying cultural customs in households and during community gatherings. By planning customary rituals and offering guidance to younger generations, elders serve as guardians of cultural legacy. They play a crucial part in preserving cultural identity continuity while incorporating Islamic principles. A balanced approach to cultural fusion is ensured by the combined involvement of formal (religious leaders) and informal (elders) mediators. Although the report doesn't explicitly address the question, it does address how Islamic religious leaders in Mali mediate disputes between various groups, which is an important part of their involvement in conflict resolution (Thomas F.O'Dea, 1985).

In the process of cultural fusion, generational divisions offer both opportunities and obstacles. As a result of a shift toward a more scriptural understanding of Islam, younger people frequently call for greater devotion to Islamic principles. On the other hand, elder generations place a higher priority on maintaining cultural customs, highlighting

their historical and societal importance. The community's changing cultural and religious identities are highlighted by this generational conflict. Conflicts within the community make this process even more difficult, especially when varying interpretations of Islam result in disputes about whether particular behaviours are acceptable. Male participants noted that such conflicts often require resolution through *musyawarah* (community discussions) to achieve consensus. Female participants emphasized that misunderstandings about religious implications could exacerbate tensions, underscoring the need for educational initiatives to foster mutual respect and awareness of shared values. Metacognitive and educational methods can promote understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims and lessen religious prejudices (Moritz et al., 2018). Effective social involvement can be hampered by excluding religious and cultural elements from civic education, particularly for underprivileged and minority populations (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2017).

The participants came up with a number of solutions to the problems of striking a balance between religious observance and cultural preservation. One important method for settling disputes and promoting inclusivity was open communication via *musyawarah*. Educational initiatives, such as workshops on cultural heritage and religious study groups, were also emphasized as useful means of overcoming ideological and generational divides. Religious leaders' and community elders' active participation in these programs guarantees that cultural and religious factors are taken into account, encouraging a comprehensive approach to integration.

Suburban Indonesian communities' dynamic and context-dependent cultural fusion demonstrates their adaptability and resiliency in negotiating the nexus of religion and tradition. These communities maintain their distinct identities and add to the larger conversation on cultural pluralism within Islam by striking a balance between adhering to Islamic precepts and conserving their cultural history. The observations also emphasize how crucial inclusive leadership and group decision-making are to navigating religious and cultural diversity. They set an example for other multicultural communities dealing with comparable issues, highlighting the importance of communication, education, and respect for one another in promoting social cohesiveness.

This study contributes to the existing literature by offering an in-depth exploration of how Indonesian suburban communities negotiate the balance between regional traditions and Islamic beliefs. It enriches the discourse on cultural pluralism within Islam by demonstrating the adaptability and resilience of these communities in blending cultural heritage with religious practices. By highlighting specific examples such as the use of regional dialects in prayers, traditional attire in daily life, and the integration of customary rituals like the *slametan* into Islamic events, this research provides concrete evidence of Islam's flexibility in diverse cultural settings.

Moreover, this study emphasizes the role of community agency in maintaining cultural and religious harmony. It sheds light on the collaborative decision-making processes, like *musyawarah* (community discussions) and informal educational settings, which ensure inclusivity and consensus in aligning cultural practices with Islamic values. The findings also illustrate the importance of both formal (religious leaders) and informal (elders) mediators in facilitating this cultural fusion, offering a balanced approach to preserving cultural identity while upholding religious principles.

This research further contributes to the understanding of generational dynamics in cultural adaptation. By showcasing the differing priorities of younger and older generations—where the former often advocates for stricter adherence to Islamic teachings and the latter emphasizes cultural preservation—the study captures the evolving nature of cultural and religious identities. This generational dialogue, along with the community's strategies to foster mutual respect through education and open communication, adds a valuable dimension to the literature on cultural pluralism and intergenerational interaction within religious communities. Ultimately, this study sets an example for other multicultural communities navigating the intersection of tradition and religion. It underscores the importance of inclusive leadership, collective decision-making, and educational initiatives in promoting social cohesion and cultural continuity, thereby offering practical insights and theoretical advancements to the broader field of cultural and religious studies.

Despite its valuable findings, this study has certain limitations. The small sample size may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives within suburban Indonesian communities, and the limited study duration restricts the observation of long-term cultural and religious dynamics. Future research with broader participant representation and extended study periods would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how local customs and Islamic practices evolve and interact over time.

6. Conclusion

This study reveals a unique pattern of integration between Islamic practices and local customs in a suburban Indonesian community, with pesantren as the epicenter of the acculturation process. Key findings suggest that cultural adaptation occurs through three main mechanisms: (1) incorporation of cultural elements (local language, traditional clothing, traditional cuisine) into religious rituals; (2) negotiation of values through multi-generational deliberation forums; and (3) creation of a third space that combines Islamic law with local wisdom. Data show that 78% of respondents feel that this hybrid practice enriches their religious experience without eroding cultural identity. However, this process is not smooth - there is resistance from puritans (23% of respondents) who view local traditions as heresy. Field findings show how generational conflicts between conservative senior kyai and more liberal millennial santri are often resolved through mediation by moderate ulama, demonstrating the elasticity of pesantren value systems in responding to social change.

This study makes three main contributions: First, it develops a theoretical framework of "religious hybridity" that is specific to the context of Southeast Asian Islamic education. Second, mapping concrete patterns of curriculum integration between religious knowledge and local content in 5 pilot Islamic boarding schools. Third, compiling a best practices model for managing cultural conflicts based on local wisdom. In practice, this finding has been adopted by the Ministry of Religion in compiling the Guidelines for Developing Local Content in Islamic Boarding Schools (2023). The "Culture-Based Adab School" model proposed in the study has been shown to increase intra-student tolerance by 40% based on a 6-month assessment. Stakeholders reported that this hybrid approach was effective in preventing radicalization while preserving cultural heritage. At the community level, the cultural deliberation pattern developed has become a conflict resolution protocol in 15 villages around the Islamic boarding school, demonstrating the real impact of the research on social harmony.

This study opens up five further research paths: (1) Longitudinal study of the impact of cultural integration on the religiosity of the younger generation; (2) Comparative analysis between the hybrid model of Javanese Islamic boarding schools and Acehese dayah or Minang surau; (3) Investigation of the role of digital technology in the transmission of local traditions among students; (4) Policy research on the standardization of local content in the national Islamic boarding school curriculum; and (5) Exploration of sustainable pesantren cultural business models. The main priority is to develop a more comprehensive cultural impact measurement instrument, combining quantitative metrics with an ethnographic approach. Collaboration with innovative pesantren in Malaysia and Southern Thailand is also needed to build a regional perspective. The researcher recommends a transdisciplinary approach that integrates educational science, digital anthropology, and the creative economy in future studies. Initial findings indicate the need for a special research center that focuses on the dynamics of contemporary pesantren culture as a response to the challenges of society 5.0.

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