

Community Perceptions Of "Ngantok Bheh Pepouw" Tradition And Its Role In Shaping Social Care Values: A Qualitative Study In Koto Bento

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Abstract: Social concern, encompassing empathy, solidarity, and responsibility, is a fundamental value that sustains community life. In Indonesia, this value is expressed through participation in cooperation, or gotong royong, particularly in rural contexts. This study examines the tradition of Ngantok Bheh Pepouw in Koto Bento Village, Jambi Province, as a cultural practice that fosters social concern. This tradition involves community members collectively providing rice to bereaved families, symbolizing solidarity and easing their material and emotional burdens. Employing a qualitative approach, data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation from key informants, including customary leaders, the village chief, and villagers. The findings indicate that Ngantok Bheh Pepouw strengthens communal bonds and integrates Islamic values of charity and compassion, serving as a form of moral and character education. The tradition demonstrates the interrelation of cultural, religious, and social dimensions in nurturing empathy, altruism, and civic responsibility. By sustaining and revitalizing such local wisdom, communities reinforce social cohesion, preserve cultural heritage, and cultivate inclusive, resilient societies capable of addressing contemporary social challenges.

Keywords: Community Perceptions, Ngantok Bheh Pepouw Tradition, Social Care Values, Character Education, Qualitative Study.

Introduction

Social concern is one of the fundamental values that sustains human life in a community. It is not merely an abstract moral principle, but a tangible manifestation of empathy, solidarity, and responsibility toward others¹. In the context of the Indonesian language, the term *care* is closely related to active participation in responding to the needs and

¹ Emile Durkheim, "The Division of Labor in Society," in *Social Stratification, Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective, Second Edition* (Routledge, 2019), 178–83, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780429306419-29/division-labor-society-emile-durkheim>.

difficulties of others². Social concern, therefore, can be understood as an enduring disposition to act politely, empathetically, and cooperatively, while avoiding behaviors that harm or exploit others. Muchlas Samani and Hariyanto define social concern as respecting diversity, being tolerant, showing compassion for all beings, and willingly engaging in collective activities for the greater good. This value strengthens interpersonal relationships and serves as the moral foundation for a cohesive society that aspires to live in peace and harmony³.

Expressions of social concern are manifested in various ways, ranging from direct assistance such as providing clothing, food, healthcare, and educational support, to intangible forms such as emotional attention, moral encouragement, and participation in community activities⁴. These practices are vital for ensuring social responsibility becomes a reality, especially within rural communities where the spirit of *gotong royong* (cooperation) remains a dominant social force⁵. The capacity of a community to cultivate social concern reflects its moral commitment and cultural resilience, particularly when faced with challenges such as poverty, natural disasters, or the loss of family members⁶.

Tradition, in its most general sense, refers to the inherited patterns of thought, behavior, and ritual passed down within a community. The Indonesian dictionary⁷ defines tradition both as a hereditary custom that continues to be practiced and as a collective judgment that established ways are the best and most appropriate to follow. Tradition is not static; it evolves as communities reinterpret their

² Koentjaraningrat Koentjaraningrat, *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*, IX (Jakarta: PT. Rineka Cipta, 2009).

³ Samani Muchlas and Hariyanto Hariyanto, *Konsep Dan Model Pendidikan Karakter* (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya., 2012).

⁴ Wardani Wardani, "Internalisasi Nilai Dan Konsep Sosialisasi Budaya Dalam Menjunjung Sikap Persatuan Masyarakat Desa Pancasila," *NUSANTARA: Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial* 6, no. 2 (2019): 164–74.

⁵ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 3rd ed. (New York: Basic books, 2017).

⁶ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=rd2ibodep7UC&oi=fnd&pg=PA13&dq=Bowling+alone:+The+collapse+and+revival+of+American+community&ots=G7IeuYlqZ5&sig=C-uax8Ib3xQaVBertPT9P_1cwmY.

⁷ David Moeljadi et al., "Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI)," in *Badan Pengembangan Bahasa Dan Kebukuan, Kementerian Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan*, 2016, <http://davidmoeljadi.github.io/slides/kbbi2.pdf>.

ancestral heritage in light of contemporary realities⁸. In many societies, particularly rural ones, traditions are deeply intertwined with social norms, religious beliefs, and communal identities⁹. They function not only as cultural symbols but also as practical guidelines for everyday life.

As a country with immense cultural diversity, Indonesia offers many traditions embodying social values. Each region preserves unique practices that reflect its historical development, ecological setting, and religious influences¹⁰. While these practices vary, they share a common purpose: to foster solidarity, provide moral guidance, and preserve cultural continuity. The spirit of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, unity in diversity, reminds us that tolerance and respect for cultural differences are indispensable for building a harmonious nation¹¹. Unfortunately, the plural nature of Indonesian society also presents challenges, as cultural and religious differences can sometimes trigger conflict when not managed with wisdom and tolerance¹². Hence, traditions that nurture empathy and social concern become vital for preventing fragmentation and reinforcing social cohesion.

One of the most significant contexts where traditions demonstrate their enduring value is in rituals surrounding death. Death, as the inevitable end of human life, is universally regarded as a sacred and transformative event. Religious texts, including the Qur'an, emphasize that death is predetermined and unavoidable, reminding humans of the need to live responsibly and prepare spiritually for the afterlife (QS. Al-Imran [3]:185). In Islam, detailed guidance is provided for funeral rites, ranging from washing and shrouding the body to communal prayers and burial¹³. Yet, beyond these religious prescriptions, local communities often incorporate unique cultural elements into their death-related rituals. These practices honor the

⁸ Robert Jagiello, Cecilia Heyes, and Harvey Whitehouse, “Tradition and Invention: The Bifocal Stance Theory of Cultural Evolution,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 45 (2022): e249.

⁹ Koentjaraningrat, *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*.

¹⁰ Octo Dendy Andriyanto, Heny Subandiyah, and Meilita Hardika, “Ethic Values in Modern Javanese Literature Works: Identity and Character Education in the Digital Era,” *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 8, no. 3 (2022): 106–19.

¹¹ Agung Wijaksono, “Ethnic and Religious Tolerance in Indonesia,” *Journal of Developing Economies* 8, no. 2 (2023): 316–25.

¹² Azyumardy Azra, “Cultural Pluralism in Indonesia: Continuous Reinventing of Indonesian Islam in Local, National and Global Contexts,” *Asia-Pacific Journal on Religion and Society* 2, no. 2 (2018): 56–60.

¹³ Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh of Muslim Funerals: Guidelines and Practices* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr, 2001).

deceased and provide emotional and material support to the bereaved family¹⁴.

The community of Koto Bento Village, located in Pesisir Bukit District, Sungai Penuh City, Jambi Province, offers an illuminating example of how tradition reinforces social concern through ritual practices. In this village, one of the distinctive traditions performed during bereavement is *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw*. This practice involves community members contributing a portion of rice, traditionally one *canting*, to the deceased's family. The rice is collected and delivered collectively after the funeral, symbolizing solidarity and easing the material burden of the grieving family. Although the quantity may seem modest, the symbolic meaning of the act is profound, as it demonstrates the community's empathy and shared responsibility¹⁵. The practice has been formalized since the 1970s through customary agreements involving local leaders and remains an integral part of the village's cultural identity.

The tradition of *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* illustrates how cultural practices can embody Islamic values of generosity, compassion, and social solidarity. The Qur'an itself emphasizes the importance of giving to parents, relatives, orphans, the poor, and travelers (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 215), while also condemning neglect of orphans and the poor (QS. Al-Ma'un [107]). In this way, *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* fulfills cultural expectations and aligns with religious teachings, reinforcing the ethical dimension of social concern. More importantly, the practice ensures that no family in the community faces bereavement alone, highlighting the communal spirit that defines rural Indonesian life.

This study addresses a notable research gap concerning the role of specific localized rituals, such as the *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* in Indonesian society. Scholars have previously examined broader constructs of social concern and tradition within Indonesia, often focusing on their symbolic or religious dimensions at a macro level. However, the nuances of how these concepts materialize in localized grief-related practices warrant empirical investigation. Through this focused lens, the importance of *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* emerges as a critical mechanism for enacting social solidarity, fostering empathy, and shaping character within the community.

¹⁴ Vanderlyn R. Pine, "Death and the Funeral Service," *Death, Dying, and Bereavement: Contemporary Perspectives, Institutions, and Practices*, Springer Publishing Company New York, NY, 2015, 193–205.

¹⁵ Field Notes, 2025

Rituals are pivotal in reinforcing social cohesion, a phenomenon documented extensively in various cultural contexts. For instance, the importance of studying rituals in minority groups, the frequency of participation in a ritual activity, and the importance of addressing social well-being in ritual research¹⁶. Expanding on this, Power's work with rural South Indian communities illustrates how collective rituals create social support networks, enhancing mutual aid crucial during personal loss¹⁷. These findings underscore that localized rituals, such as *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw*, serve as practical frameworks for social responsibility, educating community members on empathy and solidarity during bereavement processes.

Furthermore, the idea that rituals act as frameworks for communal learning aligns with observations by Rossano, who details how ritual behaviors transmit and reinforce social norms vital to human cooperation and communal life¹⁸. Similarly, Zaluchu's study on the Nias ethnicity emphasizes how death rituals encapsulate a community's values, reinforcing social order and cohesion through shared mourning practices¹⁹. Such findings highlight that *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* is more than a ceremonial obligation; it is a vital practice that creates a common space for experiencing grief together, facilitating individual and collective healing and education in social values.

This study seeks to fill that gap by examining the perceptions of Koto Bento villagers regarding the *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* tradition and analyzing its implications for strengthening the value of social concern. By employing a qualitative approach, the research aims to capture the lived experiences, narratives, and interpretations of community members, including customary leaders, families of the deceased, and ordinary villagers. The study documents the tradition through this approach and explores its socio-cultural meanings and moral

¹⁶ Khushbeen Kaur Sohi, Purnima Singh, and Krutika Bopanna, “Ritual Participation, Sense of Community, and Social Well-Being: A Study of Seva in the Sikh Community,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 57, no. 6 (December 2018): 2066–78, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-017-0424-y>.

¹⁷ Eleanor A. Power, “Collective Ritual and Social Support Networks in Rural South India,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 285, no. 1879 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2018.0023>.

¹⁸ Matt J. Rossano, “The Essential Role of Ritual in the Transmission and Reinforcement of Social Norms,” *Psychological Bulletin* 138, no. 3 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027038>.

¹⁹ Sonny Eli Zaluchu, “Interpretation about Death Rite of the Nias Ethnic and Its Relation to Social Order,” *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying* 91, no. 3 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1177/00302228221149804>.

significance. The findings are expected to contribute to broader discourses on cultural resilience, religious values, and character education in Indonesian society.

Ultimately, the *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* tradition illustrates how local wisdom can provide practical solutions to contemporary challenges of social fragmentation and moral decline. At a time when individualism and materialism increasingly threaten communal bonds, preserving and revitalizing traditions that nurture social concern become more urgent than ever²⁰. By understanding and appreciating the meanings embedded in such practices, communities can strengthen their collective identity while cultivating universal values of empathy, solidarity, and care for others.

Considering the above, this study addresses the limited scholarly attention given to localized traditions such as *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* by exploring its role in shaping social concern and strengthening communal bonds. Specifically, the research seeks to: (1) describe and explain how social care values are embodied in the practice of *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* within the community of Koto Bento Village, Pesisir Bukit District; (2) examine and understand the implications of this tradition for cultivating social care values among villagers; (3) analyze community perceptions of *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* as a cultural and moral practice; and (4) explain how intergenerational interaction contributes to the transmission of character values through this tradition. By employing a qualitative approach, the study documents the tradition. It highlights its broader socio-cultural and educational significance, offering insights into how local wisdom integrates with religious values to nurture empathy, solidarity, and character formation in contemporary Indonesian society.

Literature Review

Social care has been widely discussed in sociological and educational studies as a fundamental value that sustains social harmony. Durkheim emphasizes that social concern is not merely an abstract moral principle but a practical manifestation of empathy, solidarity, and shared responsibility²¹. In the Indonesian context, Koentjaraningrat highlights that social care is firmly embedded in communal life through

²⁰ Henry Alexis Rudolf Tilaar, *Kekuasaan Dan Pendidikan: Suatu Tinjauan Dari Perspektif Studi Kultural* (IndonesiaTera, 2003), https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=QXAH73XZDUgC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=Pendidikan+dan+kebudayaan+di+era+globalisasi+tilaar&ots=M8cLRU9NyD&sig=205nzRcANNGPvTiHjJ_GK_iZ-k8.

²¹ Durkheim, "The Division of Labor in Society."

gotong royong (cooperation), where individuals support one another in times of prosperity and hardship²². Similarly, Samani and Hariyanto argue that social care includes tolerance, respect for diversity, compassion, and willingness to contribute to collective welfare²³. These values are essential for cultivating cohesive and resilient communities.

Tradition is central to nurturing and transmitting such social values across generations. Jagiello and Whitehoise describe tradition as an “invented” yet evolving practice that communities reconstruct to maintain social continuity²⁴. In Indonesia, traditions often serve not only as cultural symbols but also as moral guidelines and mechanisms of social integration²⁵. As Magnis-Suseno explains, the pluralistic nature of Indonesian society, with its diverse cultural and religious expressions, makes traditions critical for preserving unity and solidarity²⁶. At the same time, traditions rooted in empathy and mutual assistance provide practical solutions to socio-economic challenges, such as poverty or family bereavement²⁷.

In this regard, death rituals are significant spaces where social and cultural values converge. Islamic teachings emphasize compassion and communal responsibility when responding to death, prescribing practices such as funeral prayers and material support for bereaved families²⁸. Yet, in many local contexts, religious principles are intertwined with indigenous traditions that reflect cultural identity and social solidarity²⁹. Such practices honor the deceased and ease the burden of surviving family members, reinforcing social bonds within the community.

One example is the *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* tradition practiced by the Koto Bento community in Jambi, Indonesia. This tradition involves villagers contributing a small portion of rice to families who have lost a loved one. Although materially modest, the act symbolizes collective empathy, solidarity, and moral responsibility. It has been practiced since

²² Koentjaraningrat, *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*.

²³ Muchlas and Hariyanto, *Konsep Dan Model Pendidikan Karakter*.

²⁴ Jagiello, Heyes, and Whitehouse, “Tradition and Invention.”

²⁵ Koentjaraningrat, *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*.

²⁶ Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Etika Jawa: Sebuah Analisis Falsafati Tentang Kebijaksanaan Hidup Jawa* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2003).

²⁷ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

²⁸ Al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh of Muslim Funerals: Guidelines and Practices*.

²⁹ Weijia Tan et al., “Social Work and Funeral Service: A Proposed Framework for Practice,” *International Social Work* 67, no. 3 (May 2024): 834–46, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00208728231173267>.

the 1970s and remains a living tradition that strengthens social and cultural ties. The practice resonates with Islamic injunctions on charity and compassion, as reflected in Qur'anic teachings (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:215; QS. Al-Ma'un [107]), which emphasize caring for orphans, people experiencing poverty, and those in need.

Despite its significance, scholarly studies on *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* remain limited, with most existing research focusing on broader notions of social care or other local traditions^{30,31} (Sutiyono, 2010). Exploring this tradition, therefore, provides an opportunity to understand how indigenous practices can function as vehicles for character education, particularly in fostering empathy and responsibility in rural communities. As Tilaar notes, maintaining such cultural practices is vital in facing modern challenges like individualism and materialism, which increasingly threaten communal solidarity³².

Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in post-positivist philosophy to explore and understand social phenomena within their natural context³³. In qualitative inquiry, the researcher serves as the key instrument, while data collection is conducted through triangulation—combining observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis process is inductive, emphasizing meaning rather than generalization³⁴. The subjects of this research consist of individuals directly involved in implementing the *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* tradition in Koto Bento Village, Pesisir Bukit Subdistrict, Sungai Penuh City. They include: (a) the traditional leader of Koto Bento Village, (b) the head of the village, and (c) community members. The

³⁰ Muhammad Priyatna, "Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Kearifan Lokal," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 10 (2016), <http://download.garuda.kemdikbud.go.id/article.php?article=771242&val=12580&title=PENDIDIKAN%20KARAKTER%20BERBASIS%20KEARIFAN%20LOKAL>.

³¹ Bani Sudardi, "Nilai Pendidikan Karakter Dalam Tradisi Lokal," *Jurnal Madaniyah* 7 (2016), <http://download.garuda.kemdikbud.go.id/article.php?article=1474611&val=10646&title=Nilai%20Pendidikan%20Karakter%20dalam%20Tradisi%20Lokal>.

³² Tilaar, *Kekuasaan Dan Pendidikan*.

³³ Patricia Leavy, *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches* (New York ; London: Guilford Press, 2017).

³⁴ Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), https://www.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=JFN_BwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR1&dq=Qualitative+Research+:+A+Guide+to+Design+and+Implementation&ots=wPZPRL6H41&sig=e9lEN0Hc8IaTwaD29tWs4fg9DFQ.

object of the study is the development of social care character values through the *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* tradition.

This study collected primary and secondary data from observation, interviews, and documentation³⁵. Primary data were obtained directly from the field through in-depth interviews with the traditional leader, village head, and Koto Bento Village, Pesisir Bukit District community members. In contrast, secondary data were derived from supporting documents such as village archives, literature, books, journals, and relevant scholarly publications. Observation techniques were used to understand the natural context and the practice of the *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* tradition. Semi-structured interviews were conducted flexibly to explore informants' experiences, perceptions, and views, and documentation involved recording and gathering various written sources and photographs to strengthen the research findings³⁶.

The data in this study were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes three interrelated stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing with verification³⁷. In the reduction stage, raw data were selected, categorized, and simplified to highlight the most essential aspects; in the display stage, data were organized into narrative descriptions and, when needed, supported by matrices or charts; and in the final stage, conclusions were drawn and verified continuously throughout the research process to ensure credibility and validity. Several strategies were applied to strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings, including prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observation, triangulation of data sources and collection techniques, peer debriefing, member checking with participants, and adequate references³⁸. These measures were undertaken to ensure that the results accurately represent the authentic perspectives and lived experiences of the Koto Bento community regarding the *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* tradition.

Results and Discussions

The findings of this study indicate that the tradition of *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* in Koto Bento Village has significant implications for

³⁵ Atlanta Sloane-Seale, “Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches,” *Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education* 35, no. 2 (2009), <https://doi.org/10.21225/d54s3d>.

³⁶ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Sage publications, 2017).

³⁷ Matthew B. Miles, A. M. Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, Third edition (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2014).

³⁸ Nahid Golafshani, “Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research,” *The Qualitative Report* 8, no. 4 (December 2003): 597–606, <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2003.1870>.

strengthening the social care character of the community. This tradition does not merely function as a cultural ritual, but also serves as a medium for internalizing social values oriented toward solidarity and compassion. These values manifest in various forms of concrete action, such as mutual assistance, tolerance, involvement in social action, fulfillment of social responsibility, and cultivating humility in everyday life. The community interprets the practice of giving rice in this tradition not only as material assistance but also as an act of worship and *sadaqah jariyah* with profound spiritual dimensions, as emphasized in the Qur'an (QS. Al-Hadid: 18) concerning the virtue of charity. These findings demonstrate a strong interrelation between religious teachings and local cultural practices in fostering social solidarity.

Furthermore, this study confirms that *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* maintains continuity with the gotong royong (cooperation) practice, which has long been an integral part of Indonesian identity. This tradition also aligns with other forms of social concern, such as helping neighbors, preserving customs, and participating in humanitarian activities. By implementing this practice, the community provides material contributions and cultivates empathy, strengthens solidarity, maintains social harmony, and fosters a strong sense of togetherness. Thus, *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* functions as a contextual form of character education, rooted in local wisdom, while remaining relevant to modern social challenges that demand the emergence of caring, inclusive, and resilient communities.

The study also reveals that the perception of the people of Koto Bento Village toward the tradition of *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* is generally very positive. Although Islamic teachings have no explicit normative obligation to practice this tradition, the community continues to uphold it because of the tangible social, emotional, and spiritual benefits they experience. This practice is considered a genuine form of compassion toward grieving families and a social mechanism for strengthening kinship and solidarity within the community. Such perceptions align with the theory of cultural determination put forward by Horkovits and Malinowski, which asserts that culture plays a determining role in shaping a society's mindset, attitudes, and behavior. In this sense, the tradition concretely represents how local culture can guide social actions of positive value.

Overall, this research concludes that the *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* tradition is not merely the preservation of cultural heritage but also an effective instrument of character education that fosters values of

compassion, empathy, and solidarity within the community. The tradition is believed to have high relevance in social development, as it bridges religious values with local wisdom while strengthening the social cohesion of Koto Bento Village. By integrating spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions, this tradition will likely be sustained and passed down across generations as a collective mechanism for preserving cultural values, reinforcing local identity, and building a more harmonious society.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* tradition in Koto Bento Village is not merely a ritual practice, but also a social mechanism that strengthens communal solidarity. The tradition of giving rice, food, or other necessities during the event reflects the cultural principle of *gotong royong* (cooperation), which has long been recognized as one of the foundations of Indonesian communal life³⁹. *Gotong royong* is not only a social norm, but also a cultural identity that reinforces the idea of togetherness and collective responsibility among community members. In this context, *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* serves as a cultural reaffirmation of mutual assistance, thereby ensuring that empathy, care, and a sense of shared responsibility are continuously nurtured within society.

From a religious perspective, this tradition is interpreted as an act of worship and *amal jariyah* (continuous charity). Islamic teachings consistently emphasize the importance of helping others, particularly through *sadaqah* and almsgiving, as highlighted in the Qur'an (QS. Al-Hadid: 18), where those who give alms are promised immense spiritual rewards. Thus, for the people of Koto Bento, *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* is a cultural custom and a religiously meaningful act that enhances their devotion. This reflects Clifford Geertz's (2017) concept of cultural syncretism, where religious practices and local traditions intersect, merge, and reinforce one another, resulting in a dynamic system of spiritual and cultural social behaviors⁴⁰.

Moreover, the tradition functions as a medium for character education. Lickona (2009) argued that character education requires three dimensions—moral knowing, feeling, and moral action⁴¹.

³⁹ Koentjaraningrat, *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*.

⁴⁰ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*.

⁴¹ Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility* (Bantam, 2009),

Participation in *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* allows community members, particularly the younger generation, to witness and practice values such as empathy, humility, and responsibility in a real-life setting. By engaging in food preparation, participation, and distribution during the tradition, individuals cognitively understand moral values, experience them emotionally, and practice them behaviorally. This aligns with Thomas Lickona's framework for developing responsible citizens through value-based education, where traditions become informal yet powerful spaces for intergenerational transmission of ethical conduct.

From a sociological perspective, cultural practices like *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* demonstrate the significance of tradition in sustaining social order. Kowalczyk and Cichoń (2021) highlighted that culture is a product of learned behaviors transmitted across generations⁴², while the traditions fulfill functional roles in maintaining the structure and rhythm of social life⁴³. The persistence of this practice, despite being non-obligatory in Islamic law, illustrates the Power of cultural determination in binding communities together. It provides emotional support during life transitions—such as mourning or commemorative rituals—while reinforcing communal bonds and ensuring no individual faces grief alone.

In addition, local traditions such as *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* play an essential role in addressing contemporary social challenges. Globalization and urbanization often lead to increased individualism and weakened social ties in the modern era. However, traditions rooted in local wisdom serve as counterbalances by strengthening solidarity networks and reinforcing social capital. The local wisdom and community-based practices act as cultural resources that safeguard social resilience and maintain societal harmony⁴⁴. This suggests that sustaining *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* is about preserving cultural heritage and ensuring the continuity of vital social values in contemporary contexts.

Furthermore, traditions like this contribute significantly to the

https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=QB1rPLf2siQC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&ots=xfmnT6utS-&sig=chOV7ZC8qUu4Mey_JFWIkzGVPeo.

⁴² Izabela Ścibiorska-Kowalczyk and Julia Cichoń, "The Significance of Cultural Policy—Case Study of South Korea," *Sustainability* 13, no. 24 (2021): 13805.

⁴³ Aminah Binti Ismail, "Tradition and Social Identity Formation in Society," *Journal of Social Science Studies* 1, no. 2 (2021): 221–26.

⁴⁴ Pallavi Tiwari, Archana Kushwaha, and Yogesh Sharma, "Climate Resilience with Traditional Wisdom in Asia," *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, ahead of print, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2021/v14i230352>.

discourse on civic education and the cultivation of prosocial behavior. As Narvaez and Lapsley argued, moral development and social care are more effective when embedded in community practices rather than confined to formal institutions⁴⁵. Thus, *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* provides a living example of how cultural traditions can serve as organic systems of moral instruction, complementing formal educational systems in building socially responsible individuals.

Overall, the *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* tradition embodies the integration of cultural, religious, and educational dimensions in sustaining social life. It illustrates how rituals and traditions are not static relics of the past, but dynamic practices that adapt to societal needs, offering emotional comfort and moral guidance. Preserving such practices is therefore essential for cultural continuity and reinforcing social care values that are increasingly necessary in today's rapidly changing world.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* tradition in Koto Bento Village plays a vital role in strengthening the community's social care character. Beyond being a cultural ritual, it fosters values of solidarity, empathy, and compassion through mutual assistance, tolerance, social participation, and humility. Giving rice is seen as material support and *amal jariyah* (continuous charity), reflecting the integration of religious teachings and local cultural practices in promoting social cohesion (QS. Al-Hadid: 18).

The tradition aligns with the Indonesian practice of *gotong royong* (cooperation) and other social concerns such as helping neighbors, preserving customs, and engaging in humanitarian activities. Through these practices, community members develop empathy, strengthen social bonds, maintain harmony, and cultivate a sense of togetherness, making *Ngantok Bheh Pepouw* a contextual form of character education rooted in local wisdom.

Community perceptions of the tradition are highly positive, as it provides tangible social, emotional, and spiritual benefits, despite not being an Islamic obligation. This illustrates how culture shapes attitudes and behaviors, which aligns with the theory of cultural determination.

⁴⁵ Darcia Narvaez and Daniel K. Lapsley, “Moral Identity, Moral Functioning, and the Development of Moral Character,” *Psychology of Learning and Motivation* 50 (2009): 237–74.

Overall, Ngantok Bheh Pepouw is a cultural heritage and an effective instrument for fostering empathy, social care, solidarity, and local identity.

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