

Local Traditions in Shaping Tolerance and Harmony Among Religious Communities: A Case Study in the Village of Sadar Kerukunan Batu Nindan

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Abstract

The issue of interreligious tolerance is a significant challenge in multicultural societies, where differences in beliefs can potentially lead to social friction if not managed wisely. In this context, this study aims to analyse the role of the local traditions of the Batu Nindan village community in shaping and maintaining interreligious tolerance through the perspectives of tolerance theory and conflict theory. The research used a descriptive qualitative approach with participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document study techniques, which were analysed thematically with source and method triangulation. The findings show that local traditions function as a social adhesive that encourages everyday interfaith interaction through communal practices such as customary deliberation, cultural celebrations, and cross-faith mutual aid. These traditions also facilitate intergenerational transmission of tolerance by cultivating empathy, mutual respect, and religious moderation through social customs and community-based learning. In addition, they provide a culturally legitimate mechanism for preventing and resolving social tensions through peaceful deliberation led by traditional and religious figures, grounded in principles of fairness and social justice. Local rituals and shared symbols further reinforce collective identity and social legitimacy, renewing residents' commitment to harmony and cohesion. Theoretically, these results demonstrate that Batu Nindan traditions operate as a practical platform for enacting tolerance values and managing potential conflict, contributing to an inclusive and harmonious social order.

Keywords: local traditions; interreligious tolerance; harmony-conscious village



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Introduction

In an ideal multicultural society, religious diversity is not merely tolerated but is managed through shared norms that secure mutual recognition, civic respect, and equal social participation across groups. From the perspective of tolerance theory, social harmony is sustained when individuals and communities acknowledge differences in belief without coercion and commit to fair coexistence in the public sphere. At the same time, conflict theory reminds us that diversity inherently contains tensions rooted in power, interests, and competing claims; however, these tensions do not necessarily lead to open conflict when communities possess legitimate social mechanisms to regulate disagreement, negotiate norms, and maintain social order.

In practice, the ideal above is frequently challenged. Across many multicultural settings, religious difference can become a source of social friction when everyday interactions lack trust, when communication channels weaken, or when local mechanisms for negotiation and mediation are absent. Indonesia, despite its pluralistic identity, continues to face episodic interreligious tensions, indicating that formal programs and policy initiatives alone may not fully secure durable harmony. This reality highlights the importance of examining culturally grounded practices—particularly local traditions—that work at the community level to prevent escalation, cultivate interfaith respect, and provide socially accepted pathways for resolving disputes.

The issue of tolerance and harmony between religious communities is a central theme in the social dynamics of multicultural societies. In a global context, various religion-based conflicts demonstrate that religious diversity often becomes a source of social friction if not balanced by a deep understanding of interfaith issues (Hanik & Turmudi, 2020). On the other hand, religious pluralism can also be a constructive force for building social cohesion and human solidarity if managed wisely (Hafiz et al., 2024). Therefore, strengthening religious tolerance has become one of the strategic issues in efforts to maintain social harmony in a diverse society.

In the Indonesian context, religious diversity has become a hallmark and social capital of the nation. Although it has the potential to cause differing viewpoints, this diversity often serves as the foundation for a harmonious and mutually respectful social life (Hutabarat, 2023). Various government policies and civil society initiatives have been implemented to strengthen interreligious harmony, including through multicultural education, interfaith dialogue, and the Village of Harmony Awareness program (Walad et al., 2024). However, the effectiveness of these efforts heavily depends on the extent to which local values can be integrated into the social life of the community.

Within that framework, local wisdom and traditional cultural practices play an important role as a social foundation in maintaining balance and harmony among religious communities. Local traditions, customs, and consensus-building not only serve as decision-making mechanisms but also as effective media for dialogue and social reconciliation in resolving inter-citizen issues peacefully (Faizah & Yusrina, 2022). Various studies indicate that rural communities have great potential in preserving collective values that support social cohesion, including tolerance and mutual respect (Pratama et al., 2024).

One interesting area to study in this context is Batu Nindan Village, known as a multicultural community with religious diversity and a strong traditional system. The people of Batu Nindan village strictly adhere to local traditions that govern social relations among residents, including when dealing with differences in beliefs. This tradition serves as an important means of fostering mutual respect and preventing social conflicts that could disrupt community stability. Thus, studying the role of local traditions in this village becomes relevant for understanding how culturally based social mechanisms can sustainably maintain interreligious harmony (Erawadi & Setiadi, 2024).

Although various studies have highlighted the importance of local wisdom in maintaining social harmony, research that deeply explains how local traditions at the village level intrinsically function in shaping and maintaining religious tolerance in Indonesian rural communities is still relatively limited (Hutabarat, 2023; Sinaga et al., 2025). Most previous research has tended to highlight aspects of interreligious conflict resolution or formal approaches to education and pluralism policy, rather than focusing on the social and cultural processes that function to prevent conflict from the outset through the internalisation of traditional values (Hadi, 2016; Hafiz et al., 2024; Walad et al., 2024). Additionally, research specifically examining the concrete practices of internalising tolerance values through customary activities, deliberation, and local rituals in rural areas is still limited (Fitria, 2023; Ulfaturrohmatiririn et al., 2021).

Based on this background, this research focuses on specifically identifying how the traditions of the Batu Nindan village community function as an adaptive and preventive mechanism in shaping, instilling, and maintaining interreligious tolerance values. By positioning tradition as a dynamic entity that continuously adapts to social changes, this research provides a fresh perspective on the role of local wisdom as a relevant social force in the face of the challenges of modern pluralism.

This research enriches understanding of the relationship between local wisdom and the formation of social harmony in the context of multicultural societies in Indonesia. Theoretically, this study asserts that local cultural values play an important role in supporting social stability and strengthening religious moderation. Practically, the results of this research can serve as a basis for developing a community-based social intervention model (bottom-up model) that is relevant for strengthening interreligious harmony at the local level. This approach places society as an active subject in maintaining social harmony, not merely as recipients of government policies.

Previous studies on interreligious tolerance in Indonesia and other multicultural contexts have generally emphasized formal drivers such as civic education, religious moderation programs, interfaith dialogue initiatives, and the role of state or religious institutions in maintaining harmony. Other works have discussed local wisdom and cultural values as supportive factors for social cohesion. However, the literature still tends to treat “local tradition” as a broad concept and often reports tolerance outcomes at a general level, without detailing *how* specific customary practices operate as everyday social mechanisms—how they structure interaction, transmit tolerance across generations, and function as culturally legitimate pathways for preventing or resolving emerging tensions. As a result, there remains limited empirical explanation of the concrete process through which particular local traditions shape sustained interfaith coexistence in a village-level setting.

This study addresses that gap by providing a focused, village-based analysis of Batu Nindan, demonstrating how distinct traditional practices function not only as cultural heritage but as an operational “social infrastructure” for tolerance. The novelty of this research lies in (1) mapping specific communal traditions into observable mechanisms of tolerance-building (routine interfaith encounters, mutual aid, and shared deliberation), (2) explaining their role as culturally endorsed conflict-management tools aligned with tolerance theory and conflict theory, and (3) showing how these practices support continuity of harmony through social legitimacy and intergenerational learning. By moving beyond descriptive claims that “local wisdom promotes tolerance,” the study offers a clearer conceptual and empirical account of *why* and *through which mechanisms* local traditions can sustain interreligious harmony in everyday community life.

Therefore, this study aims to explain how local traditions operate as everyday social mechanisms that build and sustain interreligious tolerance in Batu Nindan Village. Specifically, it examines how customary practices structure routine interfaith interaction,

transmit tolerance values within the community, and provide culturally legitimate ways to prevent or manage potential tensions. By clarifying these mechanisms, the study proposes a context-sensitive conceptual model that may inform efforts to strengthen interreligious harmony in other plural settings in Indonesia.

Methods

Research Design

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to deeply examine the phenomenon of religious tolerance and harmony maintained through local traditions in Batu Nindan Village. This approach was chosen because it allows for a holistic exploration of the social and cultural dynamics underlying these tolerance practices. Similar methods have been widely used in research on local wisdom that maintains interreligious harmony.

Site and Participants

The study was conducted in Batu Nindan Village. Informants were selected to represent key community stakeholders and diverse religious backgrounds. In-depth interviews involved traditional leaders, religious figures, village officials, and community members from various religious backgrounds to explore their perspectives, experiences, and values underpinning traditional-based tolerance practices.

Operational Research Procedures

The research was implemented through the following operational steps: *Field entry and contextual observation*. The researcher was present in the field to observe social interactions, interreligious activities, and tangible manifestations of local traditions through participant observation. *Eliciting perspectives through in-depth interviews*. In-depth interviews were conducted with traditional leaders, religious figures, village officials, and community members from various religious backgrounds to explore their perspectives, experiences, and values that underpin traditional-based tolerance practices. *Documentary study for corroboration and enrichment*. A documentary study was carried out by tracing village archives, traditional activity records, traditional documents, and related written materials to supplement and verify field data. *Thematic analysis of the full dataset*. Data analysis was conducted thematically through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This thematic approach allows for the identification of key patterns emerging from field data, as well as revealing the meaning and function of local traditions in maintaining religious harmony within Indonesia's diverse society.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the validity and credibility of the research, the researcher implemented several strategies, including source triangulation, which involves comparing information from various sources (traditional leaders, religious figures, and long-time and new community members). Method triangulation was applied by combining observation, interviews, and documentation so that the findings mutually reinforce each other. Member check was conducted by asking informants to verify the researcher's interpretation of the results to ensure that the presented picture aligns with their experiences. An audit trail was maintained through systematic documentation of all data collection and analysis steps so that the research process can be traced and accounted for. By implementing these procedures, it is hoped that the data obtained will have a high level of validity and strong reliability so that the research results can be held accountable and accurately represent the reality in the field.

Results and Discussion

Results

The results are presented in an operational sequence that follows the research procedures described in the Method section. First, findings from field observation describe how tradition-based activities create everyday spaces for interreligious interaction. Second, interview findings elaborate community members' meanings, values, and perceived social functions of these traditions. Third, documentary evidence is used to corroborate the continuity and institutional presence of these practices. Finally, the thematic synthesis integrates all data sources into core mechanisms through which local traditions contribute to interreligious harmony in Batu Nindan Village.

Field Observation: Interreligious Interaction in Tradition-Based Activities

Field observations in Batu Nindan Village indicate that local traditions provide routine and open social spaces where residents from different religious backgrounds interact on an equal footing. Interreligious interaction was visible in communal activities that were culturally framed rather than formally labelled as "interfaith programs." Observations captured patterns of mutual presence and participation across faith communities during traditional ceremonies, local cultural celebrations, and communal activities. These repeated encounters appeared to normalise inclusive communication and strengthen everyday social trust among residents. In addition, observations show that tradition-based activities often function as community collaboration arenas oriented toward humanitarian concerns. Collective participation was evident in mutual assistance practices and community initiatives that prioritised shared goals over religious boundaries. This pattern suggests that local traditions are not merely symbolic rituals but also practical settings that enable social dialogue through repeated collective engagement.

In-depth Interviews: Meanings, Values, and Social Functions of Tradition

Interview findings with traditional leaders, religious figures, village officials, and community members from diverse religious backgrounds indicate that local traditions are understood as a key mechanism for fostering and preserving harmony. Informants described tradition as inherited rituals, ceremonies, narratives, and social practices that shape community life and emphasise togetherness despite differences in religion, ethnicity, culture, race, and social class. They highlighted that traditions embed noble values such as mutual respect, empathy, brotherhood, and collective responsibility.

Informants consistently pointed to the tradition of visiting one another during religious holidays and interfaith celebrations as a concrete practice through which tolerance is learned and enacted. This tradition was described not as a one-time symbolic gesture but as a repeated social mechanism that strengthens closeness across faiths, encourages appreciation for others' celebrations, and contributes to intergenerational transmission of tolerance values. Informants also noted that traditions provide natural spaces for inclusive dialogue without requiring formal interfaith forums, because shared participation itself becomes a medium for communication.

Documentary Study: Local Records Supporting Tradition-Based Harmony Practices

Documentary materials (village archives, records of traditional activities, traditional documents, and related written materials) support the presence and continuity of tradition-based practices that involve cross-community participation. These documents help verify the recurrence of cultural and customary activities that bring residents together, including records of communal events and customary deliberation processes. Documentary evidence

also reinforces the observation and interview accounts that interfaith visits and communal ceremonies are longstanding practices embedded in village social life.

Thematic Synthesis: Core Mechanisms of Tradition in Maintaining Harmony

Thematic analysis across observation, interview, and documentary data identified five interconnected mechanisms through which local traditions contribute to interreligious harmony in Batu Nindan Village: (1) Social cohesion through routine interreligious interaction. Traditions create inclusive communal spaces that allow residents to gather, interact, and build trust through repeated participation in ceremonies, cultural celebrations, and community activities. Interfaith visits and shared celebrations form sustainable patterns of communication across religious boundaries. (2) Transmission of intergenerational tolerance values. Tolerance values are internalised through everyday tradition-based practices, particularly interfaith visits during religious holidays. These traditions function as lived learning processes that preserve empathy, respect for differences, and peaceful coexistence across generations. (3) Customary-based conflict prevention and resolution. Traditions provide socially accepted pathways for addressing tension and restoring relationships. Customary deliberation mechanisms involve community elders, traditional leaders, and religious figures as mediators. Community involvement in deliberation processes strengthens shared ownership of decisions and reinforces long-term cohesion. (4) Strengthening collective identity in a diverse community. Traditions shape collective identity by transmitting local values, reinforcing shared memory, and fostering a sense of belonging. Rituals, customs, and symbols serve as frameworks for solidarity and cohesion, enabling residents to connect across differences while maintaining a shared community identity. (5) Enhancing social legitimacy for tolerance norms. Tradition-based rituals and collective participation renew social commitment to harmony and legitimise tolerance as part of communal life. Rituals such as customary deliberation and interfaith visits function as mechanisms through which commonly agreed values-mutual respect, equality, and solidarity-are reaffirmed in practice.

Discussion

Tradition in the context of interreligious interaction and communication refers to inherited rituals, ceremonies, narratives, and social practices that shape religious identity and community life. The research findings indicate that local traditions play a crucial role in fostering and preserving interreligious harmony by integrating noble values that promote harmonious coexistence. This approach is rooted in local wisdom that prioritises brotherhood and togetherness, even amidst differences in ethnicity, culture, religion, race, and social class. Some of the roles of tradition in maintaining harmony between religious communities in Batunindan Village are as follows:

Social Cohesion in Building Interreligious Interaction

The research findings indicate that local traditions in Batunindan Village play a fundamental role in facilitating interreligious interaction by creating a social space that allows individuals from diverse religious backgrounds to gather, share experiences, and interact on an equal footing. This socio-cultural practice not only preserves local values but also strengthens the sense of mutual respect and interreligious cooperation, which are the foundation for social solidarity in a multicultural community (Seran, 2025). In this context, tradition serves as social glue that binds intergroup relationships through collective activities that foster a sense of community and mutual trust.

The tradition of visiting each other and interfaith celebrations serves as a vibrant and inclusive social practice within the community in Batunindan village. This strengthens

interreligious bridges through concrete actions rich in social and spiritual meaning. The interactions built through traditional ceremonies, local cultural celebrations, and communal activities form a natural and sustainable pattern of interfaith communication.

This tradition serves as a medium for the community in Batunindan village to participate in a shared experience that fosters inclusive social dialogue without being bound by formal interfaith forums. This phenomenon aligns with the view that effective interreligious initiatives generally incorporate inclusive participation and open communication to produce long-term impacts in strengthening social cohesion (Seran, 2025).

The research findings indicate that traditions are not merely symbolic rituals but also natural spaces for social dialogue, where communities learn to understand each other through repeated and meaningful collective engagement. In addition, the ceremony also serves as a collaborative platform for interfaith social projects focused on social justice and humanity. In this activity, individuals from various faiths work together to achieve common goals, such as mutual aid activities, disaster relief, or community-based social assistance programmes. This spirit of volunteerism strengthens intergroup relationships through repeated cooperative practices, builds social trust, and strengthens communal solidarity networks (Aune et al., 2025). Similar findings were also reported by Yusrifa & Murtiningsih, (2023), who showed that tradition-based meetings successfully increased social solidarity by institutionalising cooperative cultural practices that transcended religious and ethnic boundaries.

In addition to the traditional context, recent research also highlights the significant role of digital technology as a complement to traditional practices in strengthening interreligious interaction. Governments and civil society organisations are beginning to adopt digital platforms to disseminate messages of moderation and harmony, enabling broader interfaith participation, especially in social emergency situations (None & Makovsky, 2025; Sulvinajayanti et al., 2024).

Online interreligious forums, as stated in Rahawarin, (2023) research, reveal that online forums extend the reach of traditions into the digital realm, creating a space for continuous communication that strengthens interfaith collaboration and solidarity in the modern era. Thus, digital transformation does not replace tradition but rather strengthens its relevance in the context of contemporary communication.

Tradition-based activities and social dialogue can provide significant benefits in building social tolerance and acceptance of diversity (Karimullah & Sugitanata, 2023). Through shared goals and collaborative cultural expression, multicultural societies are able to build a social contract that promotes peace and mutual understanding between religious groups.

Tradition serves as an effective social glue in building interreligious interaction by creating an open, collaborative, and sustainable space for dialogue in Batunindan village. Traditions are not only a vessel for cultural expression but also a dynamic social mechanism that integrates human values across religions. In contemporary society, the sustainability of tradition coupled with adaptation to digital technology strengthens its relevance as a strategic instrument for fostering unity in diversity and solidifying the foundations of interreligious harmony.

Media for Transmitting the Value of Intergenerational Tolerance

The research findings indicate that the transmission of values of tolerance, respect for differences, and peaceful coexistence in the multicultural society of Batunindan village is deeply rooted in traditional practices passed down through generations. These values are not only taught verbally but also practised in daily life through communal traditions that reflect universal human meaning. One concrete form of this cultural transmission is the

tradition of visiting each other during religious holidays, which demonstrates how empathy and respect for other beliefs are preserved from one generation to the next (Idi & Priansyah, 2023; Idris et al., 2024).

In the social context of Batunindan Village, religious tolerance is a way of life integrated into the structure of social interaction. Visiting each other on religious holidays is not just symbolic but a social mechanism that strengthens empathy and closeness across faiths. This tradition reflects a form of active tolerance, where individuals are encouraged to show appreciation for other religious celebrations through concrete actions.

This value aligns with the teachings of Islam, which historically emphasise compassion and respect for people of different faiths as the basis for interreligious dialogue and cooperation (Idris et al., 2024; Zagoon-Sayeed, 2022). Additionally, revitalising tolerance values through local customs also contributes to the preservation of social harmony. Traditions like festivals serve as a means to emphasise the importance of togetherness in diversity and strengthen social cohesion within the community (Sa'adah & Sudrajat, 2023). This kind of tradition serves a dual purpose: it can be a cultural event and also a platform for interfaith interaction that strengthens mutual respect. The role of culture doesn't stop there; literary works and local narratives also enrich cross-cultural understanding, promote interreligious dialogue, and foster awareness of pluralism in social life (Wibowo et al., 2023).

The concept of religious moderation then became a normative framework that strengthened these values of tolerance. Religious moderation in Indonesia emphasises a balance between commitment to one's own religious teachings and respect for the beliefs of others, without losing religious identity (Idi & Priansyah, 2023; Sulaiman et al., 2022). In this context, religious education plays an important role as an educational institution that instills moderate values in the younger generation through social and humanitarian ethics-based learning (Helmy et al., 2021).

Furthermore, interreligious dialogue serves as a practical expression of the values of tolerance and mutual respect. Forums like this provide space for people of different faiths to share perspectives, foster understanding, and erode social prejudice (Artamevia et al., 2023; Pajarianto et al., 2022).

This dynamic of interaction, as seen in many Indonesian communities, forms a resilient social foundation against identity-based conflict and fosters the emergence of a society aware of the importance of diversity (Aras & Gunawan, 2019; Dachlan, 2023). At the educational level, child-friendly schools are an important agent in instilling values of appreciation for diversity. Through a curriculum that emphasises the benefits of tolerance and social dialogue, the education system in Indonesia plays a role in shaping inclusive character and fostering empathy in the younger generation (Putri et al., 2023; Yahaya et al., 2023).

This multi-faceted approach not only strengthens individual character but also solidifies the social structure of a multicultural society based on human values and equality. Traditions and socio-cultural practices in Batunindan village serve as a transgenerational mechanism for instilling values of mutual respect, appreciation for differences, and coexistence. Through activities such as interfaith visits, cultural festivals, social dialogues, and moderation-based education, society has successfully maintained dynamic social harmony. The sustainability of these values ensures that tolerance is not just a moral slogan but thrives as a living social practice that is consistently passed down in national and religious life.

Social Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

The research findings indicate that tradition plays a significant role in resolving social conflicts, especially in societies with high levels of religious and cultural diversity, such as in

Batunindan Village. In this context, customary mechanisms passed down through generations serve as a means of social reconciliation, emphasising the restoration of harmonious relationships between groups. This mechanism is carried out by traditional leaders, religious figures, and community elders, who act as mediators in resolving disputes and maintaining social balance (Aniga, 2024; Ojo-Ebenezer, 2023).

The people of Batunindan village still have high social trust in customary mechanisms as a means of resolving disputes, which are considered more humane and contextual than formal legal channels. This tradition aligns with findings from various communities, where traditional leaders act as guardians of cultural values and social mediators, particularly in conflicts rooted in religious differences or group interests (Ojo-Ebenezer, 2023).

In a cross-cultural study Bourhrous & O'Driscoll, (2023) showed that in the Nineveh Plains, Iraq, cultural rituals and community social interactions are used as a framework for peacebuilding. A similar approach is also seen in rural Zimbabwe, where traditional assemblies led by elders make consensus-based decisions as a form of local participatory democracy (Shoko, 2022). This kind of deliberative mechanism is also found in traditional consultations in Batu Nindan, which involve representatives of all religious communities in an open forum to seek peaceful agreement.

The effectiveness of this traditional mechanism lies in the resonance of its values with the local context. Customary-based dispute resolution systems are often more trusted because they emphasise reconciliation and restoring social relationships, rather than punitive legal sanctions (Falusi et al., 2023; Gupta et al., 2020). In the context of a multicultural society like Batu Nindan, this approach serves as a medium to simultaneously restore social and spiritual balance, as it is seen not only as resolving conflict but also as restoring inner harmony among residents.

Additionally, collaboration between traditional and religious figures has proven to strengthen the legitimacy of the dispute resolution process. As noted by Marsitadewi & Adhinata, (2022), the collaboration between the customary council and religious institutions in resolving disputes demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating customary norms and religious values in maintaining social harmony. This finding is also reflected in Batu Nindan, where religious leaders are often invited as spiritual advisors in the process of customary deliberation, ensuring that decisions are not only socially just but also theologically acceptable.

This collaborative approach fosters interreligious respect and underscores the importance of interfaith dialogue in any conflict resolution process. This principle aligns with the practices of the Anywaa community in East Africa, which emphasises participatory mediation involving a neutral party to ensure fair and inclusive outcomes (Hameretibeb, 2024).

Furthermore, field observation results indicate that active community involvement in the conflict resolution process is an essential element for the success of customary mechanisms. In the deliberation forum, residents are not just passive witnesses but also participate in open dialogue. This involvement creates a sense of shared ownership over the resulting decisions, while also strengthening long-term social cohesion.

However, the research also notes that the sustainability of traditional conflict resolution systems faces challenges in the modern era. In some cases, the overlap of authority between traditional figures and formal village officials creates the potential for administrative friction (Shoko, 2022). Therefore, integrating customary systems into modern governance is crucial to ensure the legitimacy and effectiveness of these mechanisms.

The tradition of resolving social conflicts has strategic value in strengthening interreligious harmony. An approach based on empathy, deliberation, and interfaith

collaboration allows communities to resolve conflicts non-violently and fosters collective awareness of the importance of peaceful coexistence. This tradition is not only a tool for resolving disputes but also a mechanism for social education that instills values of peace, respect, and togetherness within the structure of multicultural community life.

Shaping the Collective Identity of Society

The study results indicate that tradition plays a central role in shaping collective identity by serving as a vehicle for cultural transmission, social cohesion, and collective memory. Through rituals, customs, symbols, and social practices, traditions provide a conceptual and emotional framework for community members to connect with each other and foster a sense of belonging to their group. Thus, tradition is not merely a cultural heritage but a social mechanism that shapes collective consciousness and strengthens intergenerational solidarity.

One of the main ways tradition strengthens a shared identity is by fostering social bonds among community members. Studies show that cultural practices not only serve as entertainment but also as a means of social and moral education for society (Najamuddin et al., 2023). This tradition serves as a space to introduce local values and community history to the younger generation, thereby strengthening their sense of belonging and the continuity of cultural identity.

Traditions serve as symbols of belief and social solidarity. Rituals are not only a form of respect for the source of life but also an expression of collective belief that strengthens communal trust and identity (Winanti et al., 2023). Therefore, tradition plays a dual role as a spiritual symbol and as a social mechanism that strengthens cohesion among residents.

Besides strengthening social bonds, traditions also serve as agents of cultural communication, conveying the historical narratives and moral values of society. Traditional trading practices can be a means of preserving cultural identity and strengthening cross-ethnic and religious interactions (None et al., 2025). Society interprets the joint prayer activity as a form of social solidarity and respect for ancestors (Herista & Sinduwiatmo, 2025).

The research findings also confirm that the adaptive capacity of traditions allows cultural practices to remain relevant amidst social change. Traditions can serve as a bridge between historical values and modern life. Although this tradition is rooted in spiritual beliefs, its meaning has evolved into a symbol of social solidarity and communal expression of gratitude (Azhari & Asari, 2025).

Traditions are not static but rather dynamic and adaptive, capable of transforming to suit the times without losing their core values. In fact, in an international context, the Dhol Puja ritual in India's Hijra community serves as an identity of resistance against social marginalisation, demonstrating how tradition can strengthen the group's resilience and pride (Mal & Mundu, 2024).

The study results show that tradition plays a fundamental role in the formation and preservation of the community's collective identity. Traditions serve as social pillars that uphold cultural values, strengthen social cohesion, and transmit historical narratives across generations. Through rituals, symbols, and cultural practices, traditions provide a framework for communities to build a sense of belonging and solidarity amidst rapid social change. By preserving and adapting traditions to contemporary challenges, communities are not only able to maintain their cultural identity but also develop an inclusive, sustainable, and human-values-orientated shared identity.

Mechanism for Enhancing Social Legitimacy

The study results indicate that tradition serves as a vital social mechanism in strengthening social legitimacy and fostering values of tolerance amidst cultural and

religious diversity. Through institutionalised ritual practices and values rooted in local culture, tradition plays a role in building collective identity, a sense of shared responsibility, and social norms that emphasise the importance of peaceful coexistence. In this context, tradition is not only a symbol of togetherness but also an instrument for instilling values of tolerance and respect for differences through sustainable social mechanisms.

Rituals are one of the most effective forms of tradition in strengthening social legitimacy. McGrath & Marshall, (2023) emphasise that the process of ritualisation in social and institutional practices plays a crucial role in maintaining legitimacy and social stability, which in turn strengthens norms of tolerance and acceptance among citizens. Through rituals, society symbolically affirms commonly agreed-upon values, such as mutual respect, equality, and solidarity.

Field findings in Batu Nindan Village show a similar phenomenon of religious and customary rituals, such as customary deliberation and interfaith visits, being carried out not only as a traditional obligation but also as a means of renewing social commitment to harmony. This shows that customary rituals serve as a tool for social legitimisation rooted in collective consciousness, where the value of tolerance is not merely a moral norm but part of a cultural identity that is jointly preserved. Mahmududdin, (2024) emphasises that the strategic use of cultural elements such as symbols and rituals can significantly contribute to the process of reconciliation and unity amidst differences. This value is reflected in traditional practices across various Indonesian communities, where customary rituals serve as a mechanism for social healing after tensions or conflicts arise between residents.

The integration of traditions into community social activities also strengthens social legitimacy by fostering shared values in Batunindan village. Kummitha, (2023) argues that collaboration between local communities, community organisations, and social actors can create shared values that strengthen a culture of tolerance and inclusivity. This finding is relevant to practices in some indigenous communities, where interfaith mutual aid activities are understood not only as a form of social work but also as a spiritual expression of solidarity. This cross-group engagement strengthens social legitimacy derived from a shared sense of belonging to social and cultural space.

Johnson, (2022) highlights that religious and cultural rituals are capable of creating solidarity in the context of a pluralistic society, as collective participation in these activities transcends individual identity boundaries. In this context, the mass Ngaben ceremony in Batunindan village serves as an arena where differences are negotiated within the framework of social harmony. This approach aligns with the findings of Mathias & Fisher, (2021), which show that social legitimacy stemming from tradition allows societies to develop acceptance of diverse social categories and strengthens acceptance of mixed identities in multicultural societies.

In the context of a multicultural society like in Batunindan Village, interreligious and intercultural collaboration becomes an important aspect in strengthening religious moderation. (Masruroh et al., 2022) emphasise that the involvement of various stakeholders, including religious and traditional figures and social institutions, in preserving shared traditions can create an inclusive framework that fosters tolerance and mutual respect.

Tradition serves as an important instrument in strengthening social legitimacy and promoting interreligious tolerance. Through ritualisation, collective participation, and cross-community collaboration, traditions create inclusive social spaces where diversity is understood as a strength, not a threat. By placing tradition as a pillar of togetherness, society can build social legitimacy rooted in human values, justice, and respect for differences. Therefore, the preservation of tradition is not only a cultural matter but also part of a sustainable social development strategy to strengthen cohesion and harmony in a diverse society.

The findings of the above research indicate that local traditions in Batu Nindan Village are the main foundation for creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and interfaith togetherness. From the perspective of tolerance theory, as explained by John Locke, peaceful social life can be created when every individual is given the freedom to practise their beliefs without pressure or domination from others. This principle is evident in the social practices of the Batu Nindan community, where Hindus, Muslims, and Christians attend each other's religious activities and engage in mutual assistance without regard for differences in belief. This tradition builds a non-coercive and inclusive social space, in line with the essence of tolerance as a form of respect for religious freedom.

If viewed through conflict theory, as proposed by Dahrendorf, the potential for religious differences can actually lead to social tension. However, local traditions serve as a mechanism for conflict resolution through routine and meaningful social interaction. The traditions of mutual cooperation, deliberation, and interfaith visits channel potential tensions into social cooperation that strengthens solidarity. Thus, the application of these two theories explains that the harmony in Batu Nindan is not the result of the absence of conflict but rather the result of the community's ability to manage differences through the values of tolerance embedded in their traditions.

Implications

The findings of this study provide several important implications, both theoretically and practically, for the development of interreligious harmony in multicultural societies. Theoretically, this research contributes to the enrichment of socio-religious studies by reinforcing the relevance of local traditions as active social mechanisms in maintaining interreligious tolerance. The findings demonstrate that tolerance is not merely an abstract normative concept or a policy-driven agenda, but a lived social practice that is continuously constructed and reproduced through cultural traditions. By integrating tolerance theory and social conflict theory, this study shows that local traditions function simultaneously as preventive mechanisms against social tension and as adaptive tools for managing potential conflicts arising from religious diversity. Thus, the study strengthens the argument that local wisdom should be positioned as an integral component in theoretical discussions on religious moderation, social cohesion, and community-based peacebuilding.

Practically, the results of this research offer valuable insights for policymakers, religious leaders, and community stakeholders in designing strategies to strengthen interreligious harmony. The findings indicate that community-based and tradition-driven approaches are more sustainable and socially legitimate than top-down interventions alone. Therefore, programs aimed at fostering religious tolerance should actively involve local cultural institutions, traditional leaders, and customary practices as key social actors. The Batu Nindan case illustrates that empowering local traditions can enhance community participation, strengthen social trust, and create inclusive spaces for interfaith interaction.

Furthermore, this study suggests that local traditions can be strategically integrated into educational, social, and governance initiatives at the village level. Incorporating tradition-based dialogue, customary deliberation, and interfaith communal activities into social development programs can help internalize tolerance values across generations. In the long term, this approach may serve as a replicable model for other multicultural communities in Indonesia, contributing to sustainable social harmony rooted in local wisdom and collective identity.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that local traditions in Batu Nindan Village function as an effective social infrastructure for building and sustaining interreligious tolerance. The findings show that tradition-based practices create routine and inclusive spaces for interfaith interaction, strengthen social trust and cooperation, and transmit values of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence across generations—most visibly through interfaith visits during religious holidays and shared communal activities. In addition, customary deliberation involving traditional and religious figures provides a culturally legitimate mechanism to prevent escalation and resolve tensions through dialogue and reconciliation, while rituals and shared symbols reinforce collective identity and renew the social legitimacy of tolerance norms. Taken together, these mechanisms explain how harmony in Batu Nindan is maintained not by the absence of difference, but by the community's capacity to manage diversity through traditions that institutionalise cooperation, empathy, and non-coercive coexistence.

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