

Local Wisdom of Baduy Community: Systematic Literature Review on Social, Cultural, and Environmental Ethics

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ABSTRACT

The indigenous knowledge of the Baduy people encompasses social, cultural, and environmental elements essential for sustainable development. This study intends to examine and integrate literature about social, cultural, and environmental ethics within Baduy wisdom. The employed methodology is a systematic literature review adhering to the PRISMA 2020 principles. A literature search was performed via Google Scholar and Scopus via the Publish or Perish tool, encompassing papers from 2016 to 2024, along by a comprehensive analysis of 8 chosen articles. The study's findings delineate three primary themes: social ethics (pertaining to customary structures and community organisations), cultural ethics (concerning the significance of rituals and spiritual values), and environmental ethics (focused on nature conservation and restrictions on environmental alteration) through customary law (*Pikukuh*), spiritual beliefs (*Sunda Wiwitan*), traditional agricultural practices, and intergenerational oral traditions (*Pamali*). This study reinforces the concept of a comprehensive and community-oriented framework for sustainable living, grounded in the ideals of simplicity, collaboration, and harmony with nature. Notwithstanding the variety of existing research, considerable deficiencies persist, particularly in the analysis of social, cultural, and environmental ethics rooted in local wisdom, the interdisciplinary comprehension of the Baduy community's knowledge system, and the imperative of integrating local wisdom into global dialogues on sustainability and cultural preservation.

ABSTRAK

Kearifan Lokal Masyarakat Baduy: Tinjauan Literatur Sistematis tentang Etika Sosial, Budaya, dan Lingkungan. Kearifan lokal masyarakat Baduy memuat nilai-nilai sosial, budaya, dan lingkungan yang penting bagi pembangunan berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini bertujuan meninjau dan mensintesis literatur terkait etika sosial, budaya, dan lingkungan dalam kearifan lokal Baduy. Metode yang diterapkan adalah studi literatur sistematis (*systematic literature review*) berdasarkan pedoman PRISMA 2020. Pencarian literatur dilakukan menggunakan Google Scholar dan Scopus melalui perangkat Publish or Perish, mencakup publikasi periode 2016–2024, dengan analisis mendalam terhadap 8 artikel terpilih. Hasil kajian mengungkap tiga tema utama: etika sosial (berkaitan dengan struktur adat dan organisasi komunitas), etika budaya (berkaitan dengan peran ritual dan nilai-nilai spiritual), dan etika lingkungan (berkaitan dengan konservasi alam dan larangan perubahan lingkungan) melalui hukum adat (*pikukuh*), kepercayaan spiritual (*Sunda Wiwitan*), teknik pertanian tradisional, dan tradisi lisan antar generasi (*Pamali*). Studi ini memperkuat konstruksi berfikir mengenai kerangka kerja yang holistik dan berfokus pada komunitas untuk kehidupan berkelanjutan, didasarkan pada prinsip-prinsip kesederhanaan, kolaborasi, dan harmoni dengan alam. Terlepas dari keragaman dalam penelitian yang tersedia, kesenjangan yang signifikan tetap ada, terutama mengenai pemeriksaan etika sosial, budaya, dan lingkungan, yang tertanam dalam kearifan lokal, pemahaman interdisipliner terhadap sistem pengetahuan masyarakat Baduy dan menegaskan urgensi kearifan lokal dalam diskusi global tentang keberlanjutan dan pelestarian budaya.

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Introduction

The Baduy of West Java embody the integration of traditional knowledge and sustainable living. In many indigenous societies, cosmology and customary law guide both social life and resource use. The Baduy exemplifies this: for centuries their *adat* (customary rules) has regulated agriculture, housing, and behavior so as to preserve culture and nature. Baduy indigenous knowledge has “maintained the survival of their culture and natural resources” with minimal intrusion from outsiders. Central to this continuity is the Baduy worldview of *Pikukuh Tilu* (The Three Pillars), a tripartite doctrine asserting the interdependence of the divine, humans, and the natural world. *Pikukuh Tilu* as a guiding principle that “ensures cultural continuity and ecological sustainability” in the Baduy way of life (F. H. Silalahi & Purwanto, 2025).

In practice, this means the Baduy enforce strict taboos on altering the landscape that the core of *Pikukuh* is to “control the relationship between human and nature by strictly forbidding the Baduy to change the environment” (Alfira & Uekita, 2023). For example, sacred forests are left untouched, and farming follows ritual cycles. In sum, the Baduy demonstrate how an indigenous epistemology can underwrite cultural resilience sustaining a community’s social fabric in harmony with the land. As one study summarizes, the Baduy possess “deep knowledge of nature, culture, and religion” that sustains them in a “harmonious relationship between man, the environment, and the supreme power”.

This review takes an integrative view of the Baduy worldview, analyzing social, cultural and environmental dimensions as a unified system. In the Baduy context, social institutions, belief systems and ecology are inseparable. *Pikukuh Tilu* explicitly governs all facets of life, emphasize that this doctrine shapes the Baduy’s “social, spiritual, and environmental practices” jointly (F. H. Silalahi & Purwanto, 2025). For instance, the Baduy are divided into Inner (Tangtu) and Outer (Panamping) communities, but these are tightly linked intermarriage between Inner and Outer hamlets “makes the community sustained for a hundred years” (Alfira & Uekita, 2023), illustrating how kinship underpins social cohesion and cultural continuity. Daily life is equally structured by cosmovision. Customary leaders (*puun* and *jaro*) mediate between people and ancestral spirits, while rituals (such as harvest ceremonies or holy feasts) reinforce communal values. Even mundane practices like building stilted houses with rattan nails or storing rice in traditional *leuit* barns to reflect an ecological ethic embedded in *Pikukuh Tilu*. Our focus is to trace these linkages: how Baduy social order (kinship, leadership, ritual) and material culture (architecture, agriculture) are animated by indigenous cosmology. By studying these elements together, we treat the Baduy as a holistic cultural ecological system rather than as disjoint topics.

The Baduy’s traditional equilibrium now faces serious threats, making this research urgent. Encroachment and modern pressures jeopardize the very knowledge that sustains their way of life. Furthermore, (Hasim et al., 2023) provide examples of how illicit activities like illicit mining and pollution tourism “begin to threaten *the Baduy's* quality of life.” Preserving the environment and culture is the main goal of tourism.

Other finding are exposure to outsiders’ technology and habits (like smartphones and photography) is feared to “threaten the purity of teachings and beliefs in Baduy,” concluding that tourism has introduced “a threat of cultural degradation” to the Inner Baduy community (Pradana et al., 2024). These changes disturb customary limits and risk eroding the Baduy’s epistemic foundations. Baduy may be willing to share ecological wisdom for conservation, but

they are wary of any “external influences that pose a threat of disruption to their own epistemic system and way of life” (Perdani et al., 2024; Zidny et al., 2020). Amid these challenges, the Baduy model of resource use and resilience has broader importance. Scholars note that Pikukuh Tilu aligns with global sustainability agendas (SDGS) (F. H. Silalahi & Purwanto, 2025), signaling the potential value of this indigenous knowledge to contemporary debates. In other words, preserving Baduy traditions is not only a matter of local cultural rights but also of global relevance: their emphasis on sustainable living and ecological harmony offers lessons for resilience in a changing world.

To date, scholarship on the Baduy is varied but fragmented. Studies have appeared across disciplines – anthropology, geography, architecture, religious studies, and development – each illuminating one facet of Baduy life. For example, (F. H. Silalahi & Purwanto, 2025) analyze Pikukuh Tilu from a philosophical perspective, (Alfira & Uekita, 2023) examine hamlet hierarchies and vernacular architecture, and (Hasim et al., 2023) document land-use customs and ecological taboos. Other work addresses education, language, or healthcare in Baduy society. However, these threads seldom intersect. Ethnographic accounts describe customs or the origins of the Baduy faith (Sayer & Margules, 2017, p. 29), (Waluya et al., 2023). While agronomic studies note their swidden farming and seed banks (Wambugu et al., 2023), Tourism research (Pradana et al., 2024) highlights economic impacts, but does not fully connect to spiritual or social frameworks. In sum, past research has been thematic and disciplinary. We did not find comprehensive reviews integrating these perspectives. In short, the Baduy literature is rich in detail yet lacks an overarching synthesis: most scholars illuminate specific questions, but few examine the Big Picture.

This review seeks to address that gap by carefully examining interdisciplinary research on the Baduy published between 2016 and 2024, utilising mining data from Publish or Perish software sourced from google scholar and scopus database publications. Our objective is to delineate significant themes and trends in contemporary literature and to outline pathways for future research. We utilise the theoretical frameworks of indigenous epistemology and cultural resilience to analyse the findings. We prioritise Indigenous Baduy epistemologies and coping strategies rather than imposing exogenous frameworks. We will explicitly classify and compare research on social organisation, ritual and belief, environmental management, and responses to change. We will analyse the treatment of ideas such as Pikukuh Tilu and buyut, the transmission or modification of Baduy knowledge, and the highlighted stresses, including tourism, education, and climate change.

We anticipate uncovering deficiencies, such as a requirement for increased longitudinal or participatory research. By consolidating disparate findings, we seek to create a cohesive narrative that honours Baduy viewpoints. Highlighting indigenous belief systems enhances “broader discussions” around sustainable life (F. H. Silalahi & Purwanto, 2025). In this context, our review will not only catalogue existing knowledge about the Baduy but also relate it to wider theoretical discussions, so bolstering both academic inquiry and the Baduy's initiatives to preserve their cultural and environmental heritage.

Method

This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology using the PRISMA guidelines to ensure methodological rigor and transparency. The review process involves four key stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of relevant journal

articles published between 2016 and 2024. A structured search was conducted through Scopus and Google Scholar using specific keywords related to Baduy local wisdom in social, cultural, and environmental contexts. After initial identification, duplicate and irrelevant records were removed based on established inclusion and exclusion criteria. In the analysis stage, data were extracted from the selected articles and assessed for quality based on relevance, research design, and depth of discussion on Baduy wisdom. Then, a thematic analysis was done by organizing the information into categories to find common patterns and themes about social governance, cultural rituals, and environmental practices. This process enabled a synthesis of findings that highlights conceptual trends, research gaps, and the integrated nature of Baduy local wisdom in guiding community life.

Result and Discussion

Literature reviews have yielded several studies pertinent to the discourse on local wisdom and its sustainability within the Baduy community. The chosen articles delineate the diverse cultural, social, and environmental challenges encountered by the Baduy people in preserving traditional values amid modernization. This document presents a systematic and comprehensive overview of the findings: a table summarizing the researchers, methodologies employed, research subjects, and principal results of each study derived from the literature review.

The local wisdom of the Baduy community reflects a robust social structure governed by the *Pikukuh Tilu* system, which emphasizes the harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and spiritual forces. Traditional leadership by *puun* and *jaro* ensures that social values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), deliberation, and obedience to norms are preserved and passed down through generations. The internal division between the Inner Baduy (Baduy Dalam) and Outer Baduy (*Baduy Luar*) demonstrates a social stratification intended to protect cultural identity and community integrity.

Cultural practices in the Baduy community are heavily influenced by the Sunda Wiwitan belief system, which upholds the sanctity of nature and a simple way of life. Rituals such as *Seba* (a pilgrimage to express gratitude to local government) and *Ngaseuk* (a rice planting ritual) serve not only religious functions but also reinforce community solidarity and ecological balance. Oral traditions like *pamali* (taboos) are crucial in transmitting ethical and moral values to younger generations, thereby ensuring the continuity of sustainable cultural practices.

The environmental ethics of the Baduy people are evident in customary prohibitions aimed at ecological preservation. They are forbidden from altering the flow of rivers, cutting down trees in sacred forests (*leuweung titipan*), or using modern agricultural technologies. Traditional farming techniques such as *huma* (shifting cultivation) are practiced with careful attention to natural cycles and without the use of chemical inputs, highlighting their commitment to sustainable environmental stewardship.

Although the Baduy community has demonstrated resilience in maintaining their local wisdom, external pressures—such as tourism, technological infiltration, and broader modernization—pose potential threats. The introduction of mobile phones and social media, for instance, risks undermining traditional values and prompting cultural shifts. Nevertheless, the Baduy people exhibit strong cultural resilience by selectively accepting changes that do not contradict their core beliefs, while reinforcing their identity through customary education and ritual continuity.

Table 1. Article Review Results

No	Researcher	Method Research	Subjects and Results
1	(Patittingi et al., 2020)	Qualitative	During the pandemic, the Baduy Dalam community practiced isolation, while the Baduy Luar imposed restrictions. They engaged in agriculture and conservation through Pamali.
2	(Iskandar & Iskandar, 2017)	Qualitative	The Baduy people utilize over 50 plant species in nine stages of cultivation rituals, reflecting traditional ecological knowledge crucial for biodiversity conservation.
3	(ROCHMAN et al., 2020)	Qualitative	The Lebak district's local government is focusing on enhancing customary land and fostering alternative livelihoods to ensure the sustainability of these practices.
4	(F. H. M. Silalahi & Purwanto, 2025)	Qualitative	Pikukuh Tilu philosophy, rooted in Baduy's spiritual, social, and environmental values, promotes self-control, harmony with nature, and social agreement, despite modernization and environmental protection.
5	(Putri et al., 2025)	Qualitative	The study highlights the high maternal and child mortality rates in Baduy Luar due to low health literacy, cultural taboos, and insufficient information.
6	(Elan & Solihati, 2022a)	Qualitative	The Baduy community's wisdom values are deeply ingrained in their way of life, yet their integration into Citorek's Citizenship Education curriculum remains limited.
7	(A'la et al., 2023)	Qualitative	The Sunda Wiwitan belief system in Baduy customs is vital for disaster mitigation, promoting environmental protection, harmony with nature, and traditional agriculture using organic fertilizers.
8	(Sutiapermana et al., 2022)	Qualitative	This study highlights the importance of a microsociological perspective in understanding the influence of social structures and institutions on character development within the Baduy community.

This comprehensive research background allows for a thorough analysis of the local wisdom of Baduy as enforced and maintained in various social, cultural, and environmental practices. The analysis of the local wisdom of Baduy includes research published from 2016 to 2024. The eight selected articles, published between 2016 and 2024, show the increasing scientific interest in the local wisdom of the Baduy people over the past five years, particularly regarding themes such as cultural resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental sustainability, and the integration of local wisdom into the school curriculum.

The chronological distribution of the chosen literature provides a balanced perspective, integrating the ethnographic depth of earlier studies with contemporary interdisciplinary insights, thereby highlighting the enduring relevance of local Baduy wisdom in the dynamic academic discourse. The eight selected articles show various qualitative approaches, emphasizing interdisciplinary studies of Baduy local wisdom. All articles use qualitative research methods, utilizing techniques such as ethnography and case studies to investigate ecological practices, customary rituals (*kuranguh*), and spiritual beliefs (*Pikukuh Tilu*, *Sunda Wiwitan*). Examples include Silalahi and Purwanto, and Iskandar and Iskandar. Comprehensive

interviews and participant observations are frequently undertaken with indigenous leaders, farmers, and educators to comprehend the social and cultural context. Descriptive and thematic analyses were employed to examine oral narratives, traditional agricultural practices, character education, and cultural resilience. The reviewed studies show consistency and diversity of themes that can be grouped into three main domains, namely social, cultural, and environmental practices.

Social practices grounded in values, communal ties, traditional frameworks, and interpersonal relationships among indigenous peoples, including coexistence and indigenous leadership, underscore the significance of Puun, Jaro, and collective decision-making through deliberation (F. H. Silalahi & Purwanto, 2025). Customary marriage and legal systems, which include normative analysis of differences with national law (Patittingi, 2020), as well as social resilience during the pandemic, in particular examines the social adaptation of the Inner and Outer Baduy during the Covid-19 pandemic through customary isolation (*Kawalu*) and social behavior (Patittingi, 2020; Patittingi et al., 2020).

Cultural traditions serve as the foundation for values encompassing life philosophy, perspectives, rituals, and the transmission of knowledge, exemplified by the *Pikukuh Tilu* and *Sunda Wiwitan* philosophies, which constitute the fundamental elements of moral, spiritual, and social order (F. H. Silalahi & Purwanto, 2025). Ritual traditions at the time of planting and harvesting rice in huma, Seba Baduy, and Kawalu, serve as cultural expression, while character education rooted in customs that integrate Baduy values into Civic Education (Putri et al., 2025). Environmental ethics examines the interconnected relationship between humans and the environment, highlighting the sustainable management of natural resources for the benefit of current and future generations. Conventional agricultural systems and conservation methods, including huma (shifting fields), leuweung kolot (sacred or old-growth forests), and customary restrictions on forest exploitation, exemplify environmental wisdom intended to maintain ecological balance (Iskandar & Iskandar, 2017). Traditional farming practices include a rejection of modern technology, adherence to natural planting cycles, and the application of botanical pesticides, reflecting a commitment to environmental balance.

The volume of publications concerning Baduy local wisdom has significantly surged over the past five years, indicating a heightened interdisciplinary focus on this subject. Key areas of concern encompass environmental sustainability, culture-oriented character education, pandemic economic and social resilience, and traditional belief-based disaster mitigation (Hariram et al., 2023). Examining the importance of frugal culture and community economic resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic (Altınay et al., 2016; Blevins et al., 2014; Chen, 2020). A significant amount of research has transitioned from ethnographic descriptions to more applied and reflective methodologies, which include the integration of local knowledge into formal educational curricula and contextual health literacy strategies (Elan & Solihati, 2022; Putri et al., 2025).

Recent studies indicate that Baduy spiritual philosophies, including *Pikukuh Tilu* and *Sunda Wiwitan*, contribute to disaster mitigation and environmental preservation. *Sunda Wiwitan* establishes a profound ethical connection between humanity and nature, grounded in harmony and moderation. Baduy cosmology offers a moral philosophy and pragmatic framework for sustainable living by framing environmental stewardship as an ethical imperative. Contemporary society should guide the Baduy community in adapting to the environmental crisis and provide culturally rooted solutions to the conservation framework.

Customary law forbids environmental exploitation, including the preservation of leuweung kolot (sacred old forests), while ngahuma serves as a traditional method for biodiversity conservation and ecological equilibrium (Iskandar & Iskandar, 2017). The researchers' perspective on the Baduy Dalam and Baduy Luar communities suggests a departure from the simplistic binary of 'closed' versus 'open' society. This transformation illustrates diverse adaptations to the pressures and influences of modernization. The Baduy Luar community illustrates the tension between traditional values and external influences, including the progression of communication technology and tourism. Recent research highlights various methodologies, particularly qualitative methods like ethnography, narrative inquiry, and case studies, alongside normative legal approaches to analyze the relationships and intersections between customary law and state law.

This systematic literature review employs a micro-perspective on the social sphere, emphasizing interactions among individuals, families, and small groups. Only one study (Sutiapermana et al.) explicitly emphasizes the importance of macro paradigms in the social field for a comprehensive analysis of the social structure of the Baduy community. The majority of contemporary research is descriptive and cross-sectoral. The cultural shift induced by urbanization, tourism, and digital influence may vary significantly between generations within the inner and outer Baduy communities. A number of studies, including those conducted by Elan & Solihati and Diniarizky Putri et al., have emphasized the potential to incorporate local wisdom into education. Most of the research focuses on the Outer Baduy community, mainly due to its easier accessibility. As a result, the spiritual values, philosophy of life, and sacred legal system of the Inner Baduy are still not much explored. Some articles are still limited to one disciplinary approach (e.g., law, ethnography, or education). However, the complexity of Baduy local wisdom requires a synthesis of insights from anthropology, sociology, political ecology, cultural studies, critical education, and sustainable development studies.

This systematic literature review analyzes eight articles published between 2016 and 2024, concentrating on the social, cultural, and environmental practices inherent to local Baduy wisdom. This review delineates three principal thematic domains, as depicted in the subsequent table.

Table 2 . Thematic Classification of the Reviewed Studies

Theme	No. Article	Example Focus Area
Social	3	Leadership structure, communal life, and marriage customs.
Cultural	3	Rituals, oral heritage, and character education
Environmental	2	Traditional agriculture, forest conservation, and ecological ethics.

This systematic literature review identified eight articles that fulfilled the inclusion and exclusion criteria, published between 2016 and 2024. The study employs diverse methodological approaches, including qualitative ethnographic case studies and literature reviews, which underscore the interdisciplinary dimensions of research on the Baduy community.

The social framework of the Baduy community is founded on the tenets of egalitarianism, communal decision-making, and adherence to traditional law (pikukuh). Social cohesion is reinforced through communal rituals, the intergenerational transmission of oral knowledge, and compliance with social norms. Cultural preservation is exemplified through oral traditions, rituals (such as Kawalu and Seba Baduy), and traditional attire. The Pikukuh Tilu philosophy shapes the spiritual essence and social framework of society.

The Baduy people adhere to commendable environmental ethics rooted in sacred traditions and belief systems, including Sunda Wiwitan. The Baduy people engage in sustainable agriculture practices, such as huma and leuweung kolot, devoid of technology and modern fertilizers.

The results of this study indicate that Baduy local wisdom is intricate and unified, grounded in spiritual belief systems (such as Sunda Wiwitan) and customary law (pikukuh). This system governs social, cultural, and environmental practices. The Baduy community exemplifies a model of non-technological sustainability that eschews modernity while preserving social harmony, food security, and environmental equilibrium (Iskandar & Iskandar, 2017; F. H. M. Silalahi & Purwanto, 2025). These findings reflect the theory of indigenous knowledge (da Silva et al., 2023; Hasim et al., 2023; Hill et al., 2020), which underlines the importance of traditional agricultural knowledge in preserving biodiversity and increasing food security.

The Baduy Community's rejection of the use of chemical fertilizers in agricultural practices and forest conservation is in line with internationally recognized principles of sustainable development (Arif et al., 2021). The application of Baduy values in civic education (Elan & Solihati, 2022) illustrates that indigenous knowledge can improve the formal education curriculum through character development and environmental ethics and the absence of continuous studies (only partial).

These findings corroborate the existing literature on indigenous environmental knowledge, thereby substantiating theories regarding cultural resilience and sustainable (Hill et al., 2020), (Hadlos et al., 2022). The Buddhists are opposed to the theories of modernization. In the study, there are still shortcomings, especially the absence of macro analysis in the social field (Hosaini et al., 2024). Furthermore, there are few initiatives to integrate local Baduy knowledge into formal public policies, particularly in the realm of environmental governance.

Theoretical contributions encompass the validation of Environmental Knowledge and Communalism Theory in elucidating the Baduy social-environmental system, thereby reinforcing the theory of indigenous peoples' resilience through spiritual frameworks and customary enforcement. The local wisdom of Baduy should be incorporated into the character education curriculum and local governance policies. Policymakers ought to assess conservation models established by Baduy tribal leaders, including leuweung kolot (sacred forests), as pertinent strategies for environmental management.

Conclusion

The key findings suggest that Pikukuh principles and Sundanese Wiwitan spiritual beliefs not only serve as traditions but also as important frameworks that facilitate sustainable practices such as traditional agriculture (huma), forest conservation (leuweung kolot), and the transmission of ethical values through narrative (Pamali). The main contribution of this research is the strengthening of the Theory of Customary Knowledge and Ecological Communalism, showing that the lifestyle of the Baduy people exemplifies a sustainable life based on spiritual values and customary law. This interdisciplinary synthesis emphasizes the need to use macro-sociological perspectives to critically analyze the impact of social and institutional structures on the resilience and transformation of indigenous peoples. This research enhances the dialogue on sustainability by highlighting Indigenous epistemology as an

important and underappreciated knowledge system for modern environmental and educational issues. The wisdom of the Baduy community, when systematically incorporated into civic education and local environmental governance, provides practical and culturally relevant solutions for character development. Future research directions should consider the complex and diverse relationship between the Baduy community and sustainability and tradition. This engagement requires observation that goes beyond to achieve a deep ethnographic understanding that is based on cultural empathy. The research should not only record the practice but also explain the meanings and symbols inherent in it. Attention should be directed to how the Baduy perceive external influences and selectively incorporate them into their worldview. Cultural integrity should be considered not as a permanent preservation but as a dynamic process formed through everyday practice. It's important to be aware of analytical biases that can inadvertently marginalize indigenous perspectives or simplify their adaptive strategies. Interpretive sensitivity refers to the importance of the spiritual, symbolic, and moral aspects that make up the local wisdom.

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