

Social-Ecological Governance Among the Baduy People: An Analysis of Religious Values, Customary Norms, and Local Knowledge from a Sustainability Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The Baduy community is an indigenous group in Indonesia that preserves harmony between humans and nature through religious values, customary norms, and local knowledge. This qualitative study examines the socio-ecological system in Kanekes Village, Banten, using interviews and participant observation. The findings show that environmental management is guided by customary rules, as reflected in the division of protected forests, utilization areas, and settlements. The Rukun Salapan belief system reinforces environmental ethics, simple living, and obedience to tradition. Traditional farming practices and medicinal plant knowledge also support sustainability and social resilience. The study concludes that the integration of religious values, customary norms, and local knowledge helps maintain ecological balance and social harmony, offering a model for sustainable development and environmental conservation.

ABSTRAK

Tata Kelola Sosial-Ekologis pada Masyarakat Baduy: Analisis Nilai-Nilai Keagamaan, Norma Adat, dan Pengetahuan Lokal dalam Perspektif Keberlanjutan. Masyarakat Baduy adalah kelompok masyarakat adat di Indonesia yang menjaga keharmonisan antara manusia dan alam melalui nilai-nilai keagamaan, norma adat, dan pengetahuan lokal. Studi kualitatif ini meneliti sistem sosial-ekologis di Desa Kanekes, Banten, menggunakan wawancara dan observasi partisipan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pengelolaan lingkungan dipandu oleh aturan adat, yang tercermin dalam pembagian hutan lindung, area pemanfaatan, dan permukiman. Sistem kepercayaan Rukun Salapan memperkuat etika lingkungan, hidup sederhana, dan ketaatan pada tradisi. Praktik pertanian tradisional dan pengetahuan tentang tanaman obat juga mendukung keberlanjutan dan ketahanan sosial. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi nilai-nilai keagamaan, norma adat, dan pengetahuan lokal membantu menjaga keseimbangan ekologis dan keharmonisan sosial, menawarkan model untuk pembangunan berkelanjutan dan konservasi lingkungan.

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Introduction

The increasing environmental degradation, climate crisis, and massive exploitation of natural resources have driven the search for more adaptive and environmentally friendly sustainable development models. Various forms of environmental damage, such as deforestation, water pollution, declining soil quality, loss of biodiversity, and global climate change, have become serious challenges to the sustainability of human life. Modern development models oriented toward economic growth often neglect ecological and social aspects, resulting in an imbalance between human needs and the environment's carrying capacity (UNEP, 2021). In this context, Indigenous peoples are often regarded as the last guardians of traditional ecological systems that remain relatively stable and harmonious with nature, as they possess value systems, norms, and environmental management practices passed down through generations (Berkes, 2018).

Indigenous peoples generally have a strong spiritual and emotional relationship with the environment in which they live. Nature is viewed not only as an economic resource but also as part of cultural identity, a spiritual space, and a source of community livelihood. This relationship gives rise to various forms of local wisdom capable of sustainably maintaining ecological balance. The local knowledge of Indigenous peoples in managing forests, agriculture, water resources, and biodiversity is increasingly recognized in various global sustainability studies as an important alternative for addressing environmental crises and climate change (IPBES, 2019). Therefore, studies on Indigenous peoples are relevant for understanding how social and cultural systems can contribute to environmental conservation and sustainable development.

One of the indigenous communities in Indonesia that still maintains a traditional way of life based on environmental conservation is the Baduy community in Kanekes Village, Lebak Regency, Banten Province. The Baduy people are an indigenous community known for consistently preserving ancestral traditions amid the currents of modernization and globalization. A set of customary rules, called “pikukuh karuhun”, governs the life of the Baduy community and is passed down orally and strictly applied in daily life. These rules cover regional spatial planning, the utilization of natural resources, prohibitions against forest exploitation, the use of modern technology, and the regulation of social behavior within the community (Sujanah, 2020).

The Baduy community has developed a way of life that emphasizes simplicity, balance, and harmony with nature. These life principles are reflected in various customary rules, such as prohibitions against damaging mountains and forests, restrictions on the use of technology, the use of natural materials in house construction, and traditional farming systems without chemicals. For the Baduy people, nature is regarded as a sacred entity that must be respected and preserved. Environmental damage is believed to have negative consequences for the community, such as natural disasters, crop failure, and a loss of life balance (Fitriandhini & Putra, 2022).

Many studies show that the Baduy community has a clear ecological zoning system, namely the division of territory into protected or restricted forest areas (*leuweung kolot*), cultivated land, and customary settlement areas. Protected forests serve as conservation areas that must not be entered or used, as they are considered the center of natural balance and an ancestral trust. This zoning system plays an important role in maintaining hydrological balance, soil fertility, and biodiversity in the Baduy region (Suparmini et al., 2013). From the perspective of modern conservation, customary-based land management systems such as this are considered effective in maintaining ecosystem stability and reducing pressure from the exploitation of natural resources (Garnett et al., 2020).

In addition to environmental governance, the Baduy community upholds strong religious values rooted in the teachings of Rukun Salapan. These values guide social behaviour, reinforce customary norms, and are reflected in ecological practices such as farming rituals, respect for forests and mountains, and restrictions on excessive living. This belief system nurtures the understanding that humans are part of nature and share responsibility for maintaining environmental balance (Sterling et al., 2020). The Baduy also preserve local knowledge passed down through generations, including traditional agriculture, natural resource management, medicinal plant use, and interpretation of natural signs. For example, *kitajam* leaves are still used to treat stomachaches. Such knowledge reflects the community's strong ecological adaptation and ability to meet basic needs without modern technology or excessive resource exploitation (Iskandar, 2017).

From a social-ecological systems (SES) perspective, the Baduy way of life illustrates the integration of social, cultural, spiritual, and ecological dimensions in sustaining community resilience. Religious values, customary norms, and local knowledge together form an environmental management system that supports both ecological balance and social sustainability. This model offers an important alternative for sustainable development based on local culture amid increasing global environmental challenges (Folke et al., 2016).

Previous studies have highlighted the role of local wisdom, customary norms, and spiritual values in maintaining environmental sustainability among the Baduy. (Bakti et al., 2025) emphasise that the Baduy ethno-forestry system supports forest and water conservation through sustainable landscape management, while (Nurjaman & Asrawijaya, 2025) show that traditions and customary institutions help mitigate social-ecological crises and strengthen resilience. (Silalahi and Purwanto, 2025) explain that the philosophy of *Pikukuh Tilu* promotes harmony among spiritual, social, and environmental dimensions, whereas (Nurrochsyam, 2021) found that moral decisions are strongly shaped by adherence to group norms and the teachings of the *karuhun* (ancestors).

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to understand the relationship between religious values, customary norms, local knowledge, and the socio-ecological sustainability of the Outer Baduy community in Kanekes Village, Lebak Regency, Banten. Two days of field research were conducted in January 2026 to achieve this goal. The researcher had no kinship ties or involvement in the Baduy customary structure and acted as an external researcher. Informants were purposely selected based on the principle of information richness.

They included one former Outer Baduy leader and four Outer Baduy community members with knowledge of and experience in social life, customs, and the environment. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The data were then analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved transcription, data reduction, categorization, theme identification, and interpretation of meaning. To ensure the research's credibility and transparency, the researcher applied source and method triangulation, systematic field-note recording, and research ethics principles, including voluntary participation, informant confidentiality, respect for customary norms, and researcher reflexivity throughout the data collection and analysis process.

Results and Discussion

Overview of the Baduy Region and Customary Spatial Planning

The Baduy customary territory is located in Kanekes Village, Leuwidamar District, Lebak Regency, Banten Province, covering approximately 5,000 hectares. The area is divided into utilization zones based on customary regulations and ecological functions, reflecting an environmental management system rooted in local knowledge. For the Baduy people, space is not only a place to live and earn a livelihood but also part of a cosmological system whose balance must be maintained (Iskandar, 2017). Consequently, land use is strictly regulated through customary norms to preserve harmony between humans and nature (Berkes, 2018).

The territory consists of three main zones: (1) protected forest (*leuweung kolot*) covering about 2,500 hectares; (2) community utilization land covering about 2,000 hectares; and (3) socio-cultural and organizational areas. The protected forest is considered the most sacred area and is strictly prohibited from exploitation because it is regarded as an ancestral trust and the center of environmental balance (Suparmini et al., 2013). The Baduy believe that forest destruction can trigger disasters such as landslides, floods, and droughts, reflecting their strong ecological awareness (Permana et al., 2011).

Leuweung Kolot plays vital ecological roles, including maintaining air quality, preventing erosion, preserving soil fertility, protecting biodiversity, and serving as a water catchment area. This system aligns with modern conservation principles that prioritize the protection of core ecosystem areas for long-term environmental stability (Garnett et al., 2020). According to (Suparmini et al., 2013), the Baduy zoning system represents an effective form of culture-based conservation that preserves primary forests and ecological balance while keeping pressure on natural resources relatively low.

Meanwhile, community land is designated for traditional agricultural activities and the limited collection of non-timber forest products. The Baduy people cultivate various food crops and spices on this land, including upland rice, ginger, aromatic ginger (*kencur*), stink beans (*pete*), durian, and mangosteen. They carry out agricultural activities without using chemical fertilizers or synthetic pesticides because these substances are considered harmful to the soil and the balance of nature (Altieri & Nicholls, 2020). The traditional farming system emphasizes the principles of desire, sufficiency, and life rather than economic profit. This farming pattern demonstrates the local community's knowledge of how to maintain land productivity naturally (FAO, 2019).

Strict traditional rules govern the Baduy community. Traditional houses are built with natural materials like bamboo, wood, and palm fiber, and no cement or modern materials are used. The houses are built to follow the natural contours of the land, thereby minimizing environmental damage. Additionally, the Baduy people have regulations determining the number of villages and population size in certain areas. Outsiders are not permitted to reside in the Inner Baduy territory, and community members who marry under specific circumstances must relocate outside the core customary area. These rules aim to preserve tradition, maintain social balance, and promote environmental sustainability (Permana, 2019).



Source: Researchs' documentation
Figure 1: Traditional Baduy house

The Baduy customary spatial system serves as both an environmental management system and a means of moral and social control within the community. The clear division of territories reflects the close relationship between religious values, customary norms, and nature conservation. For the Baduy people, protecting nature is equivalent to preserving life. Thus, the customary spatial system plays a vital role in maintaining cultural identity and ensuring the sustainability of ecosystems for future generations (Sterling et al., 2020).

Religious Values: Rukun Salapan as a Spiritual Foundation

Rukun Salapan consists of nine fundamental principles of life for the Baduy community. These principles serve as guidelines for regulating relationships among humans, between humans and God, and between humans and nature. Passed down through generations via oral tradition, this value system forms the spiritual core of Baduy society. In practice, Rukun Salapan is understood not only as a religious teaching but also as a moral and social guide that shapes the community's collective behavior. These values are reflected in daily activities such as living simply, avoiding arrogance, respecting nature, and performing customary rituals before agricultural activities.

The Baduy community believes that humans are part of nature and that life must be lived in harmony without disrupting the balance of the environment. This belief is reflected in prohibitions against damaging mountains, indiscriminately cutting down forests, or destroying valleys and water springs. These principles demonstrate the presence of a very strong ecological ethic within the Baduy belief system. Mountains are viewed as the support of life and the center of natural balance, while valleys are considered important for maintaining air circulation and environmental fertility. Therefore, damage to nature is believed to bring negative consequences for human life, such as landslides, floods, droughts, and crop failures (Krisnawaty et al., 2025).

From the perspective of spiritual ecology, the worldview of the Baduy community reflects a sacred relationship between humans and nature. Nature is not treated as an object of economic exploitation but as a living space that must be respected and preserved. [\(Berkes, 2018\)](#) explains that indigenous communities with traditional belief systems generally possess a high level of ecological awareness because their spiritual values are integrated with environmental conservation practices. Similarly, [\(Sterling et al., 2020\)](#) argue that local knowledge and the spiritual systems of indigenous peoples play an important role in maintaining ecosystems and strengthening the socio-ecological resilience of communities.

The religious values embodied in the Rukun Salapan are also evident in the agricultural practices of the Baduy people. Before going to the fields, community members usually recite specific prayers as a form of respect to God and nature. This ritual demonstrates that agricultural activities are not merely economic endeavors but also spiritual practices that must be carried out with moral awareness and gratitude. Such beliefs foster a cautious attitude toward the use of natural resources, thereby helping to prevent excessive exploitation [\(Iskandar, 2017\)](#).

Additionally, the Baduy community believes in natural symbols that are considered spiritually significant. One example is the tiger, which serves as a moral reminder for humans. In Baduy stories, encountering a tiger is often interpreted as a sign that someone has made a mistake or violated customary norms. This belief in natural symbols strengthens religious social control without the need for a repressive formal legal system. The moral system established through these spiritual beliefs has been effective in promoting community behavior that aligns with traditional norms and in preserving environmental balance [\(Kansky et al., 2016\)](#).

The principle of simple living taught in the Rukun Salapan serves as a form of self-control against excessive consumption and the exploitation of nature. Restrictions on excessive use of modern technology and electricity, and the obligation to use natural materials in house construction, reflect values of usefulness and sufficiency in life. In the context of sustainable development, this lifestyle aligns with ecological concepts that emphasize reducing resource consumption and environmental footprints [\(UNEP, 2021\)](#).

Thus, Rukun Salapan functions as both a religious belief system and a foundation for environmental ethics, social control, and social morality. The spiritual values embedded within it have successfully fostered collective awareness of the need to maintain balance between humans and nature. This system shows that indigenous communities' religiosity can be an important instrument for supporting environmental conservation and sustainable development grounded in local wisdom.

Customary Norms and Social Ethics

The Baduy's customary norms are a system of social rules governing nearly all aspects of community life. These aspects include residential layout, social interaction patterns, marriage systems, technology use, and the relationship between humans and nature. These norms are passed down orally from generation to generation through ancestral teachings (*pikukuh karuhun*) or traditional family members. To the Baduy, these norms are not merely social rules but moral and spiritual obligations that must be followed to maintain life's balance. Adherence to these norms is a sign of respect for the ancestors and helps maintain harmony among humans, nature, and the social community [\(Permana, 2019; Berkes, 2018\)](#).

One concrete manifestation of Baduy customary norms is evident in regulations governing building layout and the use of technology. Electricity use is strictly limited, especially in the Inner Baduy region, as it is considered to lead to excessive lifestyle changes and diminish the community's simplicity. Furthermore, the Baduy community prohibits the construction of modern bathrooms and the use of building materials made from cement, iron, or other industrial materials. Traditional houses must be built using natural materials, such as bamboo, wood, and palm fiber, obtained from the surrounding environment (Suparmini et al., 2013). This rule demonstrates an environmental ethic that emphasizes harmony with nature and the reduction of excessive resource exploitation.

Using natural materials to build houses also has philosophical and ecological significance. Traditional Baduy houses are built to follow the contours of the land, ensuring that the surrounding natural landscape remains undamaged. These techniques help reduce environmental impact while maintaining air circulation and structural stability. From a sustainable development perspective, these practices reflect the principles of ecological architecture, which emphasize resource efficiency and adaptation to local environmental conditions (UNEP, 2021; Garnett et al., 2020). Therefore, customary norms serve not only to preserve cultural identity but also to conserve the environment effectively.

Baduy customary norms strictly regulate marriage and family relationships. Among the Inner Baduy community, divorce and polygamy are not permitted because they are considered capable of disrupting household harmony and the community's social stability. Meanwhile, the Outer Baduy community allows divorce under certain conditions but prohibits polygamy. These rules demonstrate the Baduy people's high value of loyalty, family responsibility, and social harmony. Family life is considered essential to maintaining societal balance (Salsabila, 2025).

The marriage system is also related to social control mechanisms within the customary community. The prohibition of polygamy reflects principles of equality and the limitation of individual dominance within the social structure of society. In addition, regulations regarding residence after marriage, particularly for members of Inner Baduy who marry outsiders, aim to preserve the purity of customs and the cultural identity of the Baduy people. From the perspective of the sociology of indigenous communities, such rules function to maintain social cohesion and strengthen group solidarity (Krisnawaty et al., 2025).

In the field of education, the Baduy community also has unique customary regulations. Modern formal education is restricted, especially in the Inner Baduy area, because it is considered likely to introduce external cultural influences that could alter the community's traditional values. Nevertheless, the Baduy people remain familiar with basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills, which are acquired through non-formal learning within family and community settings. This customs-based educational system places greater emphasis on character building, ethics, and life skills rather than on a formal academic orientation (Subai et al., 2023).

Baduy customary norms are also reflected in regulations concerning the keeping of livestock. The Baduy community is not permitted to raise cattle and buffalo because large animals are considered capable of damaging soil structure, vegetation, and environmental balance. The animals that are generally allowed to be kept are only poultry, such as chickens.

This prohibition demonstrates the principle of ecological prudence in environmental management. [Suparmini et al. \(2013\)](#) explain that Baduy customary norms function as a conservation instrument grounded in collective morality, whereby the community complies with the rules not because of formal legal pressure but because of the moral and spiritual awareness deeply embedded in their culture.

In addition to serving as an environmental conservation mechanism, customary norms regulate the community's social behavior. Excessive behavior, arrogance, and greed are considered contrary to Baduy customary values. Therefore, community members are taught to live humbly and to prioritize the collective over the individual. Values of cooperation and togetherness are strong in Baduy society, especially during agricultural activities, house construction, and customary ceremonies. This demonstrates that customary norms play an important role in building social solidarity and community resilience [\(Sterling et al., 2020\)](#).

In the context of modernization and globalization, the existence of Baduy customary norms presents both a challenge and a strength. On the one hand, modernization brings increasing pressure for social change. On the other hand, strong customary norms can serve as a cultural safeguard for preserving the community's identity. Thus, the Baduy customary norm system can be understood as a form of local wisdom that preserves cultural sustainability and supports environmental conservation and sustainable social development [\(Rachman, 2021; IPBES, 2019\)](#).

Internalization of Moral Values and the Formation of the Baduy Community's Moral-Ecological Character

The success of the Baduy community in maintaining socio-ecological sustainability is determined not only by the existence of customary rules but also by the ongoing process of internalizing moral values in everyday life. These values originate from the religious teachings of Rukun Salapan, *pikukuh karuhun*, oral traditions, and social practices passed down through generations. In the context of the Baduy community, morality is not understood as a set of formal written rules, but rather as a collective consciousness that regulates the relationship between humans and God, fellow humans, ancestors, and nature. Therefore, adherence to customary law not only reflects social obedience but also serves as a manifestation of moral responsibility embedded within the identity of the Baduy people [\(Sujana, 2020; Silalahi & Purwanto, 2025\)](#).

The process of forming and transmitting moral values takes place through social learning rooted in the family, community, and customary institutions. Field findings indicate that most customary rules are not passed down through formal education or written documents, but through oral communication and the example set by elders. One informant explained that various rules, such as the prohibition against damaging mountains, the prohibition against raising cattle and buffalo, the obligation to use natural materials for houses, and restrictions on the use of technology, are "rules from the ancestors that have become established rules and must be followed." These findings demonstrate that moral values are transmitted through processes of imitation, observation, and social habituation that begin from an early age. This condition is consistent with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which explains that individuals learn values, norms, and behaviors by observing respected figures and interacting with their

social environment. In the Baduy community, these figures are represented by parents, customary leaders, and elders who serve as models of moral behavior for the next generation.

Based on the interview results, the Baduy community believes that preserving nature is part of a moral and spiritual obligation. This is reflected in a teaching that states, “mountains must not be leveled, and valleys must not be damaged,” because environmental destruction is believed to bring disasters upon human life. Before going to their fields, community members also perform certain prayers as a form of respect to God and nature. This practice demonstrates that agricultural activities are not merely economic but also moral, carrying ecological responsibilities. These findings are consistent with the study by [\(Nurjaman and Asrawijaya, 2025\)](#), which shows that the Baduy customary value system serves as a mechanism to mitigate socio-ecological crises by strengthening of collective responsibility toward the environment. Similarly, [\(Anugrah et al., 2026\)](#) explain that the Baduy community's local knowledge regarding land and natural resource management is not only technical but also ethical, supporting environmental sustainability.

The research findings also show that the Baduy moral system contributes to the development of a social character that emphasizes simplicity, responsibility, discipline, respect for nature, and collective interests. Prohibitions against arrogance, obligations to live, and practices of cooperation in daily life reflect character values continuously reproduced through social interactions within the community. These findings align with those of [\(Waluya et al., 2023\)](#), who assert that the Baduy community's ecological culture incorporates environmental and character-education values that strengthen ecological awareness in modern society. Thus, the Baduy moral system serves an internal function in maintaining the sustainability of the customary community and contributes to the development of character education, civic ethics, and sustainability learning on a broader scale.

This study's findings indicate that the Baduy community's socio-ecological governance functions as both an environmental management mechanism and a system for shaping collective morality rooted in religious values, customary norms, and local knowledge. The integration of these three elements produces moral-ecological governance, a value-based form of governance that guides individual and community behavior toward social responsibility and environmental sustainability. From a Social Morality perspective, these findings expand the notion that social morality is constructed not only through formal institutions but also through cultural practices and local beliefs passed down from generation to generation. Thus, the Baduy community provides an empirical example of how moral values, community identity, and environmental conservation can be integrated into a sustainable social system.

However, transmitting these moral values faces challenges amid modernization, tourism, and social change. Intensifying interactions with the outside world could influence how younger generations understand and practice customary values. [\(Wuryandari et al., 2025\)](#) demonstrate that the Baduy community is currently facing challenges in maintaining socio-ecological resilience due to mounting economic pressures and modernization. Similar conditions can be seen in the growing interactions between the Outer Baduy community and tourists, as well as regional economic markets. Therefore, the sustainability of the Baduy community's moral-

ecological system depends on the strength of existing customary norms and the community's ability to transmit these values to future generations without losing their moral foundation.

Baduy Social-Ecological System from a Sustainability Perspective

The Baduy community's way of life reflects the concept of a social-ecological system (SES), which is defined as a system that demonstrates the close interconnection between social, cultural, spiritual, and environmental aspects in maintaining the sustainability of community life. From this perspective, humans and nature are viewed as a unified whole that influences each other mutually and cannot be separated ([Folke et al., 2016](#)). In the Baduy community, this relationship is evident through the integration of religious values, customary norms, and local knowledge, which shape collective, sustainable environmental management mechanisms. This system functions not only to maintain ecological balance but also to preserve social stability and the cultural identity of the indigenous community.

The religious values embedded in the Rukun Salapan belief system primarily shape the community's ecological behavior. The belief that nature is sacred leads the Baduy people to comply with customary conservation rules. Prohibitions against damaging mountains, indiscriminately cutting down forests, and excessively exploiting natural resources indicate that the Baduy's conservation practices are driven by more than just economic interests; they are also guided by spiritual and moral awareness ([Siombo et al., 2022](#)). In the context of sustainability, this approach is considered highly effective because environmental stewardship arises from the community's internal awareness rather than from formal legal pressure alone.

The Baduy community's socio-ecological system is also reflected in the clear division of customary spatial planning between protected forest areas (*leuweung kolot*), utilization lands, and settlement areas. The protected forest, which may not be entered or exploited, functions as a core conservation area that maintains ecosystem stability, water sources, and biodiversity. This customary-based zoning system has proven capable of reducing the rate of environmental degradation and preserving the quality of forest ecosystems amid increasing pressure from natural resource exploitation in many other regions ([Suparmini et al., 2013](#)). ([Garnett et al., 2020](#)) explain that areas managed by Indigenous peoples generally exhibit better biodiversity conservation than areas managed through modern exploitative practices. Baduy local wisdom should be incorporated into character education curricula and local governance policies as a relevant strategy for environmental management ([Damanhuri et al., 2025](#)).

Furthermore, Baduy customary norms serve not only as a mechanism for controlling the exploitation of natural resources but also as an instrument for fostering moral responsibility and ecological ethics within the community. Restrictions on the use of modern technology, prohibitions on agricultural chemicals, limitations on raising certain types of livestock, and regulations concerning customary spatial planning reflect the principles of prudence and respect for natural balance inherited from the ancestors (*karuhun*). Based on interview findings, community members believe that environmental degradation will affect human life and the community as a whole. Compliance with these rules demonstrates that the Baduy people's commitment to forest conservation is grounded not only in prohibitions but also in moral and spiritual obligations embedded in their customary system and passed down through

generations. This finding is consistent with the study by ([Asteria et al., 2024](#)), which shows that Baduy customary law functions both as a forest conservation instrument and as a means of strengthening the community's social responsibility toward the environment. In addition, ([Mayasari et al., 2025](#)) emphasize that the customary educational values of the Baduy community contain moral and spiritual principles that shape a simple, disciplined, and environmentally responsible way of life.

The local knowledge of the Baduy community is also an important component in building social-ecological resilience and maintaining the sustainability of the community's moral values. The community's ability to interpret natural signs, determine planting patterns, use traditional medicinal plants, and maintain a balanced relationship between humans and the environment demonstrates the accumulation of ecological knowledge passed down through oral traditions and everyday practices. Field observation results show that the community still uses various local plants, such as kitajam leaves, to treat stomachaches and continues to maintain an agricultural system based on local wisdom without dependence on modern technology. This knowledge enables the community to adapt to environmental changes while preserving their cultural identity and value system, which form the foundation of their way of life ([Sterling et al., 2020](#)). These findings are consistent with those of ([Nurfalah et al., 2023](#)), who showed that the Outer Baduy community can adapt to global developments without abandoning the local values that define their community identity. In addition, ([Anugrah et al., 2026](#)) emphasized that the Baduy community's land management practices contain ecological knowledge that contributes to climate change mitigation and environmental sustainability. In a broader context, ([IPBES, 2019](#)) recognizes the local knowledge of Indigenous communities as an important source of knowledge for natural resource conservation, strengthening social-ecological resilience, and sustainable development. The Baduy social-ecological system also contributes to social stability within the community. Strong customary norms foster social solidarity, cooperation, and collective compliance with shared rules. Social conflict is relatively low because community members have a high level of moral awareness about the importance of maintaining communal harmony. Therefore, sustainability in Baduy society encompasses not only environmental aspects but also social and cultural sustainability.

In the context of modern sustainable development, the social-ecological system of the Baduy community offers important lessons on the significance of integrating local culture into environmental management. Development models that are overly oriented toward economic exploitation often neglect ecological balance and the social values of communities. In contrast, the Baduy community demonstrates that sustainability can be achieved through the strengthening of cultural values, the regulation of consumption, and respect for nature. ([Permata, 2025](#)) emphasized that the Baduy social-ecological system can serve as an inspiration for formulating sustainable development policies grounded in local culture, particularly in the management of conservation areas and customary forests, as well as the empowerment of Indigenous communities. Furthermore, the process of transmitting values through oral traditions and customary practices across generations is an important factor in maintaining cultural sustainability and the social resilience of the Baduy community in the face of changing times ([Pudjiastuti et al., 2023](#)).

The Baduy system is relevant not only for environmental conservation but also for the global discourse on sustainable development and the climate crisis. The Baduy community's principles of simple living and limited resource consumption align with ecological economics, an increasingly popular concept in modern development studies. Ecological economics emphasizes reducing resource exploitation and shifting development's focus from economic growth to ecological balance and social well-being. (Waluya et al., 2023) explain that the Baduy community's way of life functions as both an ecological adaptation strategy and a process of value education that shapes character, environmental awareness, and social responsibility toward environmental sustainability.

Thus, the Baduy community's socio-ecological system shows that sustainability is not just a matter of technology and formal policies; it is also closely related to cultural values, spirituality, and social morality. Integrating religious values, customary norms, and local knowledge into daily life forms a holistic, adaptive sustainability system within the Baduy community. Therefore, recognizing and protecting indigenous communities is an important step in maintaining environmental and social sustainability in Indonesia and around the world.

Conclusion

This study shows that the Baduy community's social-ecological sustainability is built through the close interconnection of religiosity, customary norms, and local knowledge internalized in everyday life. The teachings of Rukun Salapan and Pikukuh Karuhun serve as a belief system, a set of social rules, and a moral foundation that shapes the community's understanding of the relationships among humans, nature, and ancestors. Through oral transmission of values, the exemplary conduct of customary leaders, religious rituals, and community social control, a collective moral-ecological framework forms. This framework encourages ethical behavior, ecological responsibility, and adherence to customary norms. Thus, the Baduy community's environmental conservation practices are not merely a form of natural resource management but a manifestation of a living moral system passed down across generations.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Social Morality studies by offering an understanding of the relationship between religiosity, customary norms, value internalization, and moral-ecological sustainability within indigenous communities. Methodologically, this study demonstrates that a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation can reveal the mechanisms of the formation and transmission of moral values underlying the community's socio-ecological practices. In practical terms, the findings have implications for the development of indigenous community-based conservation policies, character education grounded in local wisdom, and the strengthening of civic ethics that emphasize social and ecological responsibility.

The main contribution of this study lies in advancing a conceptual understanding of the moral-ecological sustainability of integrating religious values, customary norms, and the internalization of moral values within the lives of the Baduy community. Unlike previous studies that tended to examine religiosity, local wisdom, or environmental conservation as separate dimensions, this study shows that these three elements interact and form a moral-ecological governance system that simultaneously supports social and environmental sustainability. These

findings enrich Social Morality studies by affirming that the development of moral responsibility toward the environment is derived not only from formal ethical principles but also from cultural and spiritual values that are internalized in the community's way of life.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations, particularly the relatively short duration of fieldwork and the limited number of informants. Therefore, future research is recommended to examine more deeply the dynamics of intergenerational value transmission, the influence of modernization, digitalization, and tourism on the sustainability of the Baduy community's moral system, and to compare moral-ecological practices between the Inner Baduy and Outer Baduy communities.

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