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The Meaning of Social Life in the Local Weh-Wehan Tradition: A Cultural Practice of Kaliwungu, Kendal

Fadla Robbi¹

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Syekh Wasil Kediri, Indonesia

fadhlan.aliy@gmail.com

ABSTRACT:

The Weh-Wehan tradition in Kaliwungu, Kendal is a local cultural practice that carries significant social, religious, educational, and cultural functions within the community. This study aims to examine the social meaning of the tradition, the religious values embodied through the concept of Living Hadith, its educational implications, and the role of youth in cultural preservation. Employing a qualitative approach with a library research design, this study relies entirely on scientific literature, including journal articles, books, and documented reports, without conducting direct field observation. Through systematic analysis, the data were categorized into three main areas: the social practices embedded in the Weh-Wehan tradition, the religious and cultural values interpreted through the tradition, and the forms of community participation within it. The findings reveal that the Weh-Wehan tradition strengthens social solidarity, revitalizes prophetic values through acts of sharing and maintaining social ties, functions as a medium for character education, and contributes to psychological well-being by reinforcing a sense of belonging. Furthermore, youth involvement plays a strategic role in ensuring the continuity of the tradition, particularly through active participation and digital adaptation. This study concludes that the Weh-Wehan tradition serves not only as a ritual symbol but also as a socioreligious instrument that remains relevant in the dynamics of contemporary society.

Keywords: *Weh-Wehan Tradition; Social Solidarity; Living Hadith; Non-Formal Education; Local Wisdom; Cultural Preservation.*

INTRODUCTION

Understanding religion can be approached through several perspectives. First, religion is often associated with metaphysical and theological dimensions, such as belief in God. Second, it may be interpreted as an individual's psychological experience, including personal convictions related to piety and moral values. Third, religion can be viewed through cultural and social lenses, functioning as symbolic systems within a community. The weh-wehan tradition in Kaliwungu, Kendal, represents a symbolic expression of religious understanding rooted in this third perspective (Ghufron Hamzah & Iman Fadhilah, 2022).

The Weh-Wehan tradition in Kaliwungu District, Kendal Regency, Central Java, constitutes a distinctive form of local cultural heritage imbued with rich social significance. During the commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (Maulid Nabi), residents engage in the mutual exchange of food with their neighbors, including local specialties such as sumpil and decorative lanterns (teng-tengan), which have become integral to the ritual (Sumberejo Kaliwungu Official Website, 2025). This act of giving is not merely ceremonial; it serves as a communal

moment that strengthens social bonds and nurtures interpersonal warmth among community members.

The practice of weh-wehan reinforces *ukhuwah Islamiyah* and fosters social solidarity. Through exchanging food and visiting neighbors' homes, participants cultivate a tangible sense of fellowship (Waqi'aturrohmah, 2023). The tradition thus functions as a social conduit through which values of empathy, cooperation, and mutual care are expressed in everyday behavior rather than confined to verbal articulation.

Beyond its social dimensions, weh-wehan also embodies rich cultural symbolism. Lanterns and home decorations serve not only aesthetic purposes but also represent the symbolic "light" of the Prophet Muhammad and reflect the collective identity of the local community (Ghufron Hamzah & Iman Fadhillah, 2022). These decorated spaces reveal how aesthetic expression, religiosity, and social values intersect. The tradition conveys moral and cultural messages subtly yet effectively, rendering it meaningful even for younger generations.

Interestingly, the tradition incorporates educational and mathematical elements. Activities such as counting food portions, organizing distribution patterns, and determining visitation sequences provide opportunities for informal learning (Aini Fitriyah, 2021). This indicates that cultural practices can serve as nonformal pedagogical spaces, particularly for children, enabling them to learn without perceiving the process as formal instruction. Such insights demonstrate that local traditions often contain practical wisdom applicable to daily life.

In addition to its social and educational roles, weh-wehan reflects Javanese local wisdom in shaping social interaction. From an anthropological perspective, sharing food and visiting neighbors can be understood as ethical practices that reinforce social norms and communal solidarity in small-scale societies (Waqi'aturrohmah, 2023). These practices provide opportunities for residents to strengthen interpersonal relationships, expand social networks, and maintain neighborhood harmony, contributing to the tradition's resilience across generations.

Moreover, the weh-wehan tradition possesses subtle yet significant local economic implications. The foods exchanged are often produced by households or local vendors, thereby supporting micro-economic circulation within the community (Sumberejo Kaliwungu Official Website, 2025). Consequently, weh-wehan serves not only as a religious and social ritual but also as a mechanism for community economic empowerment, reflecting an interplay between solidarity, generosity, and productivity.

Despite its long-standing presence, the tradition faces challenges amid modernization. Younger generations, increasingly occupied with technology and contemporary lifestyles, tend to participate less actively (Viro Dharma Saputra, 2020). This situation underscores the urgency of

preserving and revitalizing the tradition's underlying values. Weh-wehan should not be viewed merely as an antiquated ritual but as a reflection of social life, cultural identity, and a medium for transmitting communal values to future generations.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research design. This approach was chosen because the focus of the inquiry lies in tracing and analyzing scholarly literature related to the social, religious, educational, and cultural meanings embedded in the Weh-Wehan tradition, rather than collecting empirical field data. The qualitative approach enables the researcher to interpret and explore the meanings contained in texts and previous studies through an interpretive analytical construction. It also allows for an in-depth description of the tradition, even in the absence of direct field observation (Sugiyono, 2024).

The primary data sources of this research consist of journal articles, undergraduate theses, books, and documents related to the Weh-Wehan tradition, including information from the official village website. Data were systematically collected by focusing on the following aspects:

- 1) The social practices within the Weh-Wehan tradition;
- 2) The roles of community members as primary participants; and
- 3) The religious, educational, and cultural values embedded in the tradition.

The subjects of the study are members of the community who participate in the Weh-Wehan tradition, although the data concerning them are obtained indirectly through published scholarly works and existing literature. Data collection was conducted entirely through library research techniques (Lexy J. Moleong, 2019).

Result

1. Social Solidarity and the Meaning of Peace

The Weh-Wehan tradition practiced in Kaliwungu, Kendal, demonstrates that local cultural practices can play a significant role in shaping harmonious patterns of social interaction. The acts of exchanging food, visiting neighbors, and strengthening social ties form the core of this ritual. Based on the findings of Islahudin et al., the tradition is not merely a ceremonial cultural practice but functions as a medium for cultivating social awareness among community members (Muhammad Islahudin et al., 2022). These findings indicate that through a tradition that appears simple, the community can foster mutual care, reduce social barriers, and create a safe space for intergroup interaction..

In response to these findings, Weh-Wehan can be understood as a *social equalizer*, a mechanism that dissolves social barriers through reciprocal visits. When residents visit one another regardless of social background, social esteem becomes more evenly distributed. This

supports the notion that local traditions may serve as instruments of social reconciliation and offer platforms for interpersonal dialogue. As highlighted by Islahudin Weh-Wehan promotes principles of equality and universal respect toward fellow human beings (Muhammad Islahudin et al., 2022).

Further, the study of Pambayun Mustika Rahayu Sari and Priyanto reinforces this perspective by emphasizing that *silaturahmi* (social visitation) serves as the main form of social concern within the tradition (Pambayun Mustika Rahayu Sari & Agustinus Sugeng Priyanto, 2019). They argue that visits between families or neighbors are not merely routine actions but symbolic practices that strengthen social relations within the community. This suggests that *silaturahmi* functions as a mechanism for restoring social relations, particularly within heterogeneous communities such as Kaliwungu. In other words, the tradition serves as a form of *social bonding* that enhances social cohesion.

Moreover, their research explains that mutual giving and social visitation serve as mediums for maintaining emotional closeness among residents (Pambayun Mustika Rahayu Sari & Agustinus Sugeng Priyanto, 2019). Analytically, this illustrates that social solidarity is not abstract but expressed through concrete actions capable of reducing potential social distance. When viewed closely, the tradition represents a model of social interaction rooted in reciprocity, in which relationships are built through symbolic exchanges such as food offerings, gestures of respect, and the time devoted to meeting others.

Meanwhile, the study conducted by Nuryansah and Haq (2023) assesses the tradition through the perspective of *living hadith* and finds that the act of sharing food in Weh-Wehan constitutes a form of actualizing religious values within a local cultural context (Mohamad Nuryansah & Muhammad Izzul Haq, 2023). This implies that social solidarity within the tradition is grounded not only socially but also spiritually. From this perspective, Weh-Wehan integrates two dimensions: the religious through food sharing aligned with the prophetic value of charity and the social through the strengthening of interpersonal ties. The integration of these dimensions reinforces communal peace by embedding moral values into social practices..

Further analysis shows that when social actions gain religious legitimacy, their binding force becomes stronger. In this context, the Weh-Wehan tradition functions not only as a local cultural practice but as part of a shared social ethic collectively understood as virtuous. This aligns with the argument of Nuryansah and Haq (2023) that the tradition embodies messages of togetherness, brotherhood, and mutual respect (Mohamad Nuryansah & Muhammad Izzul Haq, 2023). Therefore, the tradition may be understood as a space where cultural and religious values mutually reinforce one another in fostering social peace.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Weh-Wehan tradition effectively strengthens solidarity and fosters emotional bonds among community members. It operates as a cultural practice that unites the community through harmonious interpersonal relations while instilling moral values aligned with principles of communal coexistence. Consequently, Weh-Wehan can be regarded as a model of local tradition that plays a strategic role in building community peace and sustaining social cohesion.

2. Religious Values and the Dimension of Living Hadith

Findings from various scholarly works indicate that the Weh-Wehan tradition in Kaliwungu is not understood solely as a social or cultural phenomenon, but also as a manifestation of religious values internalized within the daily practices of the local Muslim community. The Living Hadith approach provides a robust theoretical framework for examining how this tradition reflects the embodiment of the Prophet Muhammad's teachings within contemporary societal contexts.

The study by Nuryansah and Haq (2023), which applies the Living Hadith approach to the Weh-Wehan tradition, demonstrates that the acts of sharing food and goods constitute a form of actualizing Islamic religious values that have become "alive" in the habitual practices of the Kaliwungu community. Their findings affirm that Weh-Wehan is not merely a customary ritual; rather, it serves as a concrete medium through which the values embedded in the Prophet's teachings such as generosity, strengthening fraternal ties, and expressing love for the Prophet's example are enacted in daily life (Mohamad Nuryansah & Muhammad Izzul Haq, 2023).

More specifically, Living Hadith studies conceptualize hadith not as texts to be read solely in a literal sense, but as sources of values that are translated into daily social practices. Broader research on the theory of Living Hadith highlights its role in bridging religious texts with the cultural realities of Muslim communities, ensuring that hadith remains relevant when applied within local customs (Muh Syaifudin & Izzatus Sholihah, 2025). This theoretical perspective is highly relevant to the Weh-Wehan tradition, as the people of Kaliwungu practice the ritual not only formally but with an understanding that sharing and fostering brotherhood represent the religious meanings they internalize.

Other Living Hadith studies likewise reveal that the interpretation of local traditions is often shaped by sociocultural contexts, meaning that their religious significance is not limited to legalistic ritual aspects but is embedded within meaningful social relations. For instance, research on the application of Living Hadith in practices such as communal prayer, mutual supplication, or other communal rituals shows that traditional interpretations emerge from the

belief that hadith must be “alive” in concrete practice rather than treated merely as narrative texts (Sobri Febrianto & Munawir, 2023). In the context of Weh-Wehan, this implies that the community values the act of sharing as an expression of *sadaqah* (charitable giving) and *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), not simply as a cultural custom.

Furthermore, cross-regional studies on Living Hadith explain that religious values reflected in local traditions such as sharing food, performing collective social visits, and expressing communal solidarity represent dynamic processes of religious interpretation. These studies show how hadith becomes a foundational basis for the meaning attributed to social practices, allowing community traditions to emerge as rituals perceived to align simultaneously with the Prophet’s Sunnah and their sociocultural contexts (Faticha Sadiyah, 2020).

Thus, through the lens of Living Hadith, the Weh-Wehan tradition can be understood as a religious practice that not only symbolizes social values but also embodies the community’s understanding of hadith related to generosity, solidarity, and strengthening fraternal bonds. This reflects a form of transformative integration of the Prophet’s teachings into lived social life, wherein local traditions are reinterpreted religiously and become a “living” expression of everyday religious practice.

3. Educational Functions and Psychological Well-Being

Within the phenomenon of Weh-Wehan a tradition of mutual visiting, sharing food, and strengthening familial relationships the practice is not merely understood as a ritualized social activity but also as a form of non-formal education that teaches values of togetherness, humility, and social responsibility through direct experience. The involvement of multiple age groups in this tradition illustrates that Weh-Wehan functions as a space for intergenerational learning, a defining feature of community-based education. Such a model aligns with research findings on how local Indonesian traditions transmit character values through active participation in everyday cultural practices (Ali Ridho et al., 2025).

In the context of non-formal education, Weh-Wehan can also be analyzed as a mechanism through which social values are instilled without the structure of a formal classroom. Ethnographic studies on the revitalization of local traditions reveal that cultural activities such as traditional games, annual rituals, and customary gatherings serve as means of character education for children and adolescents, particularly in fostering cooperation and social solidarity (Ali Ridho et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the understanding that youth involvement in Weh-Wehan not only preserves cultural heritage but also affirms the tradition’s inherent educational role embedded within each social interaction.

Other studies highlight that integrating cultural heritage into educational environments, including community-based non-formal education, strengthens local identity and enhances learners' social capacities. Research on the role of schools in cultural festivals in West Sulawesi underscores how cultural activities can function as “learning spaces” that embed cultural meaning in a vivid and relevant manner (Heriyati Yatim et al., 2025). When linked to Weh-Wehan, these insights suggest that the tradition serves as a model of *experiential learning* that offers direct learning experiences through interaction, emotional engagement, and cultural interpretation.

From a structural perspective, traditions such as Weh-Wehan can also be understood as forms of community education grounded in active participation. Studies on non-formal learning within Zapin traditional arts and other community programs demonstrate that the internalization of cultural values becomes more effective when participants are directly involved in planning, executing, and reflecting upon cultural activities (Nike Suryani et al., 2025). Therefore, Weh-Wehan functions not only as a social gathering but also as a “cultural curriculum” that teaches identity, togetherness, and interpersonal skills.

From the standpoint of psychological well-being, Weh-Wehan offers social experiences that strengthen a sense of belonging and social connectedness. Social research shows that participation in community activities acts as a protective factor against loneliness, anxiety, and emotional fatigue especially when social interactions are warm, familiar, and non-competitive (Sarah Febriany, 2023). Because Weh-Wehan requires collective participation through home visits, face-to-face interactions, and food sharing, the tradition naturally creates a supportive emotional environment that enhances psychological well-being for youth, adults, and the elderly alike.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of the educational value within traditions such as Weh-Wehan depends significantly on participatory involvement across all segments of the community. When children, adolescents, and adults engage actively for instance, in preparing food, organizing visitation sequences, or documenting the tradition cultural values are more easily internalized and provide long-term psychological benefits (Alfisa Hasanah et al., 2025). Thus, the educational function and psychological well-being embedded in Weh-Wehan are not merely additional social implications but form an integral part of the tradition's continuity.

4. Cultural Preservation and the Role of the Younger Generation

The Weh-Wehan tradition in Kaliwungu, Kendal, strengthens the preservation of local wisdom through the active involvement of young people who directly participate in this annual cultural practice. This younger generation, born between 1995 and 2010, is frequently exposed

to the influence of smartphones and digital technology, which often threatens the transmission of cultural knowledge across generations. Thus, participation in Weh-Wehan becomes an effective strategy for building cultural literacy. Local youth such as community youth leaders and university students serve as key informants representing younger age groups who help maintain the values of *gotong royong* and the sharing of traditional foods integral to the tradition (Viro Dharma Saputra, 2020).

The involvement of young people in Weh-Wehan not only facilitates intergenerational cultural transmission but also integrates digital technology as a means of revitalization. Youth participants document events through social media, allowing the tradition to reach wider audiences and attract greater public attention (Viro Dharma Saputra, 2020). This participatory approach reduces the risk of losing local heritage in the face of modernity, positioning young people as active custodians who adapt the tradition to contemporary life—similar to digital documentation strategies in other indigenous communities (Dede Kurnia Adiputra et al., 2025).

Preservation strategies also involve intergenerational mentorship, in which elders and community leaders encourage youth to participate consistently. This process fosters self-awareness of Kaliwungu's cultural identity and opens future potential for cultural tourism (Viro Dharma Saputra, 2020). Active youth participation through workshops and community collaborations has also been shown to strengthen local identity in cultural traditions such as *Rambu Solo'* in North Toraja (Iga Sakinah Mawarni et al., 2024).

In the midst of globalization, young people function as innovators who bridge tradition and modernity. A similar pattern is seen in the revitalization of the *ebeg* traditional performing arts in Cilacap, where youth involvement has revived endangered local practices (Herdian Putra Ageng Wijaya, 2014). Such efforts promote intergenerational dialogue and collaborative networks with local government, mirroring community service programs that empower youth to preserve cultural heritage in Nagori Dolok Mainu (Fazli Abdillah et al., 2023). Comparable initiatives have enhanced cultural literacy among youth across various regions in Indonesia (Barkah Juliansyah et al., 2024).

The role of young people ensures the sustainability of Weh-Wehan as an adaptive and enduring symbol of local wisdom. Digital-based cultural preservation initiatives not only safeguard cultural identity but also open opportunities for creative economic development rooted in traditional heritage. This form of preservation serves as a model for other local traditions in Indonesia, where culturally literate youth play a central role in navigating the challenges of globalization (Mutia Apifa Amelia et al., 2025).

Collaboration between youth and educational institutions further accelerates cultural preservation through programs grounded in local cultural content (Barkah Juliansyah et al., 2024). Such collaboration enables young people not only to act as participants but also as creators of digital content such as video documentation of the Weh-Wehan tradition—which increases its appeal to younger millennial and Gen Z audiences (Dede Kurnia Adiputra et al., 2025). This approach has proven effective in numerous indigenous communities where youth use online platforms to educate wider audiences about the values of *gotong royong* (Mutia Apifa Amelia et al., 2025).

In addition, a major challenge for the younger generation is balancing local identity with global aspirations an issue that can be addressed through hybrid cultural festivals. Insights from the *Rambu Solo'* tradition indicate that youth trained as facilitators can transfer cultural knowledge effectively, suggesting that Weh-Wehan has the potential to become a sustainable cultural tourism icon in Kendal (Iga Sakinah Mawarni et al., 2024). Such initiatives also encourage youth entrepreneurship rooted in cultural heritage, including the production of traditional Weh-Wehan foods.

Ultimately, the success of cultural preservation depends on the sustained commitment of youth organizations such as *karang taruna*. In the context of Central Java, this model aligns with local government efforts to integrate traditional practices into village development programs, ensuring that Weh-Wehan remains relevant amid the pressures of modernization (Viro Dharma Saputra, 2020). Active youth participation preserves not only the form of the tradition but also its social essence as a cohesive force within the community (Fazli Abdillah et al., 2023).

Discussion

1. Social Solidarity and the Meaning of Peace in the Weh-Wehan Tradition

The Weh-Wehan tradition in Kaliwungu, Kendal is not merely a cultural ritual; it constitutes a social practice with significant implications for the formation of social solidarity and the cultivation of peace within the community. Acts such as exchanging food, visiting neighbors, and strengthening interpersonal ties (*silaturahmi*) not only reinforce interpersonal relationships but also embody forms of solidarity that have become internalized within the community's everyday social practices.

First, the Weh-Wehan tradition functions as a mechanism for fostering social sensitivity toward the surrounding environment. Practices of food sharing and inter-household visits reflect values of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and compassion—values that sociological literature identifies as foundational to social solidarity in traditional societies. A case study of the *petik laut* ritual similarly demonstrates how cultural ceremonies can strengthen community

solidarity through the active involvement of all members in collective activities (Suci Setiya Rahayu et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Weh-Wehan also serves as an egalitarian mechanism that redistributes social honor within the community. As residents engage in mutual visits irrespective of differences in social background, symbolic social prestige becomes more evenly distributed, thereby reducing social barriers. This finding is consistent with research in other contexts showing that collaboratively managed local rituals generate strong collective solidarity and reinforce social cohesion (Alis Asikin, 2021).

In addition, *silaturahmi*, which constitutes an integral component of the tradition, plays a vital role in restoring social relations within heterogeneous communities. Local traditions that prioritize interpersonal interaction create space for social dialogue and reconciliation. This is aligned with studies demonstrating that values of solidarity and *gotong royong* form the essential foundation of cohesion within traditional communities (Sumitro Sumitro et al., 2024).

Further analysis reveals that the act of sharing within the Weh-Wehan tradition is not merely a routine social interaction but also carries religious and moral dimensions that deepen its solidarity-building function. When communal acts such as food sharing are legitimized by religious teachings and spiritual traditions, their integrative power becomes stronger and more enduring. This resonates with findings on religious traditions such as *tablilan* in Madura, where collective spiritual practices reinforce social solidarity through shared expressions of empathy and togetherness (Mohammad Jailani, 2024).

Understanding social solidarity not only as an abstract concept but also as concrete action embedded in traditional cultural practices underscores the role of local traditions like Weh-Wehan as mediums through which communities internalize values of harmony and peace. This process generates not only emotional closeness among residents but also strengthens the social mechanisms necessary for sustaining community peace over time.

In conclusion, the Weh-Wehan tradition serves as a strategic cultural instrument for reinforcing social solidarity and generating meanings of peace through communal and religious social practices. It operates as a medium of social reconciliation, a mechanism for reducing social divides, and a foundation for long-term cohesion—thereby functioning not only as a local cultural heritage but also as a moral and social framework that sustains harmonious relationships within the community.

2. Religious Values and the Living Hadith Dimension in the Weh-Wehan Tradition

The Weh-Wehan tradition in Kaliwungu is not merely a customary practice; it reflects the internalization of religious values that are actively lived within the local Muslim community. In

the context of contemporary Islamic studies, the Living Hadith framework serves as an important theoretical lens for understanding how the Prophet Muhammad's traditions are embodied in everyday sociocultural practices.

Conceptually, Living Hadith does not view prophetic traditions solely as normative texts to be read and studied textually, but as values that become "alive" and are enacted within community practices. In studies of Islamic traditions in the Indonesian archipelago, this concept represents a dynamic interaction between religious texts and local culture, wherein cultural practices serve as mediums for enlivening the Prophet's teachings within the concrete realities of society (Ayu Karina et al., 2024).

Within the Weh-Wehan tradition, acts of sharing food and visiting neighbors constitute tangible expressions of religious teachings on almsgiving, gratitude, and brotherhood. This practice parallels the Nyadran tradition, in which communities bring food, pray collectively, and clean ancestral gravesites as gestures of respect and gratitude. Studies on Nyadran show that these activities function as mechanisms for enlivening hadith values in daily life, particularly regarding the importance of sharing one's sustenance and strengthening social bonds (Ayu Karina et al., 2024). Thus, both Weh-Wehan and Nyadran illustrate how Islamic values can be actualized through simple yet meaningful cultural rituals.

The Weh-Wehan tradition also shares conceptual affinity with the *Grebeg Besar* ritual in Demak, Central Java. In Grebeg Besar, the distribution of *gunungan* a symbolic food offering containing fruits, rice, and vegetables is understood as both a sign of divine blessing and an enactment of Islamic teachings emphasizing generosity. This practice aligns with the Living Hadith paradigm, as prophetic values regarding charity, blessing, and communal sharing are revitalized through culturally inherited rituals. Research on Grebeg Besar similarly reveals that the ceremony functions not only as a customary event but also as a means of fostering collective unity and strengthening social relations through activities involving people across social strata (Darin Rihhadatul 'Aisy et al., 2024). In this sense, Weh-Wehan can be regarded as a simpler local variant that conveys similar messages: sharing food reinforces social relationships, enlivens religious values, and brings hadith teachings into everyday practice. Through this tradition, the people of Kaliwungu sustain communal harmony while preserving religious values within a living cultural framework.

Weh-Wehan also resonates with the *Ngatir* tradition in Cipanas, West Java, which represents a harmonious blend of Islamic teachings and local wisdom. One of its central features is the communal feast (*kenduri*) and the distribution of food or harvest produce to neighbors as expressions of gratitude and a means of seeking divine blessing. In Ngatir,

residents prepare dishes such as rice, vegetables, or agricultural products and distribute them to the surrounding community, symbolizing care and social consciousness (Sulistiani Sulistiani et al., 2024). This practice reflects a Living Hadith pattern similar to Weh-Wehan, as prophetic values related to charity, togetherness, and social solidarity are revitalized through consistent communal sharing. As in Kaliwungu, the Ngatir tradition reinforces neighborhood harmony and social cohesion. These parallels illustrate how diverse local communities across Indonesia bring Islamic teachings to life through simple but effective cultural practices that nurture communal bonds and religious values amid modern societal dynamics.

Moreover, Living Hadith scholarship emphasizes that religious meaning is shaped significantly by sociocultural contexts. Practices such as interpersonal visits, collective prayers, and communal rituals within local traditions are not perceived merely as social routines but as expressions of faith grounded in prophetic teachings that “live” within society. This phenomenon is reflected across various Indonesian cultural settings where hadith values are integrated seamlessly into local traditions, allowing these practices to function as meaningful forms of religious expression (Sobri Febrianto & Munawir, 2023).

Thus, Weh-Wehan can be understood as a space where hadith is translated into concrete social action. Through the Living Hadith approach, communities do not simply perform rituals out of inherited custom; rather, they interpret and embody the values of sharing and brotherhood as expressions of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* manifested in daily life. This perspective reinforces the notion that local traditions do not lose relevance when interpreted through a contextual and dynamic religious framework. Instead, such traditions become effective mediums for preserving the relevance of prophetic teachings within contemporary cultural settings (Faticha Sadiyah, 2020).

In synthesis, the religious values embedded within the Weh-Wehan tradition are neither mechanical nor merely ritualistic. They constitute a transformation of prophetic values into lived sociocultural practices a *living tradition* through which communities actively shape meaningful religious experiences via acts of sharing, social visiting, and strengthening interpersonal bonds. This dimension highlights that local traditions like Weh-Wehan are not simply cultural customs, but represent concrete manifestations of religious life within contemporary Muslim society.

3. Educational Functions and Psychological Well-Being in the Weh-Wehan Tradition

The Weh-Wehan tradition in Kaliwungu demonstrates that local cultural practices serve functions far beyond the realm of sociocultural rituals. This tradition operates as a form of non-

formal education through which values of solidarity, social responsibility, and mutual respect are transmitted via active community participation in everyday contexts.

The involvement of multiple generations from children to the elderly illustrates that Weh-Wehan functions as a site of intergenerational learning. Non-formal education within cultural traditions emphasizes experiential learning over structured classroom instruction. This aligns with findings from studies of cultural traditions in Solo, which highlight that local customs play a significant role in shaping the character of younger generations through the internalization of local wisdom such as communal harmony and social responsibility (I Made Ratih Rosanawati et al., 2023).

Within this tradition, no formal curriculum is present; instead, character-building values such as respect, cooperation, and active participation emerge organically as community members share food and interact. The involvement of children and adolescents ensures not only the continuity of the tradition but also provides them with direct learning experiences about sociocultural values. This phenomenon is comparable to the Peusijek tradition in Aceh, which functions as a medium of local-wisdom-based learning, enabling communities to understand their history and identity through cultural interaction (Okhaifi Prasetyo & Dyah Kumalasari, 2021).

Traditions such as Weh-Wehan facilitate the internalization of local wisdom as moral guidelines and character-forming principles. Core values embodied in the tradition such as reciprocity, social engagement, and mutual respect align with the character-building goals of cultural education in Indonesia. Research on local wisdom in Magelang similarly emphasizes that cultural values help shape holistic community character, including humility, social responsibility, and care for others (Sukron Mazid, Danang Prasetyo, et al., 2020).

Character formation through local traditions is also evident in other cultural practices, such as the Kenduri Sko tradition in Kerinci, which is used to cultivate youth character by integrating historical and cultural values into daily life (Dwi Wandari Purwa Nugraha et al., 2021). These examples underscore how local cultural traditions can function as a “cultural curriculum” that instills strong moral and ethical values.

Beyond its educational dimension, participation in the Weh-Wehan tradition also has positive effects on individual psychological well-being. The sense of social connectedness fostered through direct interaction—visiting neighbors, sharing food, and engaging in informal conversations enhances individuals’ sense of belonging within the community. Citizenship education scholarship indicates that local-wisdom-based values such as cooperation and social responsibility are strongly correlated with social identity formation and community

engagement, both of which contribute to psychological well-being (Thomy Sastra Atmaja, 2024).

Warm and familiar interactions during Weh-Wehan provide space for individuals to experience social support, which helps reduce feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and social isolation. Such social environments are particularly important in the modern era, where digital connectivity often fails to replicate the depth and emotional richness of interpersonal relationships. Consequently, participation in traditional cultural activities contributes significantly to the emotional and psychological welfare of community members.

In summary, the Weh-Wehan tradition functions as a non-formal educational space that enables the internalization of cultural and moral values while also serving as a medium that supports both individual and communal psychological well-being. The local wisdom embedded within the tradition not only forms the moral basis of communal life but also cultivates deep social competencies through meaningful experiential learning and sustained social interaction.

4. Cultural Preservation and the Role of Youth in the Weh-Wehan Tradition

The preservation of the Weh-Wehan tradition in Kaliwungu is closely connected to the active and innovative participation of the younger generation as cultural agents. In the era of globalization, young people play a dual role: not only as inheritors of cultural heritage but also as primary actors capable of ensuring the continuity of tradition through adaptive and contextually relevant practices. Youth engagement in local cultural activities increases cultural awareness and fosters appreciation for local heritage, thereby countering modern pressures that often weaken communal ties to tradition (Sarip Hidayat et al., 2025).

Young people hold a strategic position in sustaining local wisdom by participating directly in cultural practices and embodying these values in everyday life. As seen in the preservation activities of Sanggar Astagiri, youth engagement through educational programs, workshops, and social media has proven effective in strengthening cultural awareness (Sarip Hidayat et al., 2025). Such initiatives not only reconnect younger generations with local traditions but also provide avenues for cultural expression that remain relevant in contemporary contexts.

Moreover, youth involvement in cultural practices contributes to revitalizing values of tolerance and cooperation among community members. Studies on traditional games such as *congklak* reveal that local traditions can serve as educational tools for instilling values of tolerance, cooperation, and cultural appreciation key aspects necessary for sustaining heritage and reinforcing social cohesion (Azki Faisal Hamdani et al., 2025).

In addition, the younger generation increasingly utilizes information technology and digital media as instruments of cultural preservation. In the context of globalization, the

digitalization of local traditions through social media, websites, and other digital platforms creates opportunities for documenting, disseminating, and strengthening cultural values for broader audiences. Research on the digital transformation of cultural heritage demonstrates that digital technology enables communities to inventory, document, store, and disseminate cultural information, allowing initially local traditions to gain wider recognition and sustainability (Danu Eko Agustinova, 2022).

Youth participation in safeguarding local wisdom also fosters cultural identity and social inclusion, particularly when young people interact in intergenerational cultural activities. Such involvement facilitates dialogue across generations and deepens cultural understanding through direct engagement with traditional practices (Dede Kurnia Adiputra et al., 2025).

The engagement of young people yields significant positive impacts on the sustainability of cultural traditions. Mobilizing youth through culture-based educational programs, community initiatives, and digital platforms strengthens cultural identity and cultivates resilience amid the pressures of globalization. Without active youth participation, cultural heritage risks decline due to the absence of value transmission from older to younger generations (Musa Kiring et al., 2025).

In the context of the Weh-Wehan tradition, youth participation may take the form of cultural workshops, intergenerational collaboration, and systematic digital documentation. These approaches not only preserve the structural aspects of the tradition but also reinforce its social values such as solidarity, mutual cooperation, and interpersonal respect ensuring their continued relevance in contemporary society..

In conclusion, young people serve as key actors who bridge the past and the future of local culture. Their active involvement is essential in ensuring that the Weh-Wehan tradition remains relevant, adaptive, and sustainable amidst the challenges of modernization and globalization.

Conclusion

The Weh-Wehan tradition in Kaliwungu, Kendal is a cultural practice that carries significant social, religious, and educational depth for the community. This tradition functions not merely as an annual ritual but also as an effective medium of social interaction that strengthens solidarity, fosters social cohesion, and creates a space of harmony among members of the community. Through the act of sharing food and visiting neighbors, the people reaffirm values of togetherness, care, and mutual cooperation—values that have long served as the foundation of social harmony.

From a religious perspective, Weh-Wehan reflects the internalization of *Living Hadith* values, manifested in the practices of charity, maintaining social ties (*silaturahmi*), and expressing gratitude within a local cultural framework. This tradition illustrates how the teachings of Prophet Muhammad can be actualized through simple cultural expressions that hold deep spiritual meaning. In this sense, Weh-Wehan like many other localized traditions in Indonesia—demonstrates how Islamic values can harmoniously integrate with local wisdom, forming contextual and relevant expressions of religious life..

Moreover, Weh-Wehan carries strong educational functions through its mechanism of intergenerational learning. The involvement of all community members, including children and youth, positions this tradition as a medium of character education embedded in daily life. Values such as social responsibility, respect for others, empathy, and togetherness are naturally instilled through direct participation. The tradition also contributes to the community's psychological well-being by fostering a sense of connectedness, strengthening social belonging, and enhancing communal support.

The sustainability of the Weh-Wehan tradition greatly depends on the active participation of the younger generation. Their role is not only to continue the tradition but also to innovate, document, and disseminate its values through media that align with contemporary developments such as digital platforms and social media. With strong youth involvement, the tradition is more likely to remain relevant and resilient amid the challenges of modernization and globalization.

Overall, Weh-Wehan is a cultural heritage rich in social, religious, educational, and psychological values. It serves as a bridge connecting local wisdom with the modern community's need for meaningful and harmonious social interaction. Its continuity requires collaboration among all community elements, particularly the younger generation, who have the capacity to preserve and simultaneously develop the noble values embedded in the tradition. Thus, Weh-Wehan is not only an integral part of the cultural identity of the people of Kaliwungu but also a model of cultural practice capable of strengthening social bonds and enriching social spirituality in contemporary life.

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