



***Mombolosuako* Traditional Marriage Dynamics: Between Tolaki Muslim Majority and Muslim Minorities in Konawe District, Indonesia**

Ahmad^{1*}, Mubammad Iqbal², Mahamadaree Waeno³, Siti Hajar⁴, Abdul Syatar⁵

¹²⁴Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kendari, Indonesia

³Fatoni University, Pattani, Thailand

⁵Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia

*Corresponding E-mail: ahmad@iainkendari.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study examines the dynamics of the *Mombolosuako* (elopement) tradition among the Tolaki ethnic group in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, focusing on its practice in religiously diverse communities. This research specifically compares the implementation and acceptance of this tradition between the Muslim-majority Anggaberri District and Catholic-majority Pugasana Village in Konawe Regency. Using a qualitative approach with a comparative case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with 16 key informants, field observations, and document analysis analyzed through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The findings reveal that in Anggaberri, where Muslims and Tolaki are the majority, *Mombolosuako* is practiced as a non-normal marriage from cultural identity although some consider it contrary to Islamic teachings. This practice is supported by Regional Regulation No. 1 of 2018 concerning the Implementation of Sara Merapu Customary Law of the Tolaki Tribe. Conversely, in Pugasana, where Muslims and Tolaki are minorities, this tradition is neither known nor practiced. This indicates that diversity can reduce the role of customs in social structures. This research emphasizes the importance of adaptive and contextual regulatory approaches in multicultural societies, so that customary policies can balance between preserving traditions and dynamic social needs. These findings provide insights for policymakers and academics in designing more inclusive customary policies and add to the literature on the interaction between customary law, religion, and formal regulations in plural societies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Southeast Sulawesi has cultural diversity, including in marriage practices (Alwi et al., 2022; Awad & Shaleh, 2018; Pairin et al., 2024). This diversity not only reflects local cultural identity but also demonstrates how traditional customs interact with religious values in a predominantly Muslim society (Sulaeman et al., 2022). Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, has diverse marriage practices that reflect complex interactions between religious and customary law (Grijns & Horii, 2018; Nasir, 2020). In Southeast Asia, the phenomenon of traditional marriage intersecting with Islamic law is also found in Thailand, the Philippines, and Malaysia, albeit with different characteristics (Nadeau & Rayamajhi, 2022; Yeung et al., 2018).

In Southeast Sulawesi, one such practice is *Mombolosuako*, a form of traditional marriage known as elopement in the Tolaki community in Southeast Sulawesi (Haq et al., 2024; Zulkarnain et al., 2024). In this practice, a man takes a woman he loves without family consent, a step that is recognized by custom although often considered to violate Islamic law, which requires guardian consent for marriage validity (Alboraie et al., 2024; Bello, 2013; Pirzada, 2022). In Konawe Regency, this practice is legitimized through Regional Regulation (Perda) No. 1 of 2018 concerning the Implementation of Sara Merapu Customary Law of the Tolaki Tribe, which attempts to bridge traditional customs and formal legal requirements. As a result of this regulation, from 2018-2020, there were 58 marriage events involving *Mombolosuako*. Although there are pros and cons, this practice reduces the impact of free association and adultery, leading customary leaders to advocate for normal marriage.

Anggaber District and Puasana Village in Konawe reflect two different social dynamics regarding the implementation of the *Mombolosuako* tradition. In Anggaber District, the majority of the population is Muslim from the Tolaki ethnic group, with an acceptance rate of around 50%. Most people in this area view *Mombolosuako* not only as a custom but also as a legitimate method for resolving social conflicts in marriage, such as cases of family rejection. Conversely, Puasana Village has a Catholic majority population with only a small Tolaki Muslim population, reflecting significant differences in the application of this tradition. Survey and interview results show that in Puasana Village, there is high indifference towards the *Mombolosuako* tradition. Most residents are unfamiliar with this practice and consider it irrelevant in daily life. This attitude reflects the low role of traditional customs in the social structure of non-Muslim and non-Tolaki communities in the area. The striking demographic differences between Anggaber District and Puasana Village greatly influence the implementation of Regional Regulations (Perda) related to *Mombolosuako*. In Anggaber District, this tradition is accepted due to its compatibility with the religious values and culture of the majority. Conversely, in Puasana Village, this regulation is less relevant because its residents have no cultural or religious ties supporting the tradition. This shows that demographic and religious backgrounds play an important role in the effectiveness of custom-based policy implementation.

This pattern is similar to that found in studies in Southern Thailand, where the Malay Patani Muslim community maintains their traditional marriage practices amid a Buddhist majority (Jamjuree, 2022; Salach, 2023). A similar phenomenon is also seen in the Southern Philippines, where the Mindanao Muslim community adapts their marriage practices in the context of a Catholic majority (McDoom & Gisselquist, 2016; Yoshizawa & Kusaka, 2020).

Various studies have highlighted the adaptation of Islamic law in customary contexts, especially in Indonesia (Aziz et al., 2020; Riany et al., 2017). The term *silariang* in Bugis and Makassar traditions (Nonci et al., 2023), while in Lombok it is known as *merariq* (Umam et al., 2024). A similar phenomenon is also found in Gayo customs in Aceh with the term *munik* (Darmawan et al., 2022). In a broader context, various studies show that elopement is often adopted as a solution for couples facing family rejection, social pressure, or high economic burdens (Mayasari & Eka, 2018). This adaptation reflects efforts to maintain balance between religious law and customary practices. Elopement has different terminology and manifestations in various Muslim minority communities. In Papua, elopement often occurs among Muslim minority groups amid a Christian majority, where customary pressure is more dominant than religious law. In Toraja, this phenomenon is known but tends not to receive official recognition.

Internationally, studies of Muslim minority communities in India, the Philippines, and Thailand also reveal patterns of adapting elopement traditions that seek to harmonize customs with sharia, although often facing obstacles in formal recognition. The harmonization of customary law and Islam is often analyzed through the theory of 'urf, which refers to local community customs that do not conflict with sharia principles.

In contemporary legal anthropology perspective, this phenomenon can be explained through legal pluralism theory developed by Benda-Beckmann & Turner (2018) dan Tamanaha (2017). This theory offers an analytical framework for how different legal systems - customary, religious, and state - can coexist in one territory. Recent studies in Southeast Asia by Abdi et al. (2023) show that Muslim minority communities often develop adaptive mechanisms to bridge these various legal systems. This theory shows that widely accepted customs can become part of Islamic law if they support benefit (*maslahah*) and do not conflict with religious provisions. In the context of elopement, this harmonization is seen when customary law provides socially accepted solutions, while Islamic law continues to respect basic elements such as guardian consent, albeit with a flexible approach. Regional regulations in Lombok regarding *merariq* are considered successful in reducing family conflicts and providing legal legitimacy for couples, although sometimes facing criticism from religious groups.

This research seeks to fill these gaps by providing new perspectives on the dynamics of *Mombolosuako* customs in the context of social pluralism. This study offers an innovative comparative approach by examining two regions with very different demographic compositions. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of harmonization theory between customary law and Islam, highlighting how local traditions like *Mombolosuako* can be understood through the 'urf framework. The results of this research are expected to provide practical guidance for policymakers in designing custom-based regulations that can be accepted by communities with diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. This study also offers strategies to address potential conflicts between customary norms and Islamic law in public policy, thereby increasing the effectiveness of regional regulation implementation in multicultural societies.

2. METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach with a comparative case study design (Robbani, 2022) to understand *Mombolosuako* practices in two demographically different communities, namely Anggaber District and Puasana Village, Konawe Regency. This approach was chosen to explore the subjective meaning of these traditional practices in the context of cultural and religious

diversity. Focusing on social, economic, and religious dynamics, this research design was developed to explore in-depth perspectives from various stakeholders involved, including traditional leaders, religious figures, and the general public.

The research was conducted from January to December 2023 in two locations with different characteristics. Anggaber District, with a population of approximately 5,000, is predominantly Muslim Tolaki, where *Mombolosuako* practices are still actively performed and legitimized through Regional Regulations. Meanwhile, Puasana Village, with 1,200 residents who are predominantly Catholic (1,154 people) and only 46 Muslims, provides a contrast in terms of acceptance of this traditional practice.

Data were collected through three main methods: in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Interviews were conducted with 16 key informants selected through purposive sampling, with the following details: in Anggaber District consisting of 11 informants namely Nasruddin and Ansar (traditional leaders), Haanah (community leader), Rasyid (Pu'utobu/Traditional Chief), Akbar (traditional leader), KDR and ATN (*Mombolosuako* practitioners), SR, AN, AT, and HN (community members involved in *Mombolosuako* practices). Meanwhile, in Puasana Village, interviews were conducted with five religious counselors consisting of M. Basirun, Muh. Choerul Anas, Sugiyanto, and Miftahul Jannah from the Javanese ethnic group, and Maslina from the Tolaki ethnic group.

Field observations were conducted to observe communication patterns and social interactions in both regions, providing real context for how *Mombolosuako* is practiced. Researchers directly observed community social dynamics, particularly in the context of marriage and interfaith relationships. Documentation included quantitative data from the Office of Religious Affairs recording 69 marriage events during the 2018-2020 period, with 58 cases involving *Mombolosuako* practices. Additionally, researchers also analyzed Regional Regulation No. 1 of 2018 concerning the Implementation of Sara Merapu Customary Law of the Tolaki Tribe and other administrative marriage records.

Data analysis was conducted through four stages (Nicmanis, 2024): first, data reduction to select information relevant to the research focus; second, data presentation in narrative description and table form; third, comparative analysis between the two research locations; and fourth, drawing conclusions. Content Analysis was used to analyze interview transcripts and documents, focusing on main themes such as social, economic, and religious factors that influence *Mombolosuako* practices.

Research validity was ensured through several strategies (Torlig et al., 2022): data source triangulation by comparing information from various informants and data collection methods, member checking by confirming findings with key informants, and peer review by involving other researchers in the data analysis process. The analysis process also involved cross-checking between interview data, observations, and documentation to ensure findings consistency.

This research adheres to social research ethical principles. Before data collection, researchers obtained research permits from local government and written consent (informed consent) from each informant. To maintain confidentiality, sensitive informant names were disguised using

initials. Researchers also maintained cultural and religious sensitivity during the research process, especially considering topics related to marriage and customs.

Research limitations include focus on two specific locations that might limit generalization of findings to broader contexts. Additionally, the sensitivity of marriage and customary topics may affect informant openness in providing information. However, these limitations were addressed through careful approaches and building trust with informants, as well as data triangulation to ensure findings validity.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Practice of *Mombolosuako* (Elopement) in Tolaki Muslim Society

In Tolaki customs, there are several paths to achieve a traditional Tolaki marriage, as stipulated in Regional Regulation No. 1 of 2018 concerning the Implementation of Sara Merapu Customary Law of the Tolaki Tribe in Konawe Regency: 1. Mowindahako, marriage preceded by engagement. 2. *Mombolosuako*, marriage by elopement where the prospective groom takes away the prospective bride. 3. Umoapi, forced marriage. 4. Melanggahako, marriage due to premarital pregnancy. 5. Mebuaako, marriage that occurs when a third party reports to their parents or imam that they have been secretly intimate. 6. Tekale, marriage that occurs when both are caught in the act of having sexual relations. 7. Pinokombedulu, arranged marriage.

The following are interview results with several traditional leaders and Tolaki Muslim community members:

"*Mombolosuako* is one type of marriage that is legalized in Tolaki customs, but it falls into the category of non-normal marriage. Ansar added that according to custom, the woman must stay at the place where she was *pinolasuako* (taken away) until she is returned during *mesokei*." (Interview with Nasruddin, Tolaki traditional figures, Konawe, 2020)

"After the elopement process, there will be traditional processes until the time comes for the Marriage or *ijab kabul* process that is valid according to Customary Law, Positive Law, or Islamic Law. While waiting for the marriage time, a woman will stay at the residence where she was 'taken away', namely at the house of the village imam or local mosque imam, or at the residence of the Traditional Leader (Pu'utobu) or at the residence of the local government until the *mesokei* Custom occurs, or the marriage contract ceremony that occurs after the *Mombolosuako* process. After the *mesokei* Custom is fulfilled, the marriage is declared valid according to Custom, Religion, and state law, and finally the prospective bride is allowed to return to her residence." (Interview with Ansar, Tolaki traditional figures and religious figures, Konawe, 2020)

"Essentially, the applicable Customary Law does not allow the prospective bride to return to her home, and requires the prospective groom to return to his own home. This is done to prevent the practice of adultery that might occur before the marriage contract or before there is a bond that makes lawful between the two parties." (Interview with Haanah, Community Leader, Konawe 2020)

The practice of Sirri Marriage is indeed not prohibited by Religion, considering that when conducting Sirri Marriage if the Terms and Pillars are fulfilled, the marriage is declared valid according to Islamic Law. In reality, the practice of Sirri Marriage or in Tolaki Customary Law

known as *Kawi Iwoi* is done secretly and sometimes does not meet the pillars and conditions of marriage. *Kawi Iwoi* performed after *Mombolosuako* occurs as a solution to avoid adultery between the two prospective brides, then *Kawi Iwoi* is performed. According to local traditional and religious leaders, *Kawi Iwoi* is a solution to prevent adultery after both young people take action to run away from home with the intention of becoming a married couple. This is done as a solution for *maslahah* and avoiding *mafsadah*.

The practice of *Mombolosuako* in Tolaki society reflects the complexity of interaction between customary law and Islamic law, where its legitimacy through Regional Regulation shows efforts to accommodate customary law in the formal legal system. This phenomenon illustrates how local traditions can survive and adapt in the context of modernity (Suardika et al., 2018).

Mombolosuako also shows the flexibility of Islamic law in accommodating local practices, as long as they do not conflict with basic sharia principles. According to Ismail et al. (2022), this adaptation process reflects the dynamic relationship between custom and religion that continues to evolve according to contemporary societal needs.

Context of *Mombolosuako* Practice in Anggaber District

Data obtained from 8 Villages and Sub-districts in Anggaber District, Konawe Regency, taken from marriage records at the Office of Religious Affairs of Anggaber District and confirmed by local Village and Sub-district heads, shows that during 2018-2020 there were 69 marriage events with total marriages initiated through the *Mombolosuako* process amounting to 58 events, meaning that 84% of marriages in Anggaber District involved the *Mombolosuako* process and practiced *Kawi Iwoi*. The data presentation is as follows:

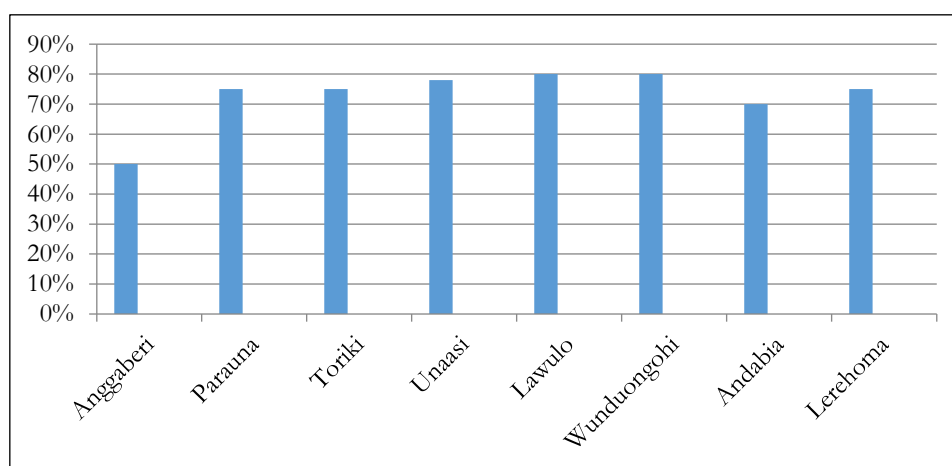


Figure 1. Acceptance Rate of *Mombolosuako* Practice in Eight Districts of Konawe Regency

Data in figure 1 represents marriages through non-normal marriage methods, namely *Mombolosuako*, with the lowest percentage occurring in Anggaber Sub-district at 50% and the highest in Lawulo Sub-district and Wunduongohi Village at 85% each of total marriages.

Mombolosuako is a type of marriage where a man takes away a woman to a certain place to become husband and wife (Konawe Regency Regulation, 2018). According to Rasyid:

"*Mombolosuako* is a method where a man takes away a woman with the intention of making her his wife. This marriage is considered non-normal marriage because it is not the marriage expected by parents in general, but this marriage is allowed in Tolaki customary law. *Mombolosuako* occurs when there is mutual consent between both parties, namely the male and female parties, with no element of coercion, because if there is an element of coercion then it is considered kidnapping." (Interview with Rasyid, Tolaki Traditional Figure, Konawe, 2020)

According to Rasyid's explanation as one of the Pu'utobu (Traditional Chief) in Anggaberri District:

"*Mombolosuako* is one type of marriage in Tolaki customs, but this marriage is a non-normal marriage, referred to as non-normal marriage, because it is actually considered taboo by parents, but is justified in custom. *Mombolosuako* occurs when there is mutual consent between both parties." (Interview with Rasyid, Tolaki Traditional Figure, Konawe, 2020)

"In custom, *Mombolosuako* is one path to marriage that is allowed in Tolaki Custom where this practice must be resolved according to custom following the provisions written in Tolaki tribal regulations, both written and unwritten, because this practice has existed since long ago and is included in Tolaki tribal marriage customs." (Interview with Akbar, Imam of the Mosque, Konawe, 2021)

Tamburaka (2015) explains in his book titled *Tolaki Marriage Customary Law*, that the *Mombolosuako* tradition has long existed in Tolaki customs, but marriage through this path is non-normal marriage. In the past, marriage with this model was viewed as a disgraceful marriage, but marriage through *Mombolosuako* actually has two different perspectives:

The first opinion states that marriage with this model is a disgraceful marriage and violates custom, where people involved in this practice will be subject to fines or penalties from custom which are quite substantial. Another risk is that if both are found before being handled by custom, the man can be killed by the woman's party. This contrasts with the above view, where the man's family will defend at all costs so that their child succeeds and survives the traditional process until finally their child sits side by side at the wedding with the girl he loves.

The second opinion actually argues that *Mombolosuako* occurs because of agreement between both parties, where the girl opens up opportunity for the man she has not known long or has not dated, because in the past a girl and man were forbidden to date. The occurrence of *Mombolosuako* without dating is evidence of conspiracy from the man's family, where the scenario has been arranged so neatly (Tamburaka, 2015).

In the Konawe Regency Regional Regulation, it is also explained that what is meant by *Mombolosuako* is when a man takes away a woman to make her his wife. Recorded in the Office of Religious Affairs of Anggaberri District, marriages that occurred from 2018-2020 were 69 events and 58 of them occurred through the *Mombolosuako* marriage process with the following percentages:

Table 1. *Mombolosuako* Events

Year	Total Events	<i>Mombolosuako</i> & <i>Kawi Iwoi</i> Events
2018	22 Events	18 Events
2019	29 Events	25 Events
2020	18 Events	15 Events

Source: data processed.

Marriage data in Anggaber District during the 2018-2020 period shown in table 1 reveals interesting patterns in *Mombolosuako* and *kawi iwoi* marriage practices. In 2018, from a total of 22 marriage events, 18 (81.8%) were conducted through *Mombolosuako* practice followed by *kawi iwoi*. This number then increased in 2019, where from 29 marriage events, 25 cases (86.2%) were *Mombolosuako* practices. Meanwhile, 2020 recorded a decrease in total marriages to 18 events, with 15 cases (83.3%) involving *Mombolosuako* practices.

This statistical pattern reveals several important findings. First, there was fluctuation in total marriages with the highest peak in 2019 (29 events) and significant decrease in 2020 (18 events). Second, although there was fluctuation in total marriages, the percentage of *Mombolosuako* practice remained consistently high with an average of 83.8% over three consecutive years. This data confirms that *Mombolosuako* has become the dominant choice in marriage practices in Anggaber District society, with relatively small normal marriages (average only 16.2%). This phenomenon indicates strong social acceptance of *Mombolosuako* practice as a legitimate marriage path in Tolaki society in Anggaber District.

The high percentage of *Mombolosuako* practice (84%) in Anggaber District reflects strong social acceptance of this tradition. This data shows that customary practices can survive and even develop when receiving structural support through formal legitimacy such as Regional Regulations (Tamanaha, 2017).

Statistical analysis also reveals that *Mombolosuako* has evolved from merely a tradition to becoming a practical solution for couples facing socio-economic barriers in marriage. This evolution demonstrates the adaptability of custom in responding to contemporary societal needs (Cohen, 2022).

Practice of Custom and Social Attitudes of Muslim Minority Community in Puasana Village, Amonggedo District

Amonggedo District is one of the administrative regions in Konawe Regency that has religious and ethnic diversity. Based on population data, there are several villages with Muslim majority population supported by adequate religious facilities. However, among these villages, Puasana Village stands out as a village with unique characteristics because its population is predominantly Catholic. Of the 1,200 people living in this village, 1,154 are Catholic adherents, while the Muslim population is only 46 people, as shown in table 2. This condition makes Muslims a significant minority group in the village, creating unique challenges in interfaith relations in this region.

Table 2. Religious Adherent Data in Amonggedo District Year 2023

No	Village / sub-district	Religion					Total
		Islam	Christian	Catholic	Hindu	Buddha	
1	Kel. Amonggedo baru	623	3		3		629
2	Desa anahinunu	590			355		945
3	Desa ulu benua	25			1,175		1,200
4	Desa puasana	46			1,154		1,200
5	Desa watulawu	842					842
6	Desa lalonona	936					936
7	Desa amonggedo	484					484
8	Desa dunggua	735					735
9	Desa benua	418					418
10	Desa matabura	646					646
11	Desa wawohine	680					680
12	Desa mendikonu	822					822
13	Desa amendete	245			105		350
14	Desa mataiwoi	572			9		581
15	Desa lalombonda	145					145
Total		7,809	3	0	2,801	0	10,613

Source: Data processed

As a village with a Muslim minority, Puasana Village draws attention in the context of cultural and religious diversity in Amonggedo District. To understand more deeply how this condition impacts the local Muslim community, and to what extent local customary law influences community life, interviews were conducted with five religious counselors serving in this area. These interviews not only explored the number and ethnic origins of Muslim residents in Puasana Village but also inquired about the religious counselors' understanding of the local cultural term "*Mombolosuako*" and the implementation of Konawe Regency Regional Regulation No. 1 of 2018, which regulates the implementation of sara merapu marriage customary law for the Tolaki tribe.

The other religious counselors in Puasana Village showed varying levels of understanding regarding local religious composition and Tolaki customary law. M. Basirun, Muh. Choerul Anas, Sugiyanto, and Miftahul Jannah, all from the Javanese ethnic group—recognized the dominance of Catholic adherents in this village with small Muslim numbers, but they were unfamiliar with the term "*Mombolosuako*," a Tolaki traditional marriage concept, or Konawe Regency Regional Regulation No. 1 of 2018 regulating this customary law. They considered this lack of knowledge as a potential barrier in cross-cultural communication, although no *Mombolosuako* cases had occurred in Puasana, making the need for in-depth understanding less urgent.

Unlike them, Maslina from the Tolaki ethnic group had a basic understanding of "*Mombolosuako*" as an "elopement" concept in Tolaki traditional marriage, but she also did not fully understand the related regional regulations. Like her colleagues, she had not witnessed any *Mombolosuako* cases in Puasana Village.

From these interview results, there was clearly a gap in understanding of local culture and customary law among religious counselors serving in Puasana Village. Counselors from the Javanese ethnic group showed limitations in understanding local cultural concepts like "*Mombolosuako*" and lack of knowledge about Konawe Regency Regional Regulation No. 1 of 2018, which regulates Tolaki tribal marriage customary law. Meanwhile, Maslina, who comes from the Tolaki ethnic group, had basic knowledge about "*Mombolosuako*," but still showed limitations in understanding the formal legal aspects regulated in the regional regulation. This situation indicates a need to increase access to cultural information and customary law for religious counselors, especially in areas with religious and ethnic diversity, to support social harmonization efforts and more effective cross-cultural relationship management.

Puasana Village, on the other hand, is a community with a Catholic majority and only a few Muslim Tolaki. Here, the tradition of *Mombolosuako* is almost unknown and does not occur as a norm. The limited presence of the Tolaki ethnicity and the dominance of Catholicism create differences in understanding and acceptance of the local customary law regarding Tolaki marriage. This reflects that the influence of customs heavily depends on the demographic makeup and the heterogeneity of the society.

The dynamics of *Mombolosuako* practices in Puasana, a predominantly Catholic village, show how religious diversity can affect the sustainability of traditional customs. As expressed by Ağılkaya-Şahin (2024) dan Moore & Schindler (2022), the lack of understanding by religious counselors regarding this practice reflects a cultural gap that has developed in plural societies.

The minimal application of *Mombolosuako* in Puasana also illustrates how traditional customs can lose their relevance when not supported by an adequate social structure. This phenomenon aligns with the theory of social change, which explains how modernity and pluralism can shift the role of traditional customs in society (Moore & Schindler, 2022).

Cultural and Traditional Legitimacy in *Mombolosuako* Practices

For the Tolaki people, the act of eloping or running away to the house of a customary leader, community leader, or village imam without the knowledge of the parents is considered a social deviation. It is deemed a social deviation because this act is not only criminal but also deviates from customary rules. This is the basis for considering *Mombolosuako* (elopement) as an abnormal marriage in the Tolaki community, even though it may eventually be recognized. The social behavior related to *Mombolosuako* within the Tolaki community, as previously mentioned, involves key actors in decision-making, both in their actions and the patterns and meanings they convey.

The concept of cultural legitimacy in *Mombolosuako* practices reflects the complexity of the Tolaki customary system in regulating norms and social behavior regarding marriage. Initially seen as a social deviation and a potentially criminal act when a man elopes with a woman without her parents' knowledge, this practice has received formal recognition through Regional Regulation No. 1 of 2018 on the Implementation of Sara Merapu Customary Law.

This process of legitimization shows how the customary system can adapt to contemporary social dynamics while maintaining the traditional values at its core. The transformation of what was once considered a deviant practice into a formally recognized solution illustrates the flexibility

of tradition in responding to the changing social needs of society (Moore & Schindler, 2022; Rahman R et al., 2023; Yazid & Sugitanata, 2023).

The customary sanction system, known as *mate sara*, plays a vital role as a social control instrument in *Mombolosuako* practices. These sanctions apply not only to those involved in *Mombolosuako* but also to families who refuse or cancel the marriage after the event. According to Syed (2024), the firm application of this sanction shows how customary law has a strong enforcement mechanism.

When a man elopes with a woman to the house of a customary leader or imam, this act automatically binds both parties to a customary process that must be completed. According to Diab et al. (2022), this comprehensive sanction mechanism reflects the local wisdom of the Tolaki community in managing potential social conflicts and maintaining community harmony.

The religious dimension in the legitimacy of *Mombolosuako* is seen in the active role of religious leaders, particularly imams, as parties who can accept and manage the customary resolution process. Although this practice is considered non-standard and deviates from the ideal marriage process, the involvement of religious leaders shows an effort to harmonize customary law with Islamic Sharia (Khamami, 2022).

The transformation of *Mombolosuako* from a social deviation to an accepted marriage conflict resolution mechanism demonstrates how traditional customs can adapt to contemporary social dynamics without losing their cultural essence.

The Impact of *Mombolosuako* on the Social and Political Order of the Tolaki Community

The occurrence of Kawi Iwoi practices, preceded by *Mombolosuako*, is common in the Anggaberi sub-district community. This is due to the boldness of young people to unite and marry. After *Mombolosuako* takes place, the marriage becomes a legal necessity under customary law. If a man brings a woman to the house of an imam or a village leader, or even to another imam, the man may take the woman to the house of Pu'utobu with the intention of making her his wife.

After this *Mombolosuako* process, it is obligatory for the imam or Pu'utobu to handle the continuation of the customary procedures as stipulated. Both the imam and Pu'utobu cannot reject the arrival of the couple; instead, they must accept and manage the process appropriately (Rasyid, 2021).

Nasaruddin explains,

“After the *Mombolosuako* process, the custom must be followed, whether one likes it or not, because if the parents come to take their child, they will face *mate sara* and be embarrassed. Therefore, it is a binding obligation.” (Interview with Nasaruddin, Tolaki traditional figure, Konawe, 2020)

Parents of a child who has been taken away or parents whose child has eloped with a woman are prohibited from retrieving their child or canceling the planned marriage, regardless of what happens. If either party, the parents of the bride or groom, or both cancel the marriage, they will face the customary sanction known as *mate sara*, which can be understood as “death under customary law.”

This statement is linked to the Tolaki proverb: “*Inae Kosara iee pinasara ianae lia sara iee pinakasara.*” Those who honor the customs will be respected; those who do not will not be honored (Ashur, 2015). This saying carries great meaning for the Tolaki community, where individuals who adhere to recognized norms and rules are considered civilized and will be respected and esteemed by society. Conversely, those who reject customs are called *Matesara* or death under custom, while those who violate the law of custom are referred to as *Liasara* (beyond custom). Both are considered *mate sara*.

The term *mate sara* means that those who are considered as such will no longer be managed under customary law, regardless of what happens in the future. They will face moral punishment from both the community and the government, as well as under customary law. This is why the society holds the belief that canceling a marriage is not allowed. In the past, those deemed as *mate sara* would not be attended to under customary law for seven generations and were regarded as shameful and uncivilized individuals, even subjected to punishment by local elders to leave the village permanently (Malemba, 2016).

Other Factors Contributing to the Practice of *Mombolosuako*

Environmental Factors

According to Pu'utobu, marriages involving *Mombolosuako* are prevalent in Anggaberu Sub-district, with approximately 85% of marriages occurring in this manner. This shows that such marriages are a common and accepted practice, not seen as a source of family shame. Nasaruddin Tongapa states that such marriages are very common in the Tolaki community, especially in Anggaberu Sub-district. As a Pu'utobu in the area, I can confirm that 85% of the marriages follow the *Mombolosuako* system. According to informant SR, who was directly involved in a Kawi Iwoi marriage, he initially feared it would bring shame to the family, but his family responded normally without disappointment. AT further explains that the practice of *Mombolosuako* cannot be eradicated as it is a tradition passed down through generations.

Educational Factors

Education is crucial for the advancement of civilization and human interactions. It opens the mind and should guide individuals to the right path. Educational factors, particularly religious education, influence the practice of *Mombolosuako* and Kawi Iwoi. The local community has expressed a lack of religious education in the district, both formal and informal, leading to insufficient knowledge about what is permissible and what is not under Islamic law. Local youth tend to follow their environment, believing that what is common in their surroundings is permissible, without considering the religious legal background. This is due to the lack of religious education, whether formal or non-formal.

Economic Factors

Apart from education and family factors, economic factors also significantly influence the practice of *Mombolosuako* and Kawi Iwoi. The high cost of traditional wedding ceremonies becomes a major consideration for both parties to engage in *Mombolosuako* and Kawi Iwoi. Many parents advise their children to follow this practice due to economic pressures.

Parents of the groom typically bear the wedding expenses, and since many in the community are subsistence farmers, organizing a large wedding ceremony is financially burdensome. Thus, the groom's family may suggest *Mombolosuako* as a way to save on the cost of a formal wedding.

This claim is supported by ATN, a man who underwent *Mombolosuako*, explaining that economic factors influenced his decision, as he believed it was easier than going through a normal wedding. The survey conducted by the researcher shows that 9 through *Mombolasuako*, considering the amount of money that needs to be prepared and the surrounding environment, which is accustomed to *Mombolasuako*.

The practice of *Mombolasuako* has profound implications on the socio-political structure of the Tolaki community, especially in terms of customary authority and the legitimacy of traditional leadership. The roles of Pu'utobu and the imam in this process demonstrate the persistence of traditional social hierarchies in a modern context. The obligation to follow customary procedures after *Mombolasuako* illustrates how traditions can maintain their relevance through mechanisms that are socially binding. This strengthens the position of customary institutions as mediators in resolving social conflicts (Suardika et al., 2018).

Analysis of the Impact of Diversity on the Social Order

Religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity significantly influences the formation of attitudes and the acceptance of local customs in society. In Konawe Regency, this diversity is clearly visible in different communities, such as in Anggaber District, which is predominantly Muslim and Tolaki, and Puasana Village, which is more pluralistic with a majority Catholic population and a smaller Tolaki ethnic group. These differences not only create distinct social dynamics in each region but also affect how communities interact with customary laws, especially in relation to the *Mombolasuako* tradition. This diversity, encompassing the social structure, ultimately shapes the community's response to customs, ranging from strong acceptance to relatively high disregard.

In Anggaber District, predominantly inhabited by the Tolaki ethnic group, customs and traditions play an important role in the social structure. The community here tends to have strong cultural bonds, where traditions like *Mombolasuako* are not only seen as part of ancestral heritage but also as symbols of collective identity. In this context, custom becomes more than just a practice; it is regarded as a normative force that must be respected and followed. Therefore, in the Tolaki community in Anggaber, the *Mombolosuako* tradition is still practiced as an alternative solution in marriage, especially for couples facing rejection from their families. The existence of Regional Regulations that legalize this practice further strengthens the influence of custom in society. This shows that in a socially homogeneous context, with supporting religious norms, customs such as *Mombolosuako* can be preserved and respected.

In contrast, the situation in Puasana Village presents a different dynamic. As a region with more diverse religious backgrounds and a smaller Tolaki ethnic population, the community in Puasana has a more pluralistic view toward Tolaki customs. The dominance of Catholicism in this area causes the community not to view *Mombolosuako* as part of their identity; in fact, most are unfamiliar with or do not understand the custom. Without normative pressure from the surrounding environment, the community in Puasana tends not to feel obligated to follow the Tolaki marriage custom. This illustrates that in more heterogeneous social contexts, religious and ethnic diversity can reduce the role of customs in shaping social identity and normative structures.

The diversity in Puasana also creates a social dynamic that is more open to external influences. In this area, religious values and modern worldviews are more dominant than the influence of Tolaki customs. In a pluralistic community like Puasana, traditions that are not supported by the majority tend to be neglected, even gradually fading from daily practice. Unlike in Anggaberri, the community in Puasana does not view *Mombolosuako* as an obligation or part of the social order that needs to be followed. Instead, they tend to adopt values that align more with the beliefs of the majority religion, which in this case is Catholicism, which holds its own view of formal marriage institutions based on parental or guardian consent.

The influence of this diversity directly impacts the patterns of social interaction and the level of acceptance of the Tolaki customs. In Anggaberri, the acceptance of *Mombolosuako* as a social norm shows that homogeneous social structures tend to strengthen the continuity of local customs. When the community shares the same cultural and religious background, they are more likely to preserve practices passed down from generation to generation. Conversely, the diversity in Puasana creates an environment where Tolaki customs have little influence on daily life. Social life there is more based on cross-cultural values and open to new influences that are more in line with the character of the heterogeneous society.

This diversity also creates differences in how the community views formal regulations, such as the Regional Regulation on customary marriages. In Anggaberri, the existence of this regulation is seen as a form of recognition of local customs and as a tool for preserving Tolaki culture. The community feels that this formal rule provides legitimacy to customary practices, including *Mombolosuako*, allowing them to continue practicing it with legal support. In contrast, in Puasana, the regulation is seen as less relevant, even less understood by the community. The lack of need or interest in *Mombolosuako* makes this regulation insignificant in their lives. This highlights that formal regulations, though applicable in the same administrative region, can be understood and accepted differently in heterogeneous societies.

Overall, this analysis shows that religious and cultural diversity in a society has a direct impact on how customs and formal regulations are accepted and practiced. In more homogeneous areas like Anggaberri, the *Mombolosuako* tradition remains preserved as a symbol of collective identity and holds high social value. In more pluralistic communities like Puasana, traditions that are irrelevant to the majority of the population tend to be neglected, and social values are more influenced by religious norms and modern worldviews. This analysis emphasizes the importance of considering diversity when creating and implementing customary regulations to meet the needs of all layers of society in different regions.

The significant difference in the acceptance of *Mombolosuako* between the homogeneous community in Anggaberri and the heterogeneous one in Puasana illustrates the important role of demographics in the sustainability of traditions. This shows how diversity can affect the strength and relevance of customary practices (Brondízio et al., 2021; Fuentes et al., 2021)).

This dynamic also reflects how modernity and pluralism can shift the role of customs in contemporary society. The difference in acceptance levels provides insights into how traditions need to adapt to the realities of increasingly diverse societies (Aziz et al., 2020; Cohen, 2022).

4. CONCLUSION

This study reveals how religious and ethnic diversity significantly affects the practice and acceptance of local customs, particularly the tradition of *Mombolosuako*, in Konawe Regency. Homogeneous communities, such as those in Anggaberu Subdistrict, demonstrate that traditional practices remain strong and legitimate, supported by formal regulations and social acceptance. This is evidenced by the high percentage (84%) of marriages conducted through *Mombolosuako*. In contrast, in heterogeneous communities like Puasana Village, traditional practices lose their relevance when not supported by the majority demographic and religious groups. The limited recognition of *Mombolosuako* in Puasana illustrates how diversity can diminish the role of customary practices.

The effectiveness of customary regulations varies significantly based on the composition of the community. Regional regulations that support traditional practices are more effective in homogeneous communities but lose relevance in diverse environments. Economic factors and social legitimacy play an essential role in sustaining traditional practices, with *Mombolosuako* often serving as a practical solution to expensive traditional marriage ceremonies. This study also highlights that a lack of religious education and understanding of religious law contributes to the continuation of this practice.

These findings underscore the need for an adaptive and contextual approach in implementing customary regulations in multicultural societies. The study recommends that policymakers consider religious and ethnic diversity when formulating customary policies to ensure their effectiveness and relevance across various societal contexts. Furthermore, efforts should be made to harmonize customary law, Islamic Sharia law, and state law to create policies that are more inclusive and acceptable to all groups within a pluralistic society.

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