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RECONSTRUCTION OF THEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE: INTEGRATION OF LOCAL WISDOM INTO RELIGIOUS PRACTICES FOR SOCIAL COHESION IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA



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Abstract

This paper addresses the integration of local wisdom into theological narratives to enhance social cohesion in multicultural societies. The main question focuses on how religious teachings can adapt to local cultural values, making them more relevant and inclusive. Despite previous studies highlighting the benefits of this integration, a comprehensive analysis of its practical implications remains limited. This research contributes a novel perspective by systematically reviewing existing literature to establish patterns and themes that support social harmony through contextual theology. Using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, the study identifies strategies, challenges, and outcomes of incorporating local traditions into religious practices. The findings of the study suggest that the adaptation of theological narratives to local cultures has the potential to improve social harmony and reduce tensions between groups. This integration also enriches religious practices, making them more inclusive and contextual according to the cultural characteristics of the local community. The conclusion of this study offers new insights into contextual theology in plural societies, where local wisdom plays a vital role in creating peace and social harmony.

Artikel ini membahas integrasi kearifan lokal ke dalam narasi teologis untuk memperkuat kohesi sosial dalam masyarakat multikultural. Pertanyaan utama berfokus pada bagaimana ajaran agama dapat beradaptasi dengan nilai-nilai budaya lokal, sehingga lebih relevan dan inklusif. Meskipun studi sebelumnya telah menyoroti manfaat integrasi ini, analisis komprehensif mengenai implikasi praktisnya masih terbatas. Penelitian ini memberikan perspektif baru dengan meninjau literatur secara sistematis untuk mengidentifikasi pola dan tema yang mendukung harmoni sosial melalui teologi kontekstual. Dengan metode Systematic Literature Review (SLR), penelitian ini mengungkap strategi, tantangan, dan hasil dari penerapan tradisi lokal dalam praktik keagamaan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penyesuaian narasi teologis dengan budaya lokal berpotensi meningkatkan harmoni sosial dan mengurangi ketegangan antar kelompok. Integrasi ini juga memperkaya praktik keagamaan, menjadikannya lebih inklusif dan kontekstual sesuai dengan karakteristik budaya masyarakat setempat. Kesimpulan penelitian ini menawarkan wawasan baru bagi teologi kontekstual dalam masyarakat plural, di mana kearifan lokal berperan penting dalam menciptakan perdamaian dan keselarasan sosial.



Background

The various results of theological narrative studies derived from local wisdom play an essential role in building social cohesion in multicultural societies, especially in theological contexts, as a bridge that connects different cultures and religions, allowing individuals from different backgrounds to find similarities and respect each other.¹ In addition, local wisdom can also be a means to overcome differences by providing a framework that supports harmonious interaction between different groups.²

This shows the importance of the role of religious communities in an increasingly pluralistic modern society. This ideology significantly favors national attachment and increases social trust among minorities. Through the perspective of practical theology, theological integration, local wisdom, history education, practical wisdom, national cohesion, and dialogical education have great potential to strengthen local values to create a vision of more inclusive social cohesion in playing an essential role in religious moderation between religious communities.

Previous research, such as a study of religious communities in South Africa that use social capital to reduce prejudice and improve harmony among different ethnic groups, indicates that the appreciation of cultural diversity through multicultural contact can strengthen a sense of community in multiethnic and Indian communities; collective rituals in village religious practices support close social networks and enhance interpersonal relationships.³ However, the existence of religion in state policy in a multicultural society often conflicts between religious values and the principles of secular government.⁴ For example, the Old Faith adherents in Russia still maintain a strong religious identity despite facing challenges from the dominant group of the more moderate group, and the Christian group in China still adapts their teachings to the local culture without creating internal conflicts⁵. It emphasizes

¹ Shakilla Aura, "The Influence of Character Education Based on Local Wisdom on Students' Social and Environmental Behavior," *Sij* 2, no. 2 (2023): 1 – 14, <https://doi.org/10.61391/sij.v2i2.46>; Alis Asikin, "Social Cohesion of Local Wisdom for Plural Communities," *International Journal of Ihya Ulum Al-Din* 23, no. 2 (2021): 210 – 23, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ihya.23.2.8261>.

² Suryaningsi Mila and Solfina L Kolambani, "Religious Harmony and Tolerance in Disruption Era: A Study of Local Wisdom in Watu Asa of Central Sumba," *Walisongo Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 28, no. 2 (2020): 171 – 94, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ws.28.2.6381>.

³ Eleanor A. Power, "Collective Rituals and Social Support Networks in Rural South India," *Proceedings of Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 285, no. 1879 (May 16, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1098/RSPB.2018.0023>.

⁴ Neng Nur Annisa and Nabila Tabassum, "The Challenges of Multiculturalism: Religious Integration in State Policy," *Journal of Religion and Policy* 1, no. 1 (December 19, 2023): 8 – 15, <https://doi.org/10.15575/RPJ.V1I1.433>.

⁵ Xiaowei Zhou, "Localization of Christianity in China: Difficulties and Possibilities of Achieving Harmonious Cultural Integration," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 43, no. 3 (2022): 320 – 30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2021.1969206>.

that theological narratives integrated with local values can enrich the relevance of religious teachings and strengthen social harmony.⁶

Theological studies, as a discipline that focuses on understanding religious teachings, is responsible for answering contemporary social challenges, one of which is by opening up space for the integration of local values. Local wisdom contains cultural values that specific communities believe and pass down from generation to generation, including views on life, ethics, and social norms.⁷ The integration of theology and local wisdom enriches religious narratives and makes religious teachings more relevant and contextual for society.⁸

The integration of theological narratives and local wisdom in religious practice is a study that is increasingly receiving attention in the context of multicultural societies through the study of contextual theology, which focuses on adapting religious teachings to socio-cultural conditions. According to Schreiter, contextual theology⁹ serves as a medium for conveying religious values and as a means to understand local needs¹⁰ and address various social problems. Studies on contextual theology show that local wisdom can play an essential role in enriching religious narratives¹¹ with local cultural values in society that are inherent in daily life, such as tolerance, cooperation, and mutual respect between communities. Local wisdom itself is a concept that includes various cultural and social aspects that have developed from generation to generation. Local wisdom has the potential to become the foundation of peace and tolerance education in multicultural communities. Even so, more contemporary research underscores theological flexibility's importance in responding to evolving social realities.

Overall, local wisdom serves as a source of knowledge and value and a strategic tool to build social cohesion in a multicultural society.¹² By prioritizing local values in education and social interaction, communities can create a more harmonious and

⁶ Bherta Sri Eko and Hendar Putranto, "The Role of Intercultural Competence and Local Wisdom in Building Intercultural and Interreligious Tolerance," *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 48, no. 4 (2019): 341–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2019.1639535>.

⁷ J. Hasse, "Revitalization of Local Wisdom: Efforts to Reduce Tensions Among the Faithful," *Al-Albab* 3, no. 1 (June 1, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.24260/ALALBAB.V3I1.95>.

⁸ Fathurrozi, "Harmony in Islamic Boarding Schools, Multicultural Education Models Based on Local Wisdom," *ATTAQWA: Journal of Islamic Education and Early Childhood* 2, no. 4 (December 26, 2023): 203–13, <https://doi.org/10.58355/ATTAQWA.V2I4.57>.

⁹ Darren Cronshaw, "Home and Away: Contextual Theology and Local Practice," *Pacifica* 28, no. 1 (Februari 2015): 94–95, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1030570X15613359>.

¹⁰ Syamsul Huda et al., "The Management of the Education System Using the Three Laws of Auguste Comte: The Case of Islamic Schools," *Management Science Letter* 10, no. 3 (2020): 617–24, <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2019.9.018>.

¹¹ Neil Darragh, "Contextual Methods in Theology: Lessons from the New Zealand Aotearoa Case," *Pacifica* 16, no. 1 (February 2003): 45–66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1030570X0301600104>.

¹² M Ilham, "Theological and Cultural Construction: Resilience Strategies of the to Sallang Minority in a Multicultural Society," *Fitrah Jurnal Kajian Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 9, no. 2 (2023): 247–64, <https://doi.org/10.24952/fitrah.v9i2.8693>.

respectful environment, which is very important in today's cultural and religious diversity.¹³

The existing literature supports the idea of this article that integrating theological narratives and local wisdom can be an effective solution to improve social cohesion in a multicultural society. With a contextual theological approach, religious practices are no longer limited to formal rituals. However, they are part of a broader cultural dialogue, able to embrace local values without sacrificing the basic principles of religion. Through this perspective, this study explores further how the integration process occurs and the extent to which a theological narrative integrated with local wisdom can contribute to creating a more harmonious and inclusive society.

The formulation of the problem in this study is how the process of integrating theological narratives and local wisdom is carried out and the extent to which it contributes to social cohesion. This study aims to identify patterns of theological narrative adaptation that are responsive to local cultural contexts and analyze their impact on social life. Hopefully, this research can contribute to developing contextual theology that is more inclusive and relevant for multicultural societies. Thus, this research is not only an academic study but also offers a practical approach for religious people to realize, maintain, and manage harmonious peace in a multicultural society through contextual and adaptive religious understanding based on local wisdom.

Research Methods

Through the *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) or *Systematic Review* (SR) approach,¹⁴ this study is conducted in-depth as the primary method of collecting, evaluating, and synthesizing the results of previous research that are relevant to the research topic. Using this approach, the researcher explained that the results are based on comprehensive and scientifically documented evidence sourced from the literature of the academic databases Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar¹⁵; the results are presented in the form of conclusions that highlight patterns and trends that emerge from the literature¹⁶ analyzed. This method provides an in-depth picture

¹³ Syafwan Rozi, A R Ritonga, and Januar Januar, "'Local Community-Based Disaster Management' the Transformation of Religious and Local Wisdom Values in Preparation to Deal With Natural Hazards in West Sumatra, Indonesia," *Jambō Journal of Disaster Risk Studies* 13, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v13i1.1020>.

¹⁴ Mathew Azarian et al., "Are We Doing Systematic Literature Reviews Correctly? Scientific Mapping and Methodological Assessment," *Logistics* 7, no. 4 (December 1, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/LOGISTICS7040089>.

¹⁵ Hayrol Azril Mohamed Shaffril, Samsul Farid Samsuddin, and Asnarulkhadi Abu Samah, "ABC Systematic Literature Review: A Basic Methodological Guide for Beginners," *Quality & Quantity* 55, no. 4 (August 1, 2021): 1319–46, <https://doi.org/10.1007/S11135-020-01059-6>.

¹⁶ Maroje Vičić, "Connecting the Pieces of the Puzzle: A Method of Systematic Literature Review in the Social Sciences," *Sociologija* 64, no. 4 (2022): 543, <https://doi.org/10.2298/SOC2204543V>.

of previous research. It develops a strong theoretical basis to support the argument about integrating theological narratives into local wisdom to achieve social cohesion.

Result and Discussion

Based on the analysis of the selected literature, we identify several key themes that emerge from the results of the existing research as an answer to the process of integrating theological narratives in local wisdom and the extent to which they contribute to social cohesion as follows:

Theological Narratives and Local Wisdom – Adapted by religious communities in local values through religious teachings

Recent research shows that religious communities use the value of local wisdom to strengthen social cohesion and maintain tolerance in multicultural societies. Local traditions such as "*tekara ne'e*" and "*mbolo weki*" in Bima. Earth alms ritual and *sadranan* in Central Java. *Tengko situru* in Sulawesi and harmonious interaction between Hindus and Muslims in Bali. This study shows that local wisdom is an effective tool in creating peace and maintaining the relevance of religious teachings in diverse societies. Additionally, research shows that local values integrated into religious teachings often include ethical and moral principles that have long existed in local cultures. The integration of local wisdom in theological narratives is also carried out through adjustments to how religious teachings are delivered.

A more contextual approach to religious communication is Integrating local wisdom into religious communication. This approach would strengthen people's understanding and emotional attachment to religious teachings. Using narratives based on local wisdom in environmental campaigns can increase public awareness by relying on local cultural symbols.¹⁷

In some areas, religious practices are adapted to local traditions, and the function of traditional rituals associated with these religious moral teachings is to strengthen social solidarity. These religious practices and local traditions are essential in strengthening community cohesion and harmony. For example, studies in the Bawakaraeng community in South Sulawesi consistently found that local rituals with Islamic teachings strengthened their religious and traditional¹⁸ commitments. Religious awareness in Indonesia can be strengthened through digital volunteerism, which builds social cohesion amid limited physical interaction.¹⁹ In Lombok, the Topat War ritual between Hindus and Muslims shows interfaith collaboration to build

¹⁷ Ni Wayan Primayanti and Virienia Puspita, "Narratives of Local Wisdom in Environmental Campaigns," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 9, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2022.2090062>.

¹⁸ Mustaqim Pabbajah, "Religious Consistency and Commitment to Local Tradition Within the Bawakareng Community in Indonesia's South Sulawesi," *Al-Albab* 9, no. 2 (December 2020): 179 – 98, <https://doi.org/10.24260/ALALBAB.V9I2.1789>.

¹⁹ Andri Azis Putra, "How to Create Social Cohesion During Pandemic? A Sociological Analysis of Digital Voluntarism as the Path of the Reconstruction of Religious Consciousness in Indonesia," *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif* 16, no. 2 (April 2022): 317 – 38, <https://doi.org/10.14421/JSR.V16I2.2360>.

moderation and tolerance.²⁰ The role of local values such as *Ain ni Ain* in creating religious moderation among the people of Kei, Maluku, which strengthens social relations amid diversity of beliefs,²¹ and the role of Javanese culture in Bantul, Yogyakarta, supports religious moderation through social practices based on the values of harmony and tolerance between citizens.²² The study illustrates how local wisdom and religion work together to build social solidarity and tolerance in Indonesia.

This is another example of integrating local wisdom in theological narratives that helps overcome cultural resistance to social and religious change. A combination of culture and local wisdom is present in Buneng village,²³ which is an accommodation of local wisdom in Indonesia's diverse urban community environment. Communication is based on local culture and religious practice.²⁴ Regional regulations protect local wisdom to maintain cultural identity amid globalization. The study supports that local wisdom plays an essential role in fostering the acceptance of social and religious change while maintaining cultural identity.

However, the findings also note challenges in integrating theological narratives with local values, especially from conservative groups concerned with cultural influences that could be perceived as deviating from religious doctrine. How new religious organizations face cultural resistance in their efforts to adapt socio-culturally in local communities, and religious moderation and local wisdom support harmony in multi-religious societies by strengthening the value of tolerance and adaptation of theological narratives to local wisdom can strengthen social cohesion and minimize the potential for conflict between groups.

The adaptation of theological narratives in multicultural societies can be seen through various successful and unsuccessful examples. Many successful examples are the application of Hindu moderation in Bali, which integrates local wisdom values in religious practice. Research shows that the concept of "*menyama braya*" (mutual

²⁰ Made Sumari, "The Contribution of the Topat War Ritual in Building Religious Moderation in Lingsar, West Lombok," *Vidyottama Sanatana: International Journal of Hindu Science and Religious Studies* 7, no. 2 (October 2023): 217–26, <https://doi.org/10.25078/VIDYOTTAMA.V7I2.2390>.

²¹ Sabara Sabara et al., "Concepts and Practices of Religious Moderation in Kei Local Wisdom," *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* 660 (April 2022), <https://doi.org/10.2991/ASSEHR.K.220408.095>.

²² Joko Tri Haryanto, "Religious Moderation in Javanese Culture in the Community of TIRENGGO Village, Bantul, Yogyakarta," *Penamas* 35, no. 1 (June 2022): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.31330/PENAMAS.V35I2.567>.

²³ Ashadi L. Diab et al., "Accommodation of Local Wisdom in Conflict Resolution in Indonesian Urban Communities," *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2153413>.

²⁴ Rachmat Kriyantono, "Fighting Radicalism with Cultural Communication in Religious Practice," *Progress in the Journal of Social Science Research* 6, no. 11 (November 17, 2019): 83–92, <https://doi.org/10.14738/ASSRJ.610.7341>.

respect) among the Balinese Hindu community is a strong social cohesion, allowing them to maintain religious teachings while demonstrating a high tolerance towards people of other faiths.²⁵ In this context, theological narratives prioritizing local values have created a harmonious and respectful environment among various religious groups.

In addition, the study shows that local values integrated into religious teachings often include ethical and moral principles that have long existed in local cultures. Examples of such studies are incorporating Minangkabau cultural values in Islamic religious education in schools to increase students' moral awareness by cultivating local values of manners and politeness²⁶ and applying ethical concepts based on local religious values, such as *Tri Kaya Parisudha*, in Bali.²⁷ The internalization of halal values and local wisdom in Setanggor increases the attractiveness of tourism based on religious values.²⁸ Bugis local wisdom effectively supports character education to build interfaith tolerance through values such as empathy and togetherness²⁹ and using textbooks incorporating local religious practices to increase moral understanding in elementary school students.³⁰ These studies confirm that strengthening religious teachings through local values results in a deeper and more relevant understanding of ethical norms in people's daily lives.

Seeing culture-based design strategies applied to religious heritage, such as the one in Taiwan, strengthens the appeal of local culture in the context of global tourism.³¹ Traditional festivals in Bhutan have adapted to modernity without losing

²⁵ Ahmed F Desky, "Implementation of Balinese Hindu Moderation Based on Local Wisdom in Kampung Bali, Langkat Regency," *Scientific Journal of Sociology of Religion (Jisa)* 5, no. 1 (2022): 1, <https://doi.org/10.30829/jisa.v5i1.11063>.

²⁶ Fika Maideja et al., "Integration of Local Cultural Values in Forming Student Morale in Learning Islamic Religious Education in Junior High Schools," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research of Higher Education* 6, no. 2 (April 2023): 97 – 105, <https://doi.org/10.24036/IJMURHICA.V6I2.108>.

²⁷ Made Aristia Prayudi and I Putu Hendra Martadinata, "Accounting Student's Moral Judgment and Integrated Cultural Religious-Based Ethics Concept," *Journal of Accounting and Investment* 1, no. 1 (2020): 162 – 79, <https://doi.org/10.18196/JAI.2101143>.

²⁸ Hendri Hermawan Adinugraha and Mila Sartika, "Religious Culture: Internalization of Local Wisdom and Halal Values in Setanggor," *Kawalu: Journal of Local Culture* 9, no. 02 (December 2022): 148 – 74, <https://doi.org/10.32678/KWL.V9I02.7869>.

²⁹ Yunus Yunus, "Building Religious Tolerance Through Character Education Based on Local Wisdom of Bugis Culture," *HIKMATUNA: Journal for Integrative Islamic Studies* 7, no. 1 (June 2021): 91 – 102, <https://doi.org/10.28918/HIKMATUNA.V7I1.3352>.

³⁰ Muhammad Ahsan, Muhammad Naeem, and Noshaba Younus, "Investigating the Role of the Text by Which Religious Practices Are Projected in the Local and Imported Textbooks," *Global Regional Review* V, no. III (September 2020): 24 – 31, [https://doi.org/10.31703/GRR.2020\(V-III\).03](https://doi.org/10.31703/GRR.2020(V-III).03).

³¹ Tsen Yao Chang and Yu Ju Chuang, "Cultural Sustainability: Teaching and Design Strategies for Incorporating Service Design in Religious Heritage Branding," *Sustainability* 13, no. 6 (March 2021), <https://doi.org/10.3390/SU13063256>.

their essence, maintaining the relevance of local culture for the younger generation.³² Sacred practices in Ghana, such as sacred forests, bridge local culture and environmental preservation in the face of modern changes.³³ The symbolism in *the Ruwatan Leuweung* ritual teaches respect for the environment while maintaining Sundanese cultural traditions.³⁴ *Tayal* practices in Taiwan, such as *Millet Ark*, reinforce local cultural identity and sustainability by blending ecological values and spirituality in everyday life³⁵.

On the contrary, examples of failure can be seen in some cases where the theological narrative has not been able to adapt to local wisdom. For example, in the case of the Geothermal Industry in West Java, conflicts between corporations and local communities often arise due to inconsistencies between the policies implemented and the values upheld by the local community.³⁶ This suggests that conflicts can escalate when theological or policy narratives do not consider local values.

Social conflicts are often rooted in conflicting values and needs.³⁷ In this context, rigid theological narratives can exacerbate the situation, as they do not provide room for group dialogue and understanding. The inability to adapt to local values can lead to greater tension, mainly when narratives reinforce certain groups' identities above others.

Agrarian conflicts in Takalar Regency, South Sulawesi, involving women as conflict resolution agents also reflect the importance of involving local perspectives in the conflict resolution process.³⁸ When theological narratives do not consider women's roles and voices in communities, it can exacerbate existing tensions. The

³² Wantanee Suntikul, "Cultural Sustainability and Fluidity in Bhutan's Traditional Festivals," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 26, no. 12 (December 2018): 2102–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2018.1533021>.

³³ Philip Aniah and Augustine Yelfaanibe, "Environment, Development and Sustainability of Local Practices in the Sacred Groves and Shrines in Bongo District: A Bio-Cultural Study for Environmental Management in Ghana," *Environment, Development and Sustainability* 20, no. 6 (December 2018): 2487–99, <https://doi.org/10.1007/S10668-017-0001-2>.

³⁴ Sigit Fitro Prasetyo, "Harmony of Nature and Culture: Symbolism and Environmental Education in Ritual," *Journal of Contemporary Rituals and Traditions* 1, no. 2 (September 2023): 67–76, <https://doi.org/10.15575/JCRT.361>.

³⁵ Yih Ren Lin et al., "Situating Indigenous Resilience: Climate Change and Tayal's 'Millet Ark' Action in Taiwan," *Sustainability* 12, no. 24 (December 2020): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.3390/SU122410676>.

³⁶ Dody Prayogo, "Anatomy of Conflict Between Corporations and Local Communities in the Geothermal Industry in West Java," *Makara Human Behavior Studies in Asia* 14, no. 1 (2010): 25, <https://doi.org/10.7454/mssh.v14i1.570>.

³⁷ Devi L Maghfiroh and Moh. Zawawi, "Social Conflict in the Novel Adis and the Fate of Minanto Based on George Simmel's Perspective," *Satwika Cultural Studies and Social Change* 7, no. 1 (2021): 173–97, <https://doi.org/10.22219/kembara.v7i1.15634>.

³⁸ Suryanto Arifin et al., "Women and Social Conflict: Efforts to Resolve Agrarian Conflicts in Takalar Regency, South Sulawesi," *Journal of Neo Societal* 6, no. 1 (2021): 1, <https://doi.org/10.52423/jns.v6i1.12559>.

study highlights that the active participation of all elements of society, including women, is crucial in overcoming social conflicts.

The study found that integrating theological narratives into local wisdom is a complex but significant effort to create social cohesion in multicultural societies. This process involves adapting religious teachings to suit the cultural values embedded in society so that religion can be more relevant and acceptable to various groups. The integration is carried out by recognizing local cultural elements that align with religious principles, such as the value of cooperation, mutual respect, and togetherness. Through this integration, religion is no longer seen as a rigid foreign doctrine but as part of society's cultural identity.

Adapting local values into theological narratives has been proven to facilitate the delivery of religious teachings to the community. The study found that religious narratives that include elements of local culture tend to be more readily accepted by the community, especially in areas that still hold potent traditions. Using local languages and cultural symbols in religious activities, such as prayers, sermons, and religious ceremonies, strengthens people's sense of emotional attachment to religion. In this way, religion becomes closer to their daily lives and increases their acceptance and involvement in religious practices.

The integration process increases individual attachment to religion and creates stronger social cohesion among members of society with different cultural backgrounds. Theological narratives that accommodate local values help to reduce differences in views and potential conflicts between groups, as these values can bridge differences in cultural identities. Research shows that when local values are adopted in religious teachings, people tend to value diversity more and show a higher tolerance attitude towards differences.

One of the adaptation patterns found is the rearrangement of religious narratives that involve elements of local culture as common moral and ethical principles. For example, the values of cooperation that have long been part of the culture of Indonesian society are contextualized as a form of manifestation of religious teachings about caring for others. This enriches the meaning of the culture of cooperation and strengthens these values as a moral obligation in religion, giving people a spiritual foundation to apply these values in their lives.

The Role of Religious Leaders and Community Leaders in Local Religious Narratives Able to Strengthen Social Cohesion – The Positive Impact of Local Cultural Adaptation in Religious Practices.

Integrating local culture into religious practices has also reduced resistance to social change among strong communities with local traditions. Local narratives adapted to religious teachings provide an understanding that religion does not conflict with cultural identity but can go hand in hand to enrich social life. Culture-

based communication and integrating local cultural norms and traditions can help promote religious moderation, contributing to a harmonious life between religious groups. Local cultural values play an essential role in community integration by reducing the perception of differences as a threat.

The adaptation process also involves religious and community leaders as the primary agents facilitating the integration of theological narratives and local wisdom. For example, Christian and Islamic leaders in Atambua work together to maintain local values for harmony between religious communities.³⁹ Religious leaders and traditional leaders in Tongkonan use the values of local wisdom to strengthen tolerance through *kasiuluran* (brotherhood) and *tengko situru* (togetherness). Community leaders in some areas help prevent human trafficking by promoting community values that value women and children.⁴⁰ The study emphasizes that religious leaders and community leaders are key agents in facilitating the adaptation of local religious and cultural values to strengthen community identity and social harmony.

Adapting local cultural narratives and symbols and the fiber of religious moderation in religious practices combined with local wisdom increases tolerance between religious communities through local values such as *kasiuluran* and *tengko situru* in Toraja. Women's involvement in leadership contributes to social cohesion through interfaith projects supporting tolerance between groups.⁴¹ The tradition of *tekara ne'e* and *mbolo weki*, local wisdom in Bima. The practice of *shaking hands* in Aceh.⁴² This study supports that local narratives in religion serve as the social glue that strengthens a sense of community and belonging in diverse communities.

Intercultural dialogue supported by collective wisdom effectively addresses cultural tensions. It builds cross-community understanding, strengthening harmonious interfaith life through the value of togetherness and easing conflicts in ethnically and religiously diverse urban communities. Empowering local wisdom can be a sustainable conflict resolution strategy that builds strong shared values in the community. Intercultural competence combined with local wisdom strengthens ethnic and religious tolerance, reducing the potential for conflict; this underscores

³⁹ Yanuarius Seran, "The Role of Christian and Islamic Leaders to Strengthen Local Wisdom in Atambua," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 22, no. 2 (April 2022): 278–98, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ESENSIA.V22I2.3246>.

⁴⁰ Any Suryani Hamzah, Mohammad Irfan, and Mohammad Sood, "Trafficking Prevention Application through Optimizing the Role of Local Wisdom," *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* 8, no. 10 (October 2021): 24, <https://doi.org/10.18415/IJMMU.V8I10.2964>.

⁴¹ John Anthony Lawler and Ghazala Mir, "Women, Faith, and Social Cohesion," Anthology of Research on the Impact of Religion on Society, September 10, 2015, 200–223, <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-8772-1.CH009>.

⁴² Bustami Abubakar, Ikhwan Ikhwan, and Sugiarto Sugiarto, "Strengthening Social Cohesion in the Practice of Liky Geleng among the Jami Aneuk Ethnic Group in Aceh," *JSW (Walisoengo Sociological Journal)* 5, no. 1 (April 24, 2021): 15–30, <https://doi.org/10.21580/JSW.2021.5.1.5479>.

the importance of local wisdom in promoting social harmony and maintaining community integrity despite cultural and religious differences.

Support from religious leaders and community leaders is critical in adapting local narratives. They act as agents of change that introduce and encourage the application of local cultural values in religious activities. This support not only increases public confidence in the adaptations made but also strengthens the legitimacy of local culture as part of religious practices. Religious leaders who understand the importance of local culture can articulate religious teachings in a context closer to the community's daily life.

Religious leaders and community leaders have an essential role in integrating local narratives into religious practices, strengthening the legitimacy of local culture, and increasing public acceptance of change. Through collective rituals led by local village leaders, they can build stronger social support networks among the devotees. Religious leaders in the community link Islamic teachings with traditional practices, maintaining local cultural values in religious practices. Innovative ritual adaptations by local leaders can preserve the religious interconnectedness of their communities, prevent radicalism by emphasizing social and humanitarian values, adapt services to meet needs, and strengthen social support and cultural acceptance. This shows that religious leaders' role in adapting local values helps people accept change without sacrificing their cultural identity.

Adapting local wisdom in theological narratives also contributes to the sustainability of local culture amid globalization. Another example is the application of culture based on local wisdom in Tigawasa, Bali, which preserves traditions and supports the local economy⁴³—the application of local regulations in protecting local wisdom in West Sumatra.⁴⁴ The combination of local wisdom plays a role in the sustainable preservation of cultural heritage, especially in the context of tourism and environmental conservation.⁴⁵ The role of local wisdom in Ilili Village, Maluku⁴⁶, and environmental campaigns is based on local wisdom in Bali. The study underscores that religious and community leaders have a role to play in integrating local values

⁴³ Agung Parameswara and Athina Wulandari, "Maintaining Local Communities through Cultural Industries Based on Local Wisdom in Tigawasa Village," *Journal of Sustainable Development* 13, no. 6 (November 24, 2020): 139, <https://doi.org/10.5539/JSD.V13N6P139>.

⁴⁴ Yenny Febrianty, Joko Sriwidodo, and Priyaldi Priyaldi, "Stipulation of Regional Regulations for the Protection of Local Wisdom," *Fiat Justitia: Journal of Law* 17, no. 3 (September 22, 2023): 193–220, <https://doi.org/10.25041/FIATJUSTISIA.V17NO3.2708>.

⁴⁵ Hayu Lusianawati et al., "Tracking the Impact of Local Wisdom in Sustainable Cultural Heritage Conservation: A Bibliometric Approach," *Social Studies and Humanities of Western Sciences* 1, no. 03 (September 28, 2023): 115–26, <https://doi.org/10.58812/WSSHS.V1I03.251>.

⁴⁶ J. M.S. Tetelepta et al., "Local Wisdom Knowledge Applied in Coastal Resource Management in Ilili Village, West Seram Regency, Indonesia," *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 1207, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/1207/1/012023>.

into religious practice, supporting cultural sustainability, and adding spiritual relevance to society.

In addition, research shows that local narratives presented by community leaders play a role in maintaining the sustainability of local culture amid modernization and globalization. When local values are adopted in religious practices, culture is preserved, renewed, and enriched with spiritual meaning. In this way, local culture remains relevant and accepted as part of the community's collective identity, even during the rapid development of the times. These findings emphasize that local narratives in religious practice are a tool to strengthen social cohesion and an instrument to build an inclusive collective identity. When religious teachings are adjusted to local values, religious and cultural identities enrich each other, creating harmony between religion and culture, improving social interaction, and creating a more stable and harmonious society.

The integration process is inseparable from the critical role of religious leaders and community leaders. They serve as agents of change that link religious teachings and local values. Religious leaders who understand local culture can convey religious teachings in a way that is more relevant and responsive to the community's needs. With their guidance, the integration of local wisdom into religious narratives becomes more acceptable and practiced by the wider community, especially by the younger generation, who are often more critical of religious teachings irrelevant to their daily lives.

The research also emphasizes the importance of the role of religious leaders in developing inclusive theology. Religious leaders who understand and appreciate local wisdom will find it easier to convey religious teachings with a relevant approach to the community. They can bridge religious values and local culture by implementing religious moderation policies, applying local wisdom, and implementing intercultural competencies combined with local wisdom to accept and practice religious teachings more widely. However, in this context, religious leaders function as conveyors of teachings and facilitators of dialogue between religion and culture.

In this context, the integration of local wisdom also has a positive impact on social cohesion. When people see religion as a force that supports cultural diversity, they tend to be more open to differences and work together to achieve common goals. A theological narrative that adopts local values serves as a moral foundation that strengthens social solidarity, where society is not only bound by cultural identity but also by an inclusive and complementary religious identity.

The contribution of this integration to contextual theology is also significant. By incorporating local wisdom in religious teachings, theology can be developed to be more inclusive and relevant. Contextual theology not only functions as a means

of conveying religious teachings but also as a way to understand and respond to the community's social needs. Theological narratives responsive to local cultures offer a more adaptive and dynamic religious model, allowing religion to function as a unifying force amidst cultural diversity.

Overall, the study shows that the process of integrating local wisdom in theological narratives has a profound impact on the social life of multicultural communities. With this approach, religion is no longer a separate element from culture but serves as an instrument to create social harmony. Integrating local wisdom in religious narratives enriches religious understanding and strengthens social cohesion, creating a more inclusive and mutually respectful society. Through these findings, the research hopes to contribute to developing contextual theology that is more inclusive and relevant for multicultural societies.

Implications of Theological Narratives and Local Wisdom in Multicultural Societies – Understanding inclusive and contextual theological narratives

The implications of theological narratives and local wisdom in adapting local culture through religious practices have succeeded in increasing social cohesion; this is influenced by the use of language and cultural symbols in religious rituals. Some of those traditions are the *Topat* War in Lombok, the active Bawakaraeng community in Sulawesi, the practice of *menyama-braya* in Bali, and the Raju ritual in the Dou Mbawa community in Bima. The Javanese mantra influenced by Islamic values, *alms, and sadranan* in Central Java, implies the integration of local cultural symbols in religious rituals, which is essential in building togetherness and maintaining harmony in a multicultural society.

Research shows that cultural symbols in religious teachings function as an effective medium to convey moral and ethical values and provide implications that strengthen social cohesion in society. Cultural symbols help instill moral education by directing individual behavior to follow social norms. Religious symbols reinforce the solidarity and cultural values that connect communities to their collective identity. Communication that is based on cultural symbols in religious practices can combat radicalism by prioritizing humanist messages. Cultural artifacts in such da'wah can reinforce religious messages and build a deeper understanding of Islamic values. Religious symbolism adds meaning to life by amplifying the spiritual experience infused by virtue values.⁴⁷

The democratic party event often involves politicizing religious symbols, which is one factor that exacerbates social conflicts in Indonesia.⁴⁸ When theological narratives are used for political purposes, they can create polarization among

⁴⁷ Nathaniel F. Barrett, "Religious Symbolism and the Experience of Life as Meaningful: Addition, Enhancement, or Both?," *Religions* 14, no. 1 (January 2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/REL14010088>.

⁴⁸ Arsenius Wisnu Aji Patria Perkasa, "Konflik Sosial Berupa Politisasi Agama Sebagai Sisi Gelap Politik Indonesia," *Deviance Jurnal Kriminologi* 7, no. 1 (2023): 1, <https://doi.org/10.36080/djk.2356>.

religious groups. In this context, developing an inclusive narrative and respecting diversity is essential to minimize conflicts. In some communities experiencing social conflict, rigid theological narratives that do not consider local values often exacerbate interreligious tensions. Research shows that when theological narratives are not aligned with local social and cultural contexts, they can lead to polarization and conflict. In such cases, the inability to integrate local wisdom into the theological narrative failed to build social cohesion.

Furthermore, the implications of successful theological narrative adaptation can also be seen in character education based on local wisdom. Local wisdom values are integrated into the educational curriculum to shape students' character. To address social conflicts, applying an approach based on education and dialogue from an early age through civic education that teaches conflict resolution can help communities understand differences and find peaceful solutions. Thus, a more flexible theological narrative and respect for local values can contribute to the resolution of social conflicts.

By putting local values forward in education, students learn about their history and culture and develop an attitude of tolerance and mutual respect. This shows that a theological narrative that adapts to local wisdom can contribute to forming a more inclusive and harmonious society. Overall, social conflicts within communities can be exacerbated by rigid theological narratives that do not consider local values. Therefore, developing a more inclusive and dialogical approach to dealing with conflicts is essential. Therefore, all parties can engage and contribute to a peaceful settlement.

The adaptation of local culture to religious practices also has a positive impact on reducing the potential for conflict between groups. Studies show that when local narratives are adopted in religious practices, communities tend to be more tolerant and respectful of differences. Religious practices are essential in reducing potential conflicts and strengthening social cohesion between groups, helping build a harmonious interfaith life. Collective rituals in the village strengthen social networks and increase support among participating community members. Interaction in a football team between Christians and Muslims can increase tolerance among the players, even if the effect off the pitch is limited.

The study revealed that local narratives in religious practices show that when local cultural values are adopted to religious teachings, religious practices gain wider acceptance and become effective social glue in society. This is because local narratives, which come from local cultural wisdom, often resonate more strongly with the collective identity of the community, thus strengthening social ties and togetherness and emphasizing that religious narratives that integrate local values

have implications for maintaining social harmony and reducing conflicts in diverse societies, strengthening interreligious life by prioritizing the value of togetherness.

The research reveals that the challenges of policy implementation, theological approaches, the realization of prayer and practice, and multicultural theology have significant implications for the development of theology in multicultural societies. Contextual theology accommodating local cultural values has created a more inclusive approach to religion. This is relevant in societies that face the challenges of cultural and religious diversity, where theological adaptation is a solution to mitigate potential conflicts and strengthen social harmony. By adapting religious teachings according to the local cultural context, theology is no longer understood rigidly but as a discipline that is flexible and responsive to social reality.

This adaptation also contributed to the development of a theology that was not only normative but also applicative, where religious teachings could be applied practically in the daily life of society. In this context, theological reflection, applying multicultural values, and interfaith dialogue become actual social realities in religious practices with local traditions. To reduce resistance to change and increase social acceptance of collective identity. For example, the principle of cooperation and mutual respect, which is local wisdom, can be contextualized in religious teachings so that these values are not only social norms but also religious principles that are firmly held.

For example, educational programs based on local wisdom, such as Nosarara Nosabatutu in Central Sulawesi aim to build a culture of peace through the spirit of brotherhood and unity.⁴⁹ Local wisdom can function as a counter-narrative to intolerant ideologies that often appear in religious societies by prioritizing local values that support interreligious harmony. Therefore, integrating local wisdom into theological narratives can strengthen social cohesion by creating space for dialogue and intercultural understanding.

According to Geertz, these local values serve as social and ethical guidelines for the community. In a religious context, local wisdom can serve as a bridge to integrating religious teachings⁵⁰ with a particular community's cultural identity so that various social groups can more widely accept and appreciate religious practices.⁵¹ The literature shows that local wisdom is essential in integrating religious teachings with cultural identity to create a harmonious and inclusive social life.

⁴⁹ Bau Ratu, Misnah Misnah, and M Amirullah, "Peace Education Based on Local Wisdom Nosarara Nosabatutu," *Jomsign Journal of Multicultural Studies in Guidance and Counseling* 3, no. 2 (2019): 106–18, <https://doi.org/10.17509/jomsign.v3i2.20958>.

⁵⁰ Nuruddin Nuruddin, "Local Wisdom as Social Cohesion in Establishing Inter-Religious Life in Donggo, District of Bima," *SANGKÜP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 5, no. 1 (October 2022): 88–96, <https://doi.org/10.20414/SANGKEP.V5I1.5749>.

⁵¹ Eko and Putranto, "The Role of Intercultural Competence and Local Wisdom in Building Intercultural and Inter-Religious Tolerance."

In some Southeast Asian communities, religious rituals have long adopted local values to maintain social harmony and avoid conflict. Mustafa examines how the local value of "nani akei sut dani" in Manokwari, West Papua, contributes to interfaith dialogue, creates mutual understanding, and reduces potential conflict.⁵² Arsal et al. found that traditions such as earth alms and sadranan in Central Java can strengthen social cohesion through the value of togetherness and humanity inherited from generation to generation.⁵³ In the Bugis community, Hasse pointed out that local wisdom is a social mechanism encouraging tolerance and harmonious interaction between religious groups.⁵⁴ Atmaja and Kurnanto noted the harmonious integration between Malay and Chinese traditions in West Kalimantan through respect and appreciation for their religious symbols.⁵⁵ In Java, Sadari et al. highlight the value of *cablaka* and the *cablaka* communication model, strengthening social ties between religious majorities and minorities.⁵⁶ The study shows that integrating local wisdom in rituals and religious interactions can create an atmosphere of tolerance that reduces social tensions in multicultural societies.

The above research results align with the argument that religion has excellent potential to adapt to local cultural values without losing the essence of its doctrine. Through this approach, theological narratives can create a religious framework that supports peace and cooperation in multicultural societies. The study's findings also show that inclusive theology allows religious people to respect differences better and build better communication between groups. In multicultural societies and religious communities, normative multiculturalism, positive interethnic contacts, acceptance of diversity, and dialogue between local theology and philosophy are often sources of tension. However, with a contextual theological approach, these differences can be approached as wealth that needs to be understood and appreciated. Theology based on local values helps communities find common ground, reducing potential conflicts and strengthening social cohesion.

In addition, an inclusive theological narrative also plays a role in strengthening society's collective identity without sacrificing individual diversity. In this context, congregation leaders, collective narratives, cultural diversity, inclusive environments,

⁵² Muhammad Sadli Mustafa, "Caring For Harmony Among Religious Communities Based on Local Wisdom in Manokwari West Papua," *Al-Qalam* 25, no. 2 (December 2019): 271–84, <https://doi.org/10.31969/ALQ.V25I2.755>.

⁵³ Thriwaty Arsal, Dewi Liesnoor Setyowati, and Puji Hardati, "The Inheritance of Local Wisdom for Maintaining Peace in Multicultural Society," *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research* 15, no. 2 (April 2023): 137–51, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-01-2022-0673>.

⁵⁴ Hasse, "Revitalizing Local Wisdom: Efforts To Reduce Tension Among Believers."

⁵⁵ Dwi Surya Atmaja and M. Edi Kurnanto, "Chinese and Malay Interaction in West Kalimantan: Discovering Harmony in Diversity of Ethnic Groups through Local Wisdom," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 26, no. 2 (December 2018): 321, <https://doi.org/10.21580/WS.26.2.2404>.

⁵⁶ Sadari Sadari et al., "Religious Local Wisdom For Strengthening Social Harmony: Study in Banyumas Indonesia and New Delhi India," May 2020, <https://doi.org/10.4108/EAI.7-11-2019.2294622>.

digital narratives, and cross-cultural stories in the community can maintain their cultural identity while practicing their religious beliefs. This creates a stronger sense of belonging to religion because religion is no longer seen as something foreign but as an integral part of their lives and culture.

A contextual theological approach contributes to a more open and adaptive understanding of religion to social change. In a dynamic society, contextual Islamic theology encourages Muslims to live inclusively and respect plurality. However, on the other hand, rigid theology has the potential to cause resistance, especially from the younger generation in adaptive religious communities, who tend to be more critical of religious teachings that are not relevant to their lives. With an inclusive and contextual theological approach, religion can answer contemporary challenges; the integration of local cultural values can increase people's acceptance of religion without sacrificing their cultural identity, so in religion, it is necessary to adapt to cultural and social contexts to remain relevant and function as a system that is responsive to current challenges that the younger generation feels that religion is relevant and essential in their lives.

Another implication of the findings is that contextual theology can reinforce the role of religion as an agent of peace and reconciliation in multicultural societies. An inclusive theological narrative allows religion to proactively create peace through moral appeals and approaches that value cultural diversity. Elements of change theology, such as forgiveness and justice, strengthen the church as agents of change to realize social reconciliation. Reconciliation can be achieved through dynamic relationships between religion and culture, such as *the concept of Koinonia and the Dei imago* to overcome racial segregation, peace rituals, and sacramental spirituality in cross-cultural reconciliation efforts. Thus, religion effectively promotes cross-cultural and religious dialogue, creating space for mutual understanding and respect.

The findings also show that contextual theology helps religions become more responsive to relevant social issues. In the face of problems such as social inequality, intergroup conflicts, or moral degradation, adaptive religion can provide solutions based on local values and religious teachings. With this approach, religion is present in ritual spaces and actively involved in dealing with social problems society faces. This shows that contextual theology reinforces the role of religion as a responsive agent to social issues, such as economic inequality and intergroup conflict; social change through relational practices that foster spiritual growth and adaptive collective transformation plays a vital role in mobilizing religion to provide value-based solutions to social issues facing society.

The study supports the idea that inclusive and contextual theology can enrich religious life in multicultural societies. The integration of theological narratives and local wisdom creates a more flexible and relevant understanding of religion, which

strengthens religious identity and the community's cultural identity. Thus, contextual theology significantly contributes to developing a more harmonious society, where religion and culture go hand in hand in creating social cohesion.

With a more inclusive and contextual theology, multicultural societies can see religion as a source of inspiration that supports diversity and unity. Such theology allows religion to be part of the solution in caring for diversity, not as a source of conflict. In the context of today's global society, an open and adaptive theological approach is very relevant to creating a more peaceful and inclusive world, where religion and local culture enrich each other, strengthen social cohesion, and affirm that cultural adaptation in religion has implications for the creation of inclusive spaces that promote unity and harmony in a multicultural society, such as instilling religious moderation through local values that enhance tolerance and reducing the potential for interreligious conflict, in communities that serve as a shared cultural identity, which strengthens social cohesion among different religious groups.

Conclusion

The success or failure of adapting theological narratives in multicultural societies largely depends on how well local wisdom values are integrated into the narrative. This suggests that an inclusive and sensitive approach to local contexts can strengthen social cohesion, while a rigid approach can exacerbate conflicts and tensions between religions.

The study also reveals that religious and community leaders are essential in strengthening social cohesion in a multicultural society. Research has shown that when local cultural values are adjusted to religious teachings, religious practices gain wider acceptance and become an effective social glue in society. This is because local narratives derived from local cultural wisdom often resonate more with the community's collective identity; in this case, it is identical to religious and community leaders who are symbols of excellence in their society to strengthen social ties and togetherness.

This study confirms that the theological implications in religious narratives that integrate local values significantly affect maintaining social harmony and reducing conflicts in diverse societies, strengthening interfaith life by prioritizing the value of togetherness. The findings of this study confirm that the integration of theological narratives and local wisdom is a process that has the potential to enrich people's religious experience while strengthening social cohesion. With this approach, religious communities can build inclusive and contextual identities where religions and cultures do not conflict but collaborate to create social harmony. Such integration is crucial for the communities concerned and offers a model for other communities facing similar challenges in balancing local religious and cultural values.

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