

Institutionalizing *Pawongan*: A Local Wisdom-Based Framework for Preventing Social Conflict in Multicultural Bali

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the role of *pawongan*—a principle of interpersonal harmony in the Tri Hita Karana philosophy—as a local wisdom-based mechanism for preventing social conflict in Bali’s multicultural society. The urgency of this research lies in the rising identity-based tensions across Indonesia, which require conflict prevention strategies that do not solely rely on institutional or coercive approaches but instead draw from cultural values. This study employs a qualitative method with a library research design. The data consist of secondary sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, policy documents, and relevant research reports. The data collection process followed a systematic procedure that included identifying key concepts, selecting primary literature on *pawongan* and Tri Hita Karana, and conducting thematic and narrative synthesis of the findings. The results reveal that *pawongan* has been actualized through four main strategies: first, the socialization of customary norms and rituals such as *matatah* and *ngejot jerimpen*; second, the promotion of interreligious tolerance by traditional and religious leaders; third, the integration of *pawongan* values into education and interfaith forums; and fourth, the revitalization of communal solidarity through customary institutional structures. These strategies demonstrate that *pawongan* is not merely a normative teaching, but a functional framework for community-based peace governance. The findings reaffirm the relevance of local wisdom in shaping inclusive conflict prevention policies and sustainable peacebuilding. The originality of this research lies in its reinterpretation of *pawongan* as an institutionalized and context-specific value model that contributes a new perspective to the discourse on conflict resolution in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Community-based governance; local wisdom; multicultural conflict prevention; *pawongan*; Tri Hita Karana.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran *pawongan*—sebuah prinsip keharmonisan antarmanusia dalam filosofi Tri Hita Karana—sebagai mekanisme berbasis kearifan lokal untuk mencegah konflik sosial dalam masyarakat multikultural Bali. Urgensi penelitian ini terletak pada meningkatnya ketegangan berbasis identitas di Indonesia, yang membutuhkan strategi pencegahan konflik yang tidak hanya bertumpu pada pendekatan institusional atau koersif, tetapi juga berakar pada nilai-nilai budaya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan rancangan studi pustaka (*library research*). Data yang digunakan berupa sumber-sumber sekunder seperti artikel jurnal ilmiah, buku akademik, dokumen kebijakan, dan laporan penelitian yang relevan. Proses pengumpulan data dilakukan secara sistematis melalui identifikasi konsep inti, seleksi literatur utama mengenai *pawongan* dan Tri Hita Karana, serta sintesis tematik dan naratif terhadap temuan-temuan yang ada. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *pawongan* telah diaktualisasikan melalui empat strategi utama: *pertama*, sosialisasi norma dan ritual adat seperti *matatah* dan *ngejot jerimpen*, *kedua*, promosi toleransi antaragama oleh tokoh adat dan agama, *ketiga*, integrasi nilai *pawongan* dalam pendidikan dan forum lintas iman, serta *keempat*, revitalisasi solidaritas komunal melalui struktur kelembagaan adat. Strategi-strategi ini memperlihatkan bahwa *pawongan* bukan sekadar ajaran normatif, tetapi juga kerangka kerja fungsional untuk tata kelola damai berbasis komunitas. Temuan ini mempertegas relevansi kearifan lokal dalam perumusan kebijakan pencegahan konflik dan pembangunan perdamaian yang inklusif. Keaslian penelitian ini terletak pada pemaknaan ulang

pawongan sebagai model nilai yang terinstitusionalisasi dan kontekstual, yang menawarkan kontribusi baru bagi diskursus resolusi konflik di Asia Tenggara.

Kata Kunci: Pemerintahan berbasis masyarakat; kebijaksanaan lokal; pencegahan konflik multikultural; *pawongan*; Tri Hita Karana.

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a country marked by a high degree of cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. *Multiculturalism* has become an inseparable characteristic of the nation's social life. However, behind this richness lies a growing vulnerability to social conflict, especially when diversity is not managed inclusively and sustainably (Amal, 2020). Historical experiences and contemporary realities indicate that diversity does not automatically lead to harmony (Iskandar & Heri Kurniawansyah, 2023). Without consistent cultivation of tolerance, solidarity, and social justice, pluralism can easily become a source of tension.

Quantitatively, social conflicts in Indonesia remain a growing concern. According to data from the Directorate General of Politics and General Governance (*Direktorat Jenderal Politik dan Pemerintahan Umum*), there were 281 recorded incidents of social conflict across various regions in Indonesia in 2023. In the first three months of 2024 alone (January–March), 83 similar incidents were already reported (Rauf, 2024). These figures suggest that social conflict is not a sporadic phenomenon, but rather a structural issue that demands serious attention and intervention from multiple actors, including academics and policymakers.

Furthermore, several major social conflicts in the past decade underscore the importance of more context-specific and culturally grounded prevention efforts. The conflict between the Samawa and Balinese communities in Sumbawa, for example, was driven by social jealousy and unequal economic access—issues that were not resolved through formal state mediation (Yasa, 2020). In Central Maluku, a land dispute between residents of Ori and Kariuw villages on Haruku Island escalated into a prolonged conflict lasting nearly a year due to the absence of peaceful settlement mechanisms (Titahelu, 2023). The Kanjuruhan Stadium tragedy in Malang, which claimed 125 lives, highlighted weak crowd control systems amid supporter group identity rivalries (Utama et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the chronic conflict in Papua continues across political regimes, reflecting the state's structural failure to build long-term peace (Hasibuan, 2022). These events underscore the need for conflict prevention strategies that go beyond law enforcement and instead draw upon local wisdom as the foundation for social cohesion.

Scholarly research on social conflict in multicultural societies has developed through several approaches. The first is the structural approach, which emphasizes economic inequality, social exclusion, and political marginalization as root causes of conflict (Azis & Pratama, 2020; Indra et al., 2019; Tadjoeiddin et al., 2021). While useful in explaining how systemic injustice amplifies intergroup tensions, this perspective often overlooks the role of local values in fostering grassroots social resilience.

The second is the governance-oriented approach, which focuses on institutional weaknesses, such as ineffective law enforcement, limited conflict resolution mechanisms, and lack of community participation in policymaking (Nabatchi et al., 2015; Skarlato, 2021; Wolf, 2021). Although this framework identifies state deficiencies in conflict response, it often remains top-down and fails to address relational dynamics within communities.

The third is the cultural-religious approach, which highlights the potential of local traditions and belief systems as tools for reconciliation and social mediation (Alzate & Dono, 2017; Fisher, 2018; Garcia & Cleven, 2024). Traditions such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), *selamatan* (communal prayer), and customary deliberations (*musyawarah adat*) are seen as mechanisms for fostering solidarity. However, many of these studies remain descriptive and have yet to develop actionable models that can be systematically applied in multicultural conflict prevention contexts.

A key gap in previous research lies in the absence of in-depth studies that specifically analyze and formulate conflict prevention strategies based on localized values that have been empirically validated

in daily life. In the context of Bali, the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy—which comprises *parhyangan* (human-God relations), *palemahan* (human-nature relations), and *pawongan* (human-human relations)—has not been sufficiently operationalized as a foundation for peace governance in multicultural societies. The value of *pawongan* in particular, which emphasizes social harmony and interpersonal relations, holds great potential as an ethical and practical framework for community-based conflict prevention.

Therefore, this study aims to: first, explore in depth the values of *pawongan* within the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy as an ethical foundation for social relations grounded in harmony, empathy, and collective responsibility; second, analyze the concrete implementation of *pawongan* values across various sectors of Balinese life—including sociocultural, educational, economic, environmental, and customary institutional spheres—as expressions of local wisdom responsive to modern dynamics; and third, formulate conflict prevention strategies based on *pawongan* values that can be institutionalized within multicultural governance systems through participatory practices, character education, and contextually grounded policy integration. This study seeks to fill the gap in previous research by offering a praxis model grounded in local values that has proven effective in fostering social cohesion and cultural resilience.

This article argues that the values of *pawongan* in the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy can be operationalized as an effective strategy for conflict prevention in multicultural contexts. The research findings demonstrate that *pawongan* functions not only as a normative doctrine but also as a value system that has been internalized in social practices (such as *menyama braya* and *ngejot jerimpen*), institutionalized in customary governance structures (such as *desa adat*, *pecalang*, and *banjar*), and applied in public sectors such as education, health, agriculture, and tourism. This article proposes that a *pawongan*-based approach—emphasizing relational ethics, empathy, and collective responsibility—offers a meaningful alternative to coercive, top-down models of conflict prevention.

2. Method

The unit of analysis in this study is the local value of *pawongan* within the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy, particularly as practiced and embodied in Balinese society. The research focuses on how *pawongan*, understood as the principle of harmonious human relationships, is reflected in local cultural practices and how these practices may serve as effective models for conflict prevention in multicultural contexts (Affandi et al., 2022). This value is not treated as an abstract concept, but as a culturally embedded norm that informs everyday interactions, interreligious relations, and community-based peacebuilding mechanisms.

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design. The qualitative method was chosen because the research aims to explore concepts and interpret cultural-philosophical frameworks rather than measure variables statistically. Qualitative research is well-suited for analyzing meaning-making processes, symbolic systems, and social values through interpretative engagement with texts and contexts (Hennink et al., 2020). The library research design, in particular, was selected to enable a comprehensive review of scholarly materials related to *Tri Hita Karana*, *pawongan*, and social conflict prevention strategies.

The data used in this research consist entirely of secondary sources, including academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, official research reports, policy documents, and relevant literature discussing cultural philosophies, Balinese traditions, and community-based governance models. The selection of sources was based on their scholarly credibility, relevance to the research topic, and contribution to the theoretical development of indigenous conflict resolution approaches. Special attention was given to literature that directly addressed the operationalization of *pawongan* in conflict-sensitive contexts.

Data collection was carried out through a structured literature review process, which involved several systematic stages: (a) identification of core variables and concepts; (b) collection of relevant academic sources from databases and scholarly repositories; (c) selection of key literature discussing *pawongan*, *Tri Hita Karana*, and social harmony in plural societies; (d) comparison of theoretical

perspectives and culturally rooted solutions; (e) extraction and paraphrasing of essential insights from the texts; (f) integration of findings into the article's conceptual framework; and (g) proper citation management using academic referencing standards (Surahman et al., 2020).

The data were analyzed using qualitative-descriptive analysis, primarily through thematic and narrative interpretation. The researcher categorized emerging themes from the reviewed literature, synthesized conceptual connections between *pawongan* values and conflict prevention practices, and constructed an argumentative narrative that reflects both theoretical and empirical relevance. The analysis emphasized intertextual coherence, critical reflection, and the translation of cultural principles into practical models for conflict-sensitive governance.

3. Results

The Pawongan Values in Tri Hita Karana (THK) Philosophy

Balinese society recognizes *Tri Hita Karana* (THK) as a guiding philosophy of social harmony that emphasizes three interrelated aspects essential for achieving well-being: the relationship between humans and God (*parhyangan*), between humans and one another (*pawongan*), and between humans and nature (*palemahan*). Humans, as beings created in the image and likeness of God, are endowed with *reason* (*ratio*) to live and develop their lives on Earth (Sugiarto et al., 2022). With this gift of reason, humans naturally seek connection with one another, as no one can survive alone without the support of others (Syahriyah & Zahid, 2022). Understanding this theological and philosophical premise requires that every individual treat others as dignified beings through tangible acts of compassion and mutual respect, in accordance with the principle of loving others as oneself.

Within this framework, *Tri Hita Karana* offers not only a worldview but also a normative system for thinking, acting, and relating in ways that foster social harmony. The values embedded in *pawongan*—the human-to-human dimension—are universal in scope and serve as essential pillars of ethical living (Affandi et al., 2022). The *pawongan* philosophy affirms that humans are both individual and social beings, capable of prioritizing communal and collective interests over personal or sectarian ones to sustain peace and social order. This pursuit of harmony is a deeply human endeavor, rooted in the dual gifts of reason and soul.

The essence of *pawongan* within *Tri Hita Karana* constitutes a deliberate effort to preserve and cultivate the philosophical values of local wisdom in daily life, particularly in Balinese communities, so that these values may persist over time and remain relevant in the face of modernization. By continuously promoting *Tri Hita Karana* as a living philosophy within the realm of cultural practice, society can establish frameworks that support happiness and peace in both local and national contexts—especially in multicultural settings like Indonesia (Pramada et al., 2022). The act of respecting others, in this sense, is not optional but an inherent and moral duty of every human being, who is destined to coexist and thrive with others through mutual support and collaboration.

An illustrative example of this is the *menyama braya* tradition practiced in Buleleng Regency, which reflects *pawongan* in action. In contemporary plural societies, this tradition plays a crucial role in mitigating social conflict by reinforcing communal solidarity and inclusive engagement (Yanti, 2024).

Beyond its cultural expressions, *pawongan* has also been institutionalized as a foundational principle in various strategic areas, such as business ethics, tourism planning, spatial development, and multicultural community governance. These sectors integrate *pawongan* to uphold balance among economic goals, environmental and cultural preservation, aesthetics, and spiritual development (Adhitama, 2020). Philosophically, the value of *pawongan* is grounded in anthropocentric theory, which places humans at the center of relational life due to their possession of the *tri pramana*—*sabda* (speech), *bayu* (energy), and *idep* (thought)—bestowed by *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa* as distinguishing attributes from other living beings (Diah Yuniti et al., 2022). Through these three faculties, humans actualize cultural values in the form of *local wisdom*, which in turn guides daily behavior, economic activity, and social conflict resolution within their communities.

This understanding aligns with Koentjaraningrat's (1980) assertion that cultural values shape how people think and act, manifesting in their language, practices, and material culture (Amaliah, 2016). Within this cultural system, *pawongan* values offer a holistic framework for integrating interpersonal relations, environmental care, and spiritual practice.

As demonstrated by its integration into Bali's economic, tourism, and development strategies, *pawongan* serves not only as a spiritual ideal but also as a guiding principle for sustainable and ethical governance. It supports ecological balance, cultural continuity, and socioeconomic well-being. Its anthropocentric foundation ensures that individuals remain aware of their responsibilities both as caretakers of the natural world and as members of an interconnected community. Ultimately, the values of *pawongan* continue to operate as a vital expression of *local wisdom*, shaping not only individual conduct but also collective policies that align modern progress with traditional Balinese values.

Table 1. Integration of *Pawongan* Values in Various Sectors of Life in Bali

No.	Sector	Application of Pawongan Values	Outcome
1	Business (tourism)	Balancing economic profit with cultural and environmental preservation; collective work ethics; balance between profit and social responsibility; development of culture and community-based tourism (CBT).	Enhances public trust, supports sustainable businesses, improves local consumer loyalty, preserves local culture, boosts village economies, and reduces negative tourism impacts.
2	Regional development	Involvement of local communities (<i>krama</i>) in spatial planning and infrastructure development.	Promotes environmentally and culturally sensitive development; encourages active participation.
3	Social harmony	Communal cooperation (<i>gotong royong</i>), <i>banjar</i> as the center of social life, and the value of <i>menyama braya</i> .	Reduces social conflict and strengthens community solidarity.
4	Environmental care	Sustainable agriculture (e.g., <i>subak</i> system), community-based waste management, sacred cleansing rituals.	Maintains ecological balance and fosters collective environmental awareness.

Source: Synthesised from (Adhitama, 2020; Amaliah, 2016; Diah Yuniti et al., 2022; Pramada et al., 2022; Yanti, 2024)

The implementation of *pawongan* values, as shown in Table 1, has moved beyond normative doctrine and manifests in concrete social practices and local policy frameworks throughout Balinese society. A clear and exemplary case of comprehensive *pawongan* integration is found in Penglipuran Village, Bangli Regency, Bali. In the tourism sector, the village internalizes *pawongan* through a *community-based tourism* model that prioritizes collective ethics, honesty, and cultural preservation. Visitors to the village not only experience its aesthetic beauty and well-organized spatial layout but also feel the communal harmony upheld through active *banjar* systems and the practice of *menyama braya*. The balance between economic interests and social responsibility materializes through collective participation in maintaining cleanliness, order, and cultural integrity—thereby cultivating a sustainable and ethical tourism ecosystem (Paramita, 2025).

In regional development and environmental conservation, Penglipuran Village strategically applies *pawongan* values. The community manages approximately 45 hectares of bamboo forest not only as an ecological conservation zone maintaining microclimatic balance but also as an economic resource through bamboo crafts marketed to tourists. This practice reflects a reciprocal relationship between humans and nature, consistent with the *Tri Hita Karana* principle (Paramita, 2025). Furthermore, active participation of village residents (*krama*) in planning and implementing development projects ensures local value-based social control that reinforces communal cohesion. This

case study demonstrates how *pawongan* can be holistically operationalized across economic, social, cultural, and ecological dimensions—serving as a practical model for social conflict prevention through participatory and just governance.

Thus, *pawongan* values in the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy represent a principle of human relations grounded in social harmony, mutual respect, and communal solidarity. Within Balinese society, these values function not merely as moral teachings but as the foundation of collective life embedded in everyday practices. Various life sectors—including tourism, spatial planning, social organization, and environmental stewardship—clearly exhibit the tangible implementation of *pawongan*. In tourism, for example, Balinese communities apply principles of balance between economic gain and social responsibility, as embodied in the development of *community-based tourism*. Similarly, in regional development, the active involvement of local residents (*krama*) reaffirms the participatory principle characteristic of *pawongan*. The Penglipuran Village case further strengthens this narrative: the village successfully integrates *pawongan* values into social systems, tourism governance, and environmental preservation, including the sustainable management of bamboo forests that also support the local economy.

Based on the data presented, four key patterns emerge regarding the implementation of *pawongan* in Balinese community life. First, *pawongan* serves as the foundation of collective ethics in managing local economies, particularly tourism. It encourages business models that prioritize cultural and environmental sustainability rather than mere profit. Second, *pawongan* becomes institutionalized in participatory governance structures, where local communities (*krama*) engage in spatial and developmental decision-making. This involvement demonstrates an inclusive and democratic social system rooted in traditional values. Third, *pawongan* reinforces social cohesion and community solidarity, evident in practices like *gotong royong*, *banjar* activities, and *menyama braya*. These practices have proven effective in maintaining social harmony and preventing potential interpersonal conflicts. Fourth, *pawongan* fosters culturally grounded ecological awareness. Practices such as the *subak* system, bamboo forest management in Penglipuran, and sacred rituals illustrate how local values shape responsible ecological behavior.

These patterns reveal that *pawongan* possesses high adaptive capacity—it responds to the challenges of modernization without losing its traditional foundations. Beyond serving as a guide for personal ethics, *pawongan* functions as a collective framework for sustainable and peaceful social development. In this way, local values like *pawongan* offer contextually grounded and applicable alternatives for conflict prevention strategies in multicultural societies.

The Pawongan Values in Balinese People

Tri Hita Karana (THK), the guiding philosophy of Balinese Hindu society, has deeply influenced the everyday practices of the Balinese people. This philosophy, including its component *pawongan*, does not merely exist as a spiritual ideal but has manifested tangibly across various social institutions in Bali—such as *desa adat* (customary villages), *desa dinas* (administrative villages), *subak* (traditional irrigation cooperatives), government bodies, and the tourism sector. *Pawongan* emphasizes harmonious, peaceful, and balanced human relationships within communal life. Sastrawan dan Giri (2023) argued that *pawongan* embodies multicultural values—such as democracy, pluralism, and humanism—which have proven effective in mitigating socio-cultural tensions and fostering harmony within Bali's diverse society. Several empirical studies have documented how *pawongan* serves as a practical mechanism for nurturing social harmony and preventing conflict.

Wasistha et al. (2022) reported that the peaceful coexistence of Hindu and Muslim communities in Bukit Karangasem Village—expressed in the phrase *Nyama Bali–Nyama Selam* (“Balinese Brothers–Muslim Brothers”)—has largely resulted from the implementation of *pawongan* through *pecalang* (customary security personnel). This harmony also emerges in shared cultural practices such as *ngejot* (food-sharing during religious celebrations), interfaith weddings, *mepitulung* or *ngoopin* (mutual assistance), and *megibung* (communal feasting). Similarly, Sahar et al. (2022) found that in Kapaon Village, Muslims and Hindus maintain interreligious tolerance and collaboration through a historically

rooted process institutionalized in the *Karang Taruna* youth organization, interfaith marriages, and continued observance of *ngejot* and *megibung*. Hanip et al. (2022) emphasized that *ngejot* serves as a tangible expression of *pawongan* within the THK framework and plays a strategic role in preserving harmony between Hindu and Muslim communities. This tradition unites religious sentiments and cultural differences through mutual care, tolerance, and the affirmation of human dignity as both a path to happiness and a tool for resolving conflict. Thus, *ngejot* operates as a medium of socio-cultural communication among religious communities in Bali.

The principles of *pawongan* resonate across multiple societal domains. In socio-cultural contexts, it serves as a reference for resolving interpersonal and communal disputes. In the health sector, it informed the Balinese response to COVID-19 through community enforcement and public health management. In the economic realm, *pawongan* promotes a work ethic grounded in honesty, responsibility, and anti-corruption. Psychologically, it reduces stress and fosters emotional well-being. In education, it strengthens character formation and supports student-centered learning environments (Affandi et al., 2022). For example, during the pandemic, *pecalang* effectively enforced health protocols, reflecting communal discipline rooted in *pawongan*. In education, the incorporation of *pawongan* through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) enhances collaborative teaching, builds mutual respect, and nurtures empathy. From early childhood, children learn *pawongan*-based values through character education—such as politeness, empathy, and peaceful social interaction—learning to avoid quarrels over toys or to refrain from bullying in school and playgrounds.

Table 2. Practical Implementation of Pawongan Values Across Social Sectors

No.	Aspect	Pawongan-Based Practices	Outcome
1	Cultural & Social	<i>Ngejot</i> , <i>megibung</i> , interfaith marriages, <i>pecalang</i> (traditional security), <i>gotong royong</i>	Strengthens interreligious tolerance and social harmony
2	<i>Subak</i> System	<i>Awig-awig</i> (customary law), collective water management, mutual help, shared rituals	Fosters collaboration among Hindu, Muslim, and Christian farmers
3	Education	Professional Learning Communities (PLC), character education, mutual respect from early age	Enhances emotional intelligence, empathy, and academic outcomes
4	Health (COVID-19)	<i>Pecalang</i> -enforced protocols, community-driven awareness campaigns	Maintains public discipline, improves pandemic response
5	Economy	Anti-corruption values, ethics-oriented labor practices	Reduces greed-driven behavior, supports sustainable and fair economies
6	Psychological	Tolerance-building, stress reduction through shared values and cooperative behavior	Lowers interpersonal tension, fosters emotional resilience

Sources: Synthesised from (Affandi et al., 2022; Hanip & Diana, 2022; Sahar et al., 2022; Siu & Sutawan, 2023; Sudiarta & Suardana, 2016; Wasistha et al., 2022).

This table illustrates the operationalization of *pawongan* values across the lived realities of Balinese society. In cultural and social life, *pawongan* is visible in practices like *ngejot*, *megibung*, interfaith marriage traditions, and the security roles played by *pecalang* and community cooperation (*gotong royong*). These practices effectively strengthen tolerance and harmony between religious communities, especially between Hindus and Muslims, by grounding human interaction in mutual respect and solidarity.

Within the *subak* agricultural system, *pawongan* is embedded through *awig-awig* (customary law), collaborative irrigation management, and collective rituals, thereby fostering solidarity among Hindu,

Muslim, and Christian farmers. In the field of education, *pawongan* is institutionalized through the formation of PLCs, which foster collaboration between teachers and students and reinforce character education from an early age. Mutual respect, empathy, and solidarity form the foundation for improved learning outcomes and the development of emotional intelligence.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, *pawongan* informed public health management. Community enforcement of health protocols by *pecalang* and awareness campaigns reflect the social discipline grounded in Balinese collective culture. In the economic sphere, *pawongan* values guide ethical work behavior, encouraging honesty and reducing greed. Psychologically, these values help mitigate social stress and cultivate emotional resilience through shared practices of tolerance and cooperation.

Overall, the data demonstrate that *pawongan* is not simply a symbolic cultural value but a foundational principle in shaping a tolerant, inclusive, and resilient society amidst modern challenges. These findings reaffirm the importance of culturally embedded wisdom as a practical foundation for inclusive social governance and sustainable peacebuilding in multicultural contexts.

The Implementation of Pawongan Values for Preventing Social Conflict

One of the most urgent and strategic implications of the *pawongan* values in the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy lies in their role as a medium for preventing and resolving social conflict. Beyond functioning as a normative ideal of harmonious human relations, *pawongan* possesses tangible potential to be institutionalized as a framework for peaceful coexistence within multicultural societies. Rooted in mutual respect, empathy, and collective responsibility, this value system offers concrete strategies for fostering social cohesion and mitigating tensions arising from religious, ethnic, or cultural differences. Its internalization through daily practices—as described in the preceding sections—demonstrates that *pawongan* does not merely serve as a cultural ornament, but instead operates as a proactive social mechanism.

Within the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy, *pawongan* functions as a strategic value that not only guides ethical social interactions but also shapes a cultural framework for conflict prevention in Balinese society. In light of the growing plurality of social identities and the increasing potential for identity-based tensions, the internalization of *pawongan* values becomes increasingly vital. This value system, deeply rooted in Balinese communal life, cultivates a spirit of peaceful coexistence through respect, empathy, and social responsibility. Various community strategies and ritual practices show that *pawongan* is not merely a spiritual teaching but also a proactive social instrument for de-escalating potential conflict.

One clear example is the mass *matatah* (tooth-filing) ceremony conducted by *Banjar Adat Beraban* in collaboration with *Desa Dauh Puri Kauh* in Denpasar. This ceremony exemplifies the implementation of *pawongan* values in maintaining cultural identity and social harmony. The *matatah* ritual symbolizes a transition into emotional and spiritual maturity, which directly contributes to social equilibrium. Government involvement in supporting this ceremony illustrates a strategic partnership between traditional institutions and state bodies in strengthening local identity as a foundation for conflict mitigation (Maya, 2025).

Traditional leadership in *Banjar Beraban* underscores that preserving *pawongan* values cannot be separated from the broader effort to safeguard Balinese religion and culture. The *kelian adat* (traditional head) IB Agung Warasmena affirmed that cultural practices like *matatah* serve as pillars of social harmony and therefore require ongoing state support. By integrating the roles of traditional institutions such as *desa adat*, *prajuru* (village officials), and *sanan* (ritual elders) with *pawongan* principles, the Balinese community has created a normative consensus that governs interpersonal relationships, spatial organization, and ritual obligations. This model illustrates how local wisdom can productively interact with modern governance systems to build social resilience (Maya, 2025).

In addition to large-scale rituals, simpler community practices like the *ngejot jerimpén* tradition also serve as concrete expressions of *pawongan*. In *Desa Adat Kelampuak*, Tamblang, Buleleng, residents present various food offerings to families celebrating their first *Galungan* with their eldest child. This act functions not only as a symbolic gesture of giving but also as a collective prayer and expression of

social solidarity. From a conflict prevention perspective, *ngejot jerimpen* creates emotional connections that foster a sense of belonging and reinforce communal cohesion (Sukedana, 2023).

Interestingly, the *ngejot jerimpen* tradition transcends social status. Elderly individuals dressed in modest clothing, residents in luxurious attire, as well as religious leaders and village elders all actively participate in the practice. This egalitarianism reflects the essence of *pawongan* as a value system that rejects hierarchy in human relations and instead promotes sincerity and openness among community members. The *kelian* (head) of *Desa Adat Kelampuak*, Made Sukeastawa, stated that this tradition helps bridge relationships between newcomers and long-time residents and functions as a medium for intergenerational character education (Sukedana, 2023).

Numerous empirical studies support the effectiveness of *pawongan* in cultivating harmony and mitigating conflict. In *Desa Bukit Karangasem*, for instance, peaceful coexistence between Hindu and Muslim communities is attributed to the application of *pawongan* values through customary institutions such as the *pecalang* (traditional security guard), as well as through interfaith traditions like *megibung* and *ngejot* (Wasistha et al., 2022). Similarly, in *Desa Kepaon*, the presence of *karang taruna* (youth organization), interreligious marriages, and collective ritual practices reflect the everyday internalization of *pawongan* values (Sahar et al., 2022).

Communities outside of Bali have also adopted *pawongan* values. In *Balinuraga*, Lampung, a Balinese transmigrant community embraced values such as *tatwam asi*, *Tri Hita Karana*, and *menyama braya* as guiding principles for restoring social cohesion following ethnic riots. This approach successfully reconstructed fractured intergroup relationships after the outbreak of communal violence (Eko & Putranto, 2021). In *Tangkiling*, Central Kalimantan, Balinese transmigrants blended with local communities through shared security systems and village cooperatives, which reinforced a spirit of intercultural *gotong royong* (Rahmawati, 2020). These cases demonstrate the adaptability of *pawongan*, showing its potential for replication beyond its original cultural context.

In terms of governance, institutional structures such as the *desa adat* play a crucial role in formalizing *pawongan* values. Supported by Bali Regional Regulation No. 4 of 2019, *desa adat* functions not only as a guardian of cultural values but also as a key actor in resolving social conflict. This legal framework strengthens the position of local values within the formal legal system and enhances the capacity of communities to conduct participatory conflict mediation (Sridana et al., 2024). The synergy between customary law and state regulation forms a credible and effective conflict prevention strategy.

To expand the reach of *pawongan* values, educational institutions and interfaith forums such as the *Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama* (FKUB) have been systematically engaged. This is evident in curricula that integrate *pawongan* values into character and civic education, thereby reinforcing the internalization of tolerance and social responsibility from an early age. Furthermore, collaborations among village authorities, religious leaders, and state agencies such as *KESBANGPOL* have produced pluralism and peace education programs that strengthen societal resilience against polarization and intolerance (Lestari et al., 2024).

In sum, the application of *pawongan* values in Balinese society represents a holistic approach to conflict prevention grounded in local wisdom. Through ritual practices, institutional integration, and character education, *pawongan* functions as a participatory and contextual cultural strategy. This value system serves not only as a normative guideline but also as an active social mechanism for cultivating solidarity, fostering tolerance, and sustaining social equilibrium amid growing complexity and diversity.

4. Discussion

This study finds that the value of *pawongan* in the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy does not merely exist as a spiritual doctrine or normative cultural concept, but has been tangibly implemented across various sectors of Balinese community life and has proven effective in preventing social conflict. The three result subsections demonstrate that *pawongan* has been internalized in everyday social practices (such as the traditions of *menyama braya* and *ngejot jerimpen*), institutionalized within customary structures (such as *desa adat*, *pecalang*, and *banjar*), and actively involved in public sectors such as education, health,

tourism, and the *subak* agricultural system. Conflict prevention strategies based on *pawongan* are operationalized through four main approaches: the socialization of customary values, the promotion of interreligious tolerance by local leaders, the strengthening of interfaith forums and educational programs, and the revitalization of communal solidarity through traditional rituals and cultural practices.

The relationship between *pawongan* values and social conflict prevention arises from *pawongan*'s emphasis on balance, empathy, and mutual respect in communal life. In multicultural societies vulnerable to identity-based friction, values that nurture grassroots social cohesion are critical. Traditions such as *matatah* mass ceremonies or *ngejot jerimpen* not only reflect interpersonal harmony but also build emotional and symbolic structures that deter escalation. The success of communities like *Bukit Karangasem* and *Kepaon* in sustaining interreligious relations through *pecalang*, *karang taruna*, and interfaith rituals shows that when institutionalized, *pawongan* can serve as an effective and sustainable conflict prevention instrument.

Compared to previous studies, this research advances a more integrative framework that moves beyond existing paradigms. Structural approaches—which focus on economic inequality, social exclusion, and political marginalization as key drivers of conflict (Azis & Pratama, 2020; Indra et al., 2019; Tadjoeeddin et al., 2021)—have been instrumental in uncovering systemic injustices, yet they tend to marginalize the role of local cultural values in sustaining grassroots resilience. Similarly, governance-oriented approaches, which emphasize institutional deficiencies such as weak law enforcement and lack of participatory policymaking (Nabatchi et al., 2015; Skarlato, 2021; Wolf, 2021), often adopt a top-down lens that neglects community-based relational dynamics. Meanwhile, cultural-religious perspectives have begun to acknowledge the conflict-mediating potential of practices like *gotong royong*, *selamatan*, and *musyawarah adat* (Alzate & Dono, 2017; Fisher, 2018; Garcia & Cleven, 2024), but most remain descriptive and fall short of proposing structured and replicable action frameworks. In response to these gaps, this study contributes a novel approach by formulating a systematic and context-sensitive model based on *pawongan* values. It offers a practical template for institutionalizing cultural mechanisms of conflict prevention in diverse and plural societies.

Historically, these findings affirm the continuity of Balinese ancestral values that have endured and transformed amid changing times. As part of the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy, *pawongan* represents a form of local wisdom that not only survives symbolically but continues to evolve in addressing modern social and ecological challenges. Recent studies show that similar local wisdom in various regions of Indonesia serves comparable functions by preserving cultural continuity through practically adaptive responses to contemporary contexts. For example, in *Desa Gumanano*, customary practices support beach cleanliness and ecological balance in sustainable ways (Kaswandi et al., 2025). In *Turen* and *Sumbermujur*, bamboo forest management based on taboos and local beliefs has successfully supported environmental conservation and community welfare (Sumarmi et al., 2022).

In the education sector, integrating local cultural values into learning models has proven to enhance students' academic achievement and strengthen their cultural identity (Pamungkas et al., 2023). Additionally, cultural festivals such as *Isen Mulang* in Central Kalimantan show how local wisdom can underpin the development of sustainable tourism (Widen, 2024). Cultural preservation initiatives in regions like *Simeulue* and *Paramasan* also highlight the importance of value transmission through community-based education and intergenerational initiatives (Ali & Candrasari, 2019; Wardhani et al., 2023). These findings align with the Balinese context, where *pawongan* values are transmitted not only through oral traditions but also maintained through customary institutions, ritual systems, and culturally rooted development policies. Thus, *pawongan* constitutes a dynamic form of *cultural continuity*—not static but actively and contextually reproduced to meet the challenges of changing times.

In the social context, *pawongan* demonstrates that the roots of harmony do not always originate from state intervention or formal authorities, but rather from everyday interactions shaped by relational values embedded in community life. Values such as *gotong royong*, *menyama braya*, or the *ngejot jerimpen* tradition represent forms of *everyday peace* that emerge from lived experiences of

coexistence, rather than official power structures. In contemporary peace studies, this approach is recognized as *everyday peacebuilding*—the social practices performed by individuals or communities in daily life to minimize conflict and build peaceful coexistence (Mac Ginty, 2014; Ware & Ware, 2022).

These practices include strategies such as avoiding direct confrontation, preserving ambiguity for the sake of harmony, fostering solidarity through social exchange (*reciprocity*), and maintaining *civility* in intergroup interactions. These characteristics are clearly evident in the Balinese context, where interreligious and interethnic relations are managed through symbolic language and ritual, thereby minimizing tension without requiring state intervention. Research by Mac Ginty (2014) and Njeri (2022) affirms that such forms of peace constitute a robust foundation for sustainable coexistence, often proving more resilient to polarization than top-down approaches. In practice, *everyday peace* also functions as a space for negotiating power relations in pluralistic societies, as illustrated in the study of intercommunal programs involving the Rohingya and Rakhine in Myanmar (Ware, 2023).

Furthermore, this approach opens up a more inclusive and contextual understanding of peace. It does not rely on formal institutions or state regulations for success, but on the local community's capacity to read social dynamics, navigate potential conflict, and build empathetic and tolerant relationships (Ware & Ware, 2022). Thus, *pawongan* values function not only as moral or spiritual principles, but also as practical tools within a citizen-based architecture of peace (Berents, 2024; Väyrynen, 2019). This affirms the importance of treating cultural values such as *pawongan* as active forms of social knowledge, relevant to both theory and practice in contemporary peacebuilding.

Ideologically, *pawongan* offers an alternative to the coercive and legalistic logic of conflict resolution by promoting a paradigm rooted in collective ethics, relational spirituality, and shared responsibility. This alternative is particularly significant in responding to contemporary ideological challenges such as polarization, identity-based radicalism, and the erosion of social solidarity. This approach aligns with the framework of *relational ethics* developed in family therapy and moral sociology. *Relational ethics* emphasizes that conflict resolution cannot rely solely on power structures or legal norms, but must be built through just, trusting, and ethically communicative relationships (Daneshpour, 2025; Shaw, 2011). In practice, conflict often stems from imbalances in perceived rights and justice within relationships, and its resolution demands empathy and accountability developed through relational engagement.

Sells et al. (2009) developed a *relational conflict model*, which argues that defensive reactions to emotional pain often prolong conflict, while the presence of justice and generosity fosters relational healing. This model has received empirical support from Bokar et al. (2011), who highlight the restorative role of justice and reconciliation in interpersonal conflict. Furthermore, communication occupies a central role in *relational ethics*. Sillars and Canary (2012) note that the quality of family relationships is deeply shaped by interpretive frameworks in communication, and that ethical communication is more complex than the dichotomy of constructive versus destructive. In the context of *pawongan*, such communication takes shape in practices like *sungkeman* (ritual gestures of respect), *ngayah* (voluntary service), or *musyawarah desa* (village deliberations), all of which emphasize politeness and inclusivity.

Shaw (2011) further argues that in contemporary systemic practice, ethical responsibility is constructed through relational responses rather than abstract moral norms. *Relational ethics* enables individuals to develop a *moral self* formed through social interactions and reflection on behavior within relational contexts. Values such as justice, trust, and collective responsibility—embodied in the *pawongan* tradition—clearly resonate with these principles. Even in professional therapy settings and competitive social interactions, as studied by Sommet et al. (2014) and Ebert & Goodwin (2020), the capacity to recognize and manage conflict relationally proves more sustainable than merely asserting dominance or avoiding difference.

Thus, when understood as a form of *relational ethics praxis*, *pawongan* functions not only as a cultural instrument but also as an ideological framework to counter the crisis of social solidarity marked by the commodification of relationships and the fragmentation of identities. This reinforces the position of *pawongan* as an alternative epistemic source for community-based conflict resolution.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study are not without limitations. One critical reflection that must be emphasized is that the success of *pawongan* values in preventing conflict depends heavily on the continuity of the social and customary structures that sustain them. Modernization and commercialization—especially in the tourism and property sectors—threaten to erode the social spaces where *pawongan* is practiced. In addition, the transmission of values from older to younger generations has begun to weaken under the dominance of digital culture and increasingly individualistic lifestyles. When *pawongan* no longer guides collective behavior, its effectiveness as a conflict prevention mechanism risks decline. This signals the urgent need for the sustainable and adaptive revitalization of *pawongan* values in response to evolving societal conditions.

Based on these findings, the study recommends several policy actions. First, educational authorities should strengthen the integration of *pawongan* values into character education curricula, particularly through community-based and context-specific pedagogical approaches. Second, policymakers must enhance the institutional capacity of customary structures—such as *desa adat* (customary villages) and interfaith forums (*FKUB*)—as part of sustainable development strategies that prioritize not only material aspects but also spiritual and cultural dimensions. Third, local governments should expand collaborative spaces with community stakeholders in multiculturalism outreach programs, ensuring that values like *pawongan* serve as a cross-sectoral foundation for conflict prevention strategies. Lastly, new regulations must be enacted to protect the social arenas in which *pawongan* is enacted—such as *banjar* (community halls), *subak* (irrigation collectives), and *balai desa* (village halls)—so that these are not displaced by development projects lacking cultural sustainability.

Through this approach, the study not only contributes to the conceptual understanding of *pawongan* but also provides practical insights for the development of conflict prevention policies that are more humanistic, participatory, and grounded in local culture. In the context of a pluralistic Indonesia prone to identity-based tensions, *pawongan* offers valuable lessons on how social harmony can be built from the ground up—by communities themselves—through values that have long proven their capacity to safeguard intergenerational peace.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the *pawongan* values within the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy hold significant potential as a cultural mechanism for preventing social conflict in multicultural societies, particularly in Bali. Through an exploration of social practices, customary rituals, and community policies, the research found that *pawongan* functions not only as an ethical guide for interpersonal relationships but has also transformed into a foundational element of community governance that effectively mitigates identity-based tensions. The study identified four main strategies—namely, the socialization of customary values, the promotion of tolerance by local leaders, the strengthening of interfaith forums and educational initiatives, and the revitalization of communal solidarity—that demonstrate how *pawongan* can be systematically institutionalized as a participatory and context-sensitive preventive approach.

The primary contribution of this research lies in mapping an operational model of *pawongan* values within contemporary contexts that involve the interaction between local traditions, customary institutional structures, and modern social systems. The study expands the literature on culturally grounded conflict resolution by offering a value-based framework, rather than one that relies solely on structural or legalistic approaches. Theoretically, this research enriches the discourse on *local wisdom* as an epistemic source within governance studies, peacebuilding, and the sociology of multiculturalism. Practically, the findings provide a foundation for policymakers to design conflict prevention programs that are deeply rooted in community values, while also affirming that the involvement of indigenous communities is not merely symbolic but strategically vital.

Nevertheless, this study acknowledges certain limitations. Due to its qualitative nature, based on a library research design with limited ethnographic scope, the research did not fully capture internal community dynamics that might reveal resistance, distortion, or commodification of *pawongan* values in the modern context. Furthermore, the study has yet to incorporate quantitative validation or broader

cross-regional comparisons. Therefore, future research should investigate in greater depth the transformation of *pawongan* values in the context of globalization and cultural commodification, and explore the effectiveness of this model in multi-regional policymaking through participatory and multisectoral approaches.

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