

Sapuk Puteq in Wetu Telu Islam of Lombok: A Symbol of Cultural Communication as a Form of Religious Moderation

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Abstract

Despite growing interest in cultural communication and religious moderation, limited scholarly attention has been paid to traditional cultural symbols as communicative instruments within indigenous Muslim communities. This study examines *Sapuk Puteq* as a symbol of cultural communication in Lombok's *Wetu Telu* Muslim community and analyzes its role in transmitting cultural values and strengthening religious moderation. A qualitative phenomenological design was employed, involving 20 participants selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis and examined using thematic analysis and the interactive model of Miles et al. The findings indicate that *Sapuk Puteq* functions not merely as traditional attire but as a symbolic communication medium conveying collective identity, historical memory, ethical values, and religious meanings. It embodies interconnected cultural and religious values, including respect, humility, responsibility, solidarity, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence, thereby strengthening social cohesion and fostering religious moderation within the *Wetu Telu* community. The study concludes that local cultural symbols can provide effective mechanisms for integrating Islamic values with indigenous traditions while preserving cultural identity. Theoretically, it contributes to scholarship on cultural communication, symbolic interactionism, and religious moderation by conceptualizing traditional symbols as active systems of meaning and communication. Practically, the findings support the strengthening of cultural preservation, educational integration, and community-based initiatives to sustain local wisdom in contemporary multicultural societies. Future research

should examine other indigenous symbols and their roles in promoting cultural sustainability and religious moderation.

Keywords: Cultural Communication; Local Wisdom; Religious Moderation; *Sapuk Puteq; Wetu Telu Islam*

INTRODUCTION

Globalization and increasing cultural diversity have intensified scholarly interest in the relationship between culture, communication, and religion. In multicultural societies, cultural communication is recognized as an essential mechanism for preserving collective identity, strengthening social cohesion, and fostering peaceful coexistence among communities with different cultural and religious backgrounds (Jackson, 2025). Rather than functioning merely as a means of exchanging information, cultural communication enables communities to construct, negotiate, and reproduce shared meanings through language, traditions, and cultural symbols (Hutchings et al., 2026). At the same time, ineffective intercultural communication often results in misunderstanding because cultural symbols and social practices are interpreted differently across communities (Piller & Takahashi, 2025). These perspectives highlight that cultural symbols are not passive cultural artifacts but active communicative media through which values and identities are transmitted across generations.

Within this global context, the integration of local culture and religious values has become an important approach to strengthening religious moderation. Studies indicate that local wisdom provides an effective medium for communicating values of tolerance, mutual respect, and social harmony because cultural symbols are more easily understood and accepted by local communities (Diab et al., 2022; Fuadi et al., 2024). Likewise, culturally based communication has been shown to strengthen interfaith harmony by transforming indigenous traditions into shared spaces for dialogue and cooperation (Sari et al., 2025). Local traditions therefore function not only as cultural heritage but also as communication systems that preserve social solidarity and peaceful coexistence (Fiani et al., 2024; Keban et al., 2025).

Religious moderation is more effectively fostered through local wisdom and intercultural communication embedded in community life. The cultural accommodation of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago has enabled local symbols to function as effective communication media for transmitting Islamic values while promoting dialogue, mutual

cultural understanding, and social cohesion within diverse societies (Pajariantio et al., 2022; Thohir, 2022; Dasih et al., 2023). Religious harmony is more readily achieved when local traditions serve as a medium for social communication that bridges cultural and religious identities. In multicultural societies, cultural dialogue and respect for local traditions play a crucial role in maintaining social cohesion, while the integration of local wisdom into institutional policies further strengthens the implementation of religious moderation by making religious values more accessible and culturally acceptable to communities (Sumbulah et al., 2022; Wani et al., 2022; Miftah et al., 2023).

A cultural-based communication approach is considered more effective than purely normative strategies in promoting religious moderation, as communities more readily internalize the values of tolerance through familiar cultural symbols. The revitalization of local traditions and the integration of local culture into religious education further strengthen moderate attitudes, respect for diversity, and commitment to religious moderation. This cultural accommodation is evident in the Wetu Telu Islamic tradition, where Islamic teachings and Sasak customs coexist harmoniously, allowing local traditions to remain an integral part of the community's religious life (Mailin et al., 2023; Harahap et al., 2024; Sugianto & Karim, 2024; Umam et al., 2024)

Indonesia represents an important context for examining this issue because of its rich cultural diversity and long history of interaction between religion and local traditions. Recent studies emphasize that strengthening religious moderation requires approaches that integrate Islamic values with local wisdom through education, community practices, and cultural traditions (Lestari & Nopiana, 2024; Khamdan & Wiharyani, 2024; Rijal et al., 2023). In this regard, indigenous Muslim communities provide valuable insights into how local cultural symbols contribute to maintaining religious harmony while preserving cultural identity.

One of the most distinctive indigenous Muslim communities in Indonesia is the Wetu Telu community in Lombok. Contemporary studies describe Wetu Telu as a cultural expression of Islam that emerged through a long process of interaction between Islamic teachings and Sasak traditions rather than as a separate religious system (Sirnopati, 2021; Sirnopati et al., 2022). Despite the influence of modernization and social change, Wetu Telu continues to preserve its cultural identity through customary traditions, indigenous values, and symbolic practices that strengthen community cohesion (Ibrahim et al., 2024; Nasri et

al., 2024). These characteristics make Wetu Telu an important case for understanding how cultural symbols function as communication media in sustaining religious moderation within indigenous Muslim societies.

Among Indonesia's indigenous Muslim communities, Wetu Telu Islam in Lombok represents a unique manifestation of the interaction between Islamic teachings and Sasak cultural traditions. Rather than being understood as a separate religious system, contemporary scholars describe Wetu Telu as the result of a historical dialogue in which Islamic values were gradually accommodated within local customs, beliefs, and social practices (Sirnopati, 2021; Sirnopati et al., 2022). This interaction demonstrates that Islam in Lombok developed through cultural adaptation, enabling religious teachings to coexist with indigenous traditions while preserving the cultural identity of the Sasak people (Nasri et al., 2024). Consequently, Wetu Telu reflects not only a religious tradition but also a cultural system that integrates faith, customary values, and communal life.

The continuity of Wetu Telu traditions amid modernization further illustrates the resilience of local cultural symbols in maintaining social cohesion. Although education, social mobility, and broader religious interaction have influenced the practice of Wetu Telu, many customary traditions remain preserved because they continue to represent collective identity and community values (Ibrahim et al., 2024). Studies also reveal that the cultural values embedded within Wetu Telu—including mutual respect, inclusiveness, communal responsibility, and harmony—provide a strong foundation for strengthening religious moderation in contemporary society (Nurmalayani & Wijoyo, 2025). These values have even been incorporated into contextual Islamic education to encourage moderate religious attitudes through culturally relevant learning approaches (Masriyani et al., 2026). Moreover, the experience of cultural interaction in Lombok demonstrates that shared traditions and cultural spaces are capable of fostering peaceful coexistence among communities with different religious backgrounds (Sumiadi, 2025).

Within this cultural landscape, Sapuk Puteq, a traditional white Sasak head covering, occupies an important symbolic position in customary ceremonies, religious gatherings, and communal events. Beyond its function as traditional attire, Sapuk Puteq represents dignity, respect, social responsibility, and collective identity within the Sasak community. In the perspective of cultural communication, symbols such as Sapuk Puteq function as communicative media through which communities preserve historical memory, express

shared values, and strengthen social relationships. Cultural communication scholars argue that local symbols enable communities to transmit collective meanings across generations because they embody values that are socially recognized and culturally internalized (Muhajir, 2022; Mumtaza et al., 2026). Likewise, communication based on local wisdom has proven effective in preserving cultural resilience and facilitating the transmission of social values through familiar cultural expressions (Damayani et al., 2022; Digdoyo & Maududi, 2022).

The significance of cultural symbols becomes even more evident in the context of religious moderation. Previous studies have shown that the integration of religion and local culture enables religious values to be communicated more effectively because communities interpret moral teachings through symbols, traditions, and customary practices that are already embedded in their cultural experience (Fuadi et al., 2024). Indigenous traditions therefore function not merely as cultural heritage but also as communicative systems that nurture tolerance, solidarity, and peaceful coexistence (Fiani et al., 2024). Furthermore, local wisdom serves as an intergenerational communication medium through which values of mutual respect and religious moderation are continuously transmitted (Keban et al., 2025), while culturally based communication creates opportunities for dialogue and strengthens harmony among communities with diverse religious backgrounds (Sari et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the argument that cultural symbols should be understood not only as representations of tradition but also as dynamic communication media capable of sustaining harmonious social relations.

The importance of cultural communication is also reflected in the broader Indonesian context, where local traditions continue to support social integration and national unity. Studies concerning Islamic communication, indigenous customs, and cultural diversity demonstrate that moderate Islamic messages are more readily accepted when communicated through culturally familiar approaches (Amrullah, 2022). Likewise, customary traditions within Sasak society continue to strengthen civic values, collective participation, and social solidarity (Fitriani et al., 2022), while local rituals preserve ethical values that reinforce community cohesion (Hidayati, 2020). These cultural practices are consistent with Indonesia's principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which recognizes cultural diversity as a social asset for strengthening unity and harmonious coexistence (Riyadi et al., 2024).

Preliminary observations conducted in Wetu Telu communities indicate that Sapuk Puteq embodies shared cultural meanings related to dignity, respect, collective identity, and

social responsibility. It is also consistently associated with customary interactions that encourage harmonious relationships among community members (*Observation, May 02, 2026*). Consequently, Sapuk Puteq should not be understood merely as traditional attire but as a symbolic medium through which cultural values are expressed, interpreted, and transmitted across generations.

The existing body of literature has substantially advanced the understanding of Wetu Telu Islam from various disciplinary perspectives. Previous studies have consistently examined Wetu Telu in relation to its historical evolution, cultural adaptation, indigenous traditions, socio-cultural transformation, Islamic education, and religious moderation (Sirnopati, 2021; Sirnopati et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2024; Nasri et al., 2024; Nurmawayani & Wijoyo, 2025; Masriyani et al., 2026; Sumiadi, 2025). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that the interaction between Islamic teachings and Sasak culture has produced a distinctive indigenous Islamic tradition characterized by cultural accommodation, social harmony, and peaceful coexistence. Other scholars further emphasize that local wisdom and cultural traditions strengthen religious moderation by promoting tolerance, inclusiveness, dialogue, and mutual respect within multicultural communities (Fuadi et al., 2024; Fiani et al., 2024; Keban et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2025). Likewise, integrating local wisdom into education and community practices has been shown to reinforce moderate religious attitudes and preserve indigenous cultural identity (Lestari & Nopiana, 2024; Khamdan & Wiharyani, 2024; Rijal et al., 2023; Sutrisno, 2026)

The research gap lies in the limited attention given to Sapuk Puteq as a symbol of cultural communication within the Wetu Telu Muslim community. Previous studies have mainly examined cultural symbols as elements of rituals, traditional identity, or local wisdom, while their communicative role in transmitting the values of religious moderation remains underexplored. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates Sapuk Puteq as a cultural communication symbol and examines how it communicates and sustains the values of tolerance, mutual respect, social cohesion, and religious moderation in Wetu Telu Islam.

This study therefore presents four interrelated novelties. The conceptual novelty lies in reconceptualizing Sapuk Puteq not merely as a traditional Sasak attribute or cultural artifact but as a symbol of cultural communication through which collective identity, cultural values, and religious meanings are continuously transmitted within the Wetu Telu community. The theoretical novelty is reflected in the integration of cultural communication theory,

indigenous Islam, and religious moderation into a unified analytical framework, offering a broader understanding of the relationship between local culture and moderate religious life. The empirical novelty is demonstrated by examining the communicative meaning and social function of Sapuk Puteq, an aspect that has received little scholarly attention compared with previous studies focusing on history, rituals, education, and socio-cultural transformation. The practical novelty is represented by the proposed conceptual model explaining how Sapuk Puteq functions as a cultural communication symbol that preserves local identity while simultaneously communicating tolerance, mutual respect, social cohesion, and peaceful coexistence as fundamental values of religious moderation.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine Sapuk Puteq as a symbol of cultural communication within the Wetu Telu Muslim community of Lombok and to analyze its contribution to strengthening religious moderation. Specifically, the study seeks to explain the communicative function of Sapuk Puteq, identify the cultural and religious values embedded within the symbol, and explore how these values are communicated and reproduced through indigenous cultural practices. By offering a new perspective on the communicative role of local cultural symbols, this study is expected to contribute to the development of scholarship on cultural communication, indigenous Islam, and religious moderation while providing a conceptual reference for future studies on local wisdom and multicultural harmony.

METHODS

1. Research Approach and Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method using a phenomenological approach to explore the symbolic meanings of *Sapuk Puteq* within the social, cultural, and religious life of the Wetu Telu Muslim community in Lombok. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to understand participants' lived experiences, interpretations, and perspectives regarding *Sapuk Puteq* as a symbol of cultural communication rather than to test hypotheses or quantify variables. Phenomenology was selected because it seeks to reveal the essence of participants' experiences and the meanings they attach to a particular social and cultural phenomenon. Creswell and Poth (2024) explain that phenomenological research focuses on understanding the essence of individuals' lived

experiences by interpreting how they perceive and construct meaning from a particular phenomenon.

In this study, the researcher directly engaged with community members, traditional leaders, and religious leaders who possessed profound knowledge of the Wetu Telu tradition and the symbolic meanings of *Sapuk Puteq*. Their experiences and interpretations were regarded as the primary source for understanding how cultural symbols communicate collective identity, local wisdom, and religious moderation within the Sasak community. This approach enabled the researcher to interpret the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives while considering the socio-cultural context in which the symbol is practiced.

The descriptive qualitative design was also intended to generate an in-depth and contextual understanding of the communicative functions of *Sapuk Puteq*. Rather than producing statistical generalizations, the study emphasized rich descriptions of participants' experiences, cultural interpretations, and social interactions surrounding the use of *Sapuk Puteq*. As suggested by Creswell and Poth (2024), qualitative inquiry allows researchers to investigate complex social realities by interpreting meanings embedded in human experiences and cultural practices.

Similarly, Yusuf (2022) argues that qualitative research is particularly suitable for investigating cultural and social phenomena because it emphasizes participants' perspectives, contextual understanding, and natural settings. Therefore, the phenomenological approach was considered appropriate for uncovering the symbolic meanings of *Sapuk Puteq* and explaining its role as a medium of cultural communication that contributes to strengthening religious moderation within the Wetu Telu Muslim community.

2. Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted from May to July 2026 in several villages across Lombok Island, West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia, where communities have continuously preserved and practiced the Wetu Telu tradition. The research sites were purposively selected because they maintain strong cultural relationships with Tuan Guru, traditional leaders, and custodians of Sasak customary traditions. These communities were considered appropriate research settings because *Sapuk Puteq* remains actively used in customary ceremonies, religious rituals, and social activities, allowing the researcher to observe its symbolic meanings within their natural cultural context. Creswell and Poth (2024) emphasized that selecting a

natural setting enables qualitative researchers to obtain authentic and contextually rich information regarding the phenomenon under investigation.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling, followed by snowball sampling to identify additional informants who possessed extensive knowledge of the Wetu Telu tradition. Purposive sampling ensured that every participant had direct experience and a comprehensive understanding of the symbolic meanings and social functions of *Sapuk Puteq*, while snowball sampling facilitated access to key community members recommended by the initial informants. Yusuf (2022) explained that purposive sampling is appropriate in qualitative research because participants are intentionally selected based on their knowledge, experience, and relevance to the research objectives.

A total of 20 participants were involved in this study. They consisted of four traditional leaders who understood the history, philosophy, and symbolic meanings of *Sapuk Puteq* in Sasak customs; four religious leaders (Tuan Guru and Wetu Telu religious figures) who explained the relationship between Wetu Telu traditions, Islamic teachings, and religious moderation; four community elders who provided historical perspectives on cultural transmission across generations; four adult community members who regularly wore *Sapuk Puteq* during customary, religious, and social activities; and four youth representatives who shared their perspectives on preserving Sasak cultural identity and promoting religious moderation among younger generations. The inclusion of participants from different social groups enabled the researcher to obtain diverse viewpoints and comprehensive insights into the symbolic, cultural, and religious significance of *Sapuk Puteq* within the Wetu Telu community.

3. Data Sources and Data Collection

The study utilized primary and secondary data sources to obtain comprehensive and credible information regarding the symbolic meanings and communicative functions of *Sapuk Puteq*. Primary data were obtained directly from participants through field observations and in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, religious leaders (*Tuan Guru*), community elders, adult community members, and youth representatives. Secondary data were collected from books, peer-reviewed journal articles, government documents, village archives, photographs, and previous studies related to Wetu Telu Islam, *Sapuk Puteq*, cultural communication, and religious moderation. Creswell and Poth (2024) stated that integrating multiple data sources enables qualitative researchers to achieve a more comprehensive

understanding of complex social and cultural phenomena. Likewise, Yusuf (2022) emphasized that combining primary and secondary data strengthens the richness and credibility of qualitative findings.

Data were collected using three complementary techniques: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. First, participant observation was conducted by directly observing the use of *Sapuk Puteq* during customary ceremonies, religious rituals, and community activities. The observations focused on participants' interactions, symbolic expressions, patterns of communication, and the socio-cultural contexts in which *Sapuk Puteq* was worn. Field notes were systematically recorded throughout the research process to capture both verbal and non-verbal cultural expressions.

Second, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of the symbolic meanings of *Sapuk Puteq*. Interview questions focused on its historical background, cultural philosophy, communicative functions, relationship with Islamic values, and contribution to religious moderation within the Wetu Telu community. Each interview lasted approximately 45–90 minutes and was conducted in Indonesian or the Sasak language according to the participants' preferences. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim to facilitate systematic analysis. According to Creswell and Poth (2024), semi-structured interviews allow researchers to obtain rich and in-depth information while providing flexibility to explore emerging issues during the interview process.

Third, document analysis was employed to complement the findings obtained from observations and interviews. Documentary materials included village archives, photographs of customary ceremonies, local historical records, cultural manuscripts, government publications, and previous academic studies concerning Wetu Telu traditions and *Sapuk Puteq*. These documents were examined to verify participants' narratives and to provide broader historical and cultural contexts. Yusuf (2022) explained that document analysis serves as an important supporting technique for validating field data and strengthening qualitative interpretations through multiple sources of evidence.

The combination of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis enabled the researcher to obtain rich, contextual, and triangulated data concerning

the role of *Sapuk Puteq* as a symbol of cultural communication and its contribution to strengthening religious moderation within the Wetu Telu Muslim community.

4. Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles et al. (2020), which consisted of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During the data reduction stage, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary materials were carefully reviewed, coded, and organized according to the research objectives. The coding process facilitated the identification of meaningful categories and recurring patterns related to the symbolic meanings and communicative functions of *Sapuk Puteq*. Subsequently, the organized data were systematically presented in descriptive narratives and thematic matrices to facilitate interpretation and comparison across participants. Finally, conclusions were continuously verified by comparing evidence from different participants and data sources to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the phenomenon under investigation. According to Miles et al. (2020), qualitative data analysis is an iterative process in which data collection, coding, interpretation, and verification are conducted simultaneously to generate credible findings.

In addition to the interactive analysis model, the study employed thematic analysis to identify major themes concerning the symbolic meanings of *Sapuk Puteq*, its role as a medium of cultural communication, and its contribution to strengthening religious moderation within the Wetu Telu Muslim community. The themes were developed inductively from participants' experiences and interpretations while considering the broader socio-cultural and religious contexts. Creswell and Poth (2024) explain that thematic analysis enables qualitative researchers to organize participants' experiences into meaningful patterns and interpret the essence of a particular phenomenon.

The trustworthiness of the research findings was ensured through several validation strategies. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from traditional leaders, religious leaders, community elders, adult community members, and youth representatives. Method triangulation was applied by integrating participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis to examine the consistency of the findings across different data collection techniques. Theoretical triangulation was performed by interpreting the findings through the perspectives of cultural communication, symbolic interaction, and religious moderation. Furthermore, member checking was undertaken by

returning the preliminary interpretations to several key participants to confirm that the researcher's interpretations accurately represented their experiences and perspectives. These validation procedures enhanced the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and trustworthiness of the research findings. As emphasized by Creswell and Poth (2024), triangulation and member checking are fundamental strategies for strengthening the credibility and authenticity of qualitative research.

5. Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical principles throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, all participants were informed about the objectives, procedures, and expected outcomes of the study. Their participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before conducting observations and interviews. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. To protect privacy and confidentiality, all personal identities were anonymized, and the collected data were used exclusively for academic purposes. During the research process, the researcher respected local customs, cultural norms, and religious values practiced by the Wetu Telu Muslim community. As emphasized by Creswell and Poth (2024), qualitative researchers should uphold ethical standards by ensuring informed consent, protecting participants' confidentiality, and respecting the socio-cultural context of the research setting. Similarly, Yusuf (2022) argued that ethical considerations constitute an essential component of qualitative research because they establish trust between researchers and participants while enhancing the credibility of the findings.

6. Research Procedure

The research was conducted through several systematic stages. The first stage involved identifying the research problem and reviewing relevant literature concerning Wetu Telu Islam, cultural communication, symbolic interaction, and religious moderation. The second stage focused on selecting research sites and participants using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The third stage consisted of collecting data through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. During this stage, the researcher directly observed the use of *Sapuk Puteq* in customary ceremonies, religious rituals, and community activities while simultaneously conducting interviews with key informants and collecting supporting documents.

The fourth stage involved organizing and analyzing the collected data through data reduction, data display, thematic coding, and conclusion drawing. Emerging themes were continuously compared across participants and data sources to ensure consistency and credibility. Finally, the findings were validated through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and member checking before the final interpretation was formulated. This systematic procedure ensured that the findings accurately represented the symbolic meanings and communicative functions of *Sapuk Puteq* within the Wetu Telu Muslim community.

Figure 1 illustrates the overall research procedure employed in this study, from the identification of the research problem to the interpretation of the findings.

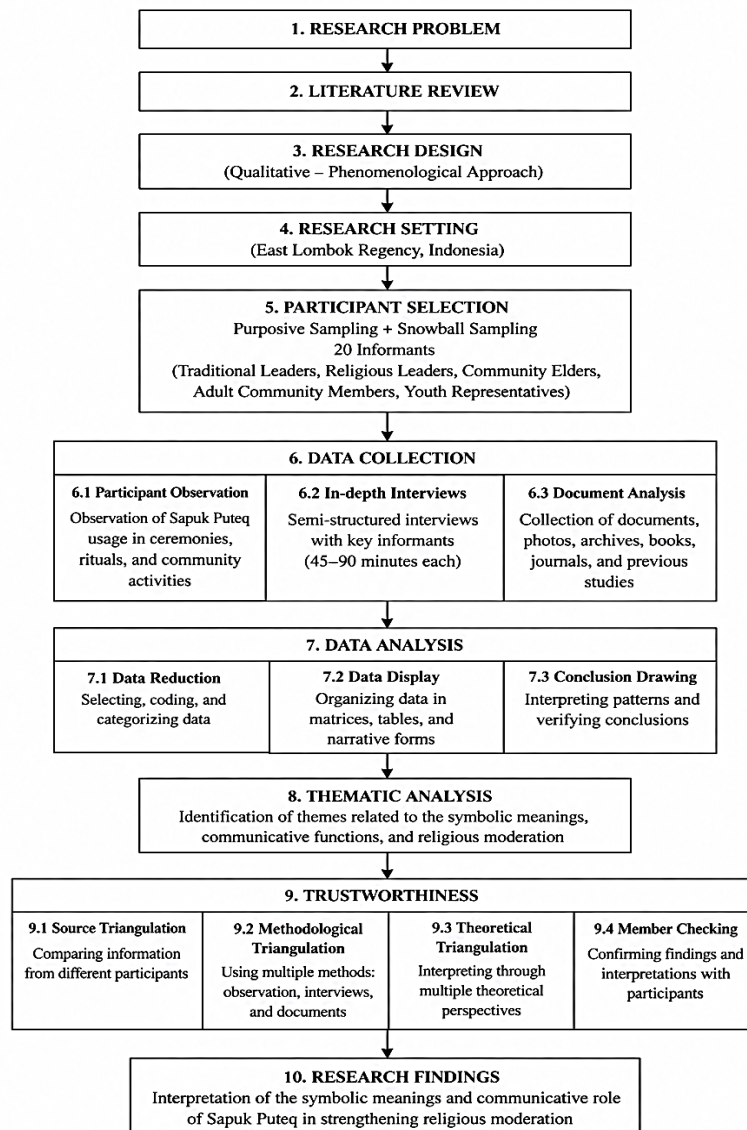


Figure 1. Research Procedure

As presented in Figure 1, the research began with the identification of the research problem and a comprehensive literature review, followed by the selection of a qualitative phenomenological research design. The study was subsequently conducted in selected Wetu Telu communities in East Lombok through purposive and snowball sampling involving 20 participants. Data were collected using participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, and were analyzed through data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and thematic analysis. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation, methodological triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and member checking were employed before drawing the final conclusions regarding the symbolic meanings and communicative role of *Sapuk Puteq* in strengthening religious moderation.

RESULTS

1. Sapuk Puteq as a Symbol of Cultural Communication in the Wetu Telu Muslim Community of Lombok

a. Historical Background of *Sapuk Puteq* in the Wetu Telu Tradition

The findings revealed that *Sapuk Puteq* has long constituted an essential component of the cultural heritage of the Wetu Telu Muslim community in Lombok. Participants consistently described it as more than a traditional white headcloth; rather, it represents a historical symbol reflecting the long-standing interaction between Sasak cultural traditions and Islamic values. The continuity of *Sapuk Puteq* demonstrates how cultural identity has been preserved through symbolic practices that communicate shared ethical principles, collective memory, and social responsibility across generations.

Traditional leaders explained that *Sapuk Puteq* has historically symbolized dignity, responsibility, and honor within Sasak society. Its use during customary ceremonies, religious rituals, and communal gatherings signifies an individual's commitment to preserving cultural traditions while maintaining ethical conduct within the community.

One traditional leader explained:

"For the Wetu Telu community, Sapuk Puteq is far more than a traditional head covering. It represents the identity of a Sasak man. Since the time of our ancestors, we have been taught that anyone wearing Sapuk Puteq must guard their words, respect others, and uphold personal dignity because the symbol reflects one's moral character." (P01, Male, Traditional Leader, Lombok, Interview, May 08, 2026).

Another traditional leader highlighted that the philosophical meaning of *Sapuk Puteq* has been continuously preserved through customary teachings.

"Our ancestors never created Sapuk Puteq without meaning. Every fold carries a philosophical message, and its white color symbolizes purity of intention. It reminds us to remain humble, exercise self-control, and resolve differences through deliberation rather than conflict." (P02, Male, Traditional Leader, Lombok, Interview, May 21, 2026).

Community elders further emphasized that *Sapuk Puteq* represents the historical continuity of Sasak cultural identity. According to them, the symbol connects ancestral traditions with contemporary community life while reinforcing the harmonious relationship between local customs and Islamic teachings.

As one community elder stated:

"Sapuk Puteq connects the past with the present. It preserves the stories of our ancestors, who maintained brotherhood, resolved conflicts through consensus, and lived together with mutual respect. Those values remain alive through this symbol today." (P10, Female, Community Elder, Lombok, Interview, June 10, 2026).

Similarly, another elder explained:

"The life of the Wetu Telu community has always been built upon a balance between custom and religion. Sapuk Puteq constantly reminds us that these two foundations should complement one another in order to preserve harmony within society." (P11, Male, Community Elder, Lombok, Interview, June 27, 2026).

Field observations supported these interview findings. During customary ceremonies and religious gatherings, traditional leaders and community members consistently wore *Sapuk Puteq* as an essential element of ceremonial attire. Younger participants were also observed learning its proper use and philosophical meanings under the guidance of community elders, indicating that the transmission of cultural knowledge remains an active intergenerational process rather than merely a ceremonial tradition (*Observation, May 18, 2026; Observation, June 21, 2026*).

Document analysis likewise confirmed that *Sapuk Puteq* is formally recognized within Sasak customary traditions as a symbol of identity, dignity, and communal responsibility. Community cultural documents consistently describe its role in preserving historical memory while maintaining cultural continuity through customary and religious practices (*Document*

Analysis, Sasak Cultural Documentation, June 2026; Document Analysis, Community Traditional Ceremony Record, July 2026).

Overall, these findings demonstrate that the historical significance of *Sapuk Puteq* extends beyond its physical appearance. It functions as a symbol of cultural communication that preserves collective memory, strengthens Sasak cultural identity, and facilitates the intergenerational transmission of ethical, cultural, and religious values within the Wetu Telu Muslim community of Lombok.

b. Symbolic Meanings of *Sapuk Puteq*

The findings revealed that the Wetu Telu Muslim community perceives *Sapuk Puteq* as a cultural symbol representing dignity, honor, collective identity, and moral responsibility. Rather than functioning merely as traditional attire, the white headcloth embodies ethical principles that guide individual behavior within both customary and religious contexts. Participants consistently explained that the symbolic meanings attached to *Sapuk Puteq* continue to be reproduced through everyday cultural practices, making it an important medium for communicating shared values within the Sasak community.

Traditional leaders emphasized that every element of *Sapuk Puteq*, particularly its white color, carries profound philosophical significance. The color white symbolizes purity, sincerity, honesty, and self-discipline, while wearing *Sapuk Puteq* signifies an individual's commitment to maintaining honorable conduct and respecting others.

One traditional leader explained:

"The white color of Sapuk Puteq symbolizes purity of heart and sincerity of intention. Our community believes that anyone wearing it should come without hostility or personal interests. This philosophy has been passed down from generation to generation, teaching us that every cultural symbol carries moral responsibilities, not merely ceremonial functions." (P01, Male, Traditional Leader, Lombok, Interview, May 08, 2026).

Another traditional leader further stated:

"Sapuk Puteq possesses a unique power as a symbol of cultural communication because people do not simply see its physical appearance; they understand the moral messages embedded within it. It continually reminds us to preserve unity, respect differences, and prioritize peace in our daily lives." (P03, Male, Traditional Leader, Lombok, Interview, June 12, 2026).

Religious leaders also associated the symbolic meaning of *Sapuk Puteq* with Islamic ethical principles. They explained that the symbol reflects the philosophical concept of maintaining harmony between one's relationship with God (*hablum minallah*) and with fellow human beings (*hablum minannas*). Consequently, *Sapuk Puteq* serves as a visible expression of moral integrity, humility, and social responsibility.

One religious leader explained:

"Within the Wetu Telu tradition, we uphold the philosophy of Lam-Alif, which reminds people to maintain a balanced relationship with God while also preserving harmonious relationships with others. These principles are clearly reflected in the meaning of Sapuk Puteq." (P05, Male, Religious Leader, Lombok, Interview, May 16, 2026).

Community members likewise perceived *Sapuk Puteq* as a symbol that shapes personal character and everyday social interaction. According to them, individuals wearing *Sapuk Puteq* are expected to demonstrate politeness, honesty, and respect rather than merely fulfilling ceremonial obligations.

As one participant explained:

"Whenever I wear Sapuk Puteq during customary or religious activities, it reminds me to behave respectfully, speak politely, and treat everyone with dignity. For me, wearing the symbol also means maintaining good character in everyday life." (P13, Male, Adult Community Member, Lombok, Interview, May 19, 2026).

Field observations reinforced these interview findings. During customary ceremonies, participants wearing *Sapuk Puteq* consistently demonstrated respectful attitudes, observed ceremonial etiquette, and prioritized harmonious interaction throughout the activities. The researcher also observed that community elders regularly explained the philosophical meanings of the white headcloth to younger participants before ceremonial events, indicating that symbolic values continue to be transmitted through direct cultural practice (*Observation, June 05, 2026; Observation, July 09, 2026*).

Document analysis likewise confirmed that community cultural records describe *Sapuk Puteq* as a traditional symbol representing dignity, purity, responsibility, and Sasak identity. The documents consistently emphasize that preserving *Sapuk Puteq* also means safeguarding the ethical principles embedded within the symbol rather than merely

maintaining its physical form (*Document Analysis, Sasak Traditional Cultural Guide, June 2026; Document Analysis, Community Cultural Archive, July 2026*).

Overall, these findings demonstrate that *Sapuk Puteq* possesses profound symbolic meanings that extend far beyond its function as traditional clothing. It represents dignity, moral responsibility, purity, and collective identity while simultaneously functioning as a symbol of cultural communication through which ethical, religious, and social values are continuously interpreted, communicated, and transmitted within the Wetu Telu Muslim community.

c. *Sapuk Puteq* as a Medium of Cultural Communication

The findings demonstrate that *Sapuk Puteq* functions not only as a cultural symbol but also as an effective medium of cultural communication within the Wetu Telu Muslim community. Participants consistently explained that the symbol communicates shared meanings without requiring verbal expression. Through its use in customary ceremonies, religious rituals, and community gatherings, *Sapuk Puteq* conveys messages of respect, solidarity, social responsibility, and religious harmony that are collectively understood by community members. Consequently, it reinforces cultural identity while strengthening social relationships through symbolic communication.

Traditional leaders emphasized that *Sapuk Puteq* communicates moral values even before verbal interaction occurs. Its presence immediately signifies respect for customary traditions and reflects an individual's commitment to maintaining communal harmony.

One traditional leader explained:

"From our perspective, Sapuk Puteq is the language of culture. Before a person even speaks, the community already understands the message conveyed through the symbol—respect, togetherness, and a commitment to preserving harmony. That is why Sapuk Puteq serves as a powerful medium of cultural communication that strengthens social relationships within our community." (P01, Male, Traditional Leader, Lombok, Interview, May 08, 2026).

Similarly, another traditional leader stated:

"When viewed from the perspective of cultural communication, Sapuk Puteq conveys messages without spoken words. Its presence has long been understood as a symbol of brotherhood, mutual respect, tolerance, and a shared commitment to maintaining peace within the Wetu Telu community." (P04, Male, Traditional Leader, Lombok, Interview, July 05, 2026).

Religious leaders further explained that *Sapuk Puteq* serves as a bridge between Islamic teachings and local cultural traditions. They emphasized that moral and religious values are communicated not only through formal religious instruction but also through everyday cultural practices. Consequently, *Sapuk Puteq* enables Islamic ethical principles to be experienced naturally within community life.

As one religious leader stated:

"For our community, custom and religion have never been separated. As long as cultural traditions promote goodness, unity, and values that are consistent with Islamic teachings, they become an effective means of conveying religious messages. Sapuk Puteq is one of the cultural symbols through which these values are communicated without the need for lengthy explanations." (P05, Male, Religious Leader, Lombok, Interview, May 16, 2026).

The younger generation also regarded *Sapuk Puteq* as a relevant medium for communicating cultural identity in contemporary society.

One youth representative explained:

"I believe Sapuk Puteq remains highly relevant today because it communicates respect, solidarity, and social responsibility without requiring verbal expression. Through this symbol, young people can better understand the cultural values inherited from previous generations." (P17, Male, Youth Representative, Lombok, Interview, May 28, 2026).

Field observations reinforced these interview findings. During customary ceremonies and religious gatherings, *Sapuk Puteq* consistently appeared as an essential cultural attribute worn by traditional leaders, religious leaders, and community members. Individuals wearing the symbol were treated with particular respect, while interactions throughout the ceremonies reflected politeness, mutual recognition, and collective responsibility. Community elders were also observed explaining the symbolic meanings of *Sapuk Puteq* to younger participants before ceremonial activities, demonstrating that cultural communication occurred through both symbolic practice and direct social interaction (*Observation, May 30, 2026; Observation, July 18, 2026*).

Document analysis further supported these findings. Community cultural records and customary ceremony guidelines consistently describe *Sapuk Puteq* as a traditional symbol representing social harmony, customary authority, and Sasak cultural identity. These documents indicate that its continued use in ceremonial practices preserves collective

memory while transmitting ethical, cultural, and religious values to succeeding generations (*Document Analysis, Sasak Customary Ceremony Guideline, June 2026; Document Analysis, Community Cultural Preservation Document, July 2026*).

Overall, the findings confirm that *Sapuk Puteq* functions as a dynamic medium of cultural communication rather than merely as ceremonial attire. Through its symbolic presence, it communicates shared values, strengthens collective identity, preserves cultural continuity, and promotes harmonious social relationships across generations. These findings further demonstrate that symbolic communication remains a fundamental mechanism through which the Wetu Telu Muslim community sustains its cultural heritage while reinforcing social cohesion in contemporary Sasak society.

Figure 2 summarizes the principal findings regarding the role of *Sapuk Puteq* as a symbol of cultural communication within the Wetu Telu Muslim community of Lombok.

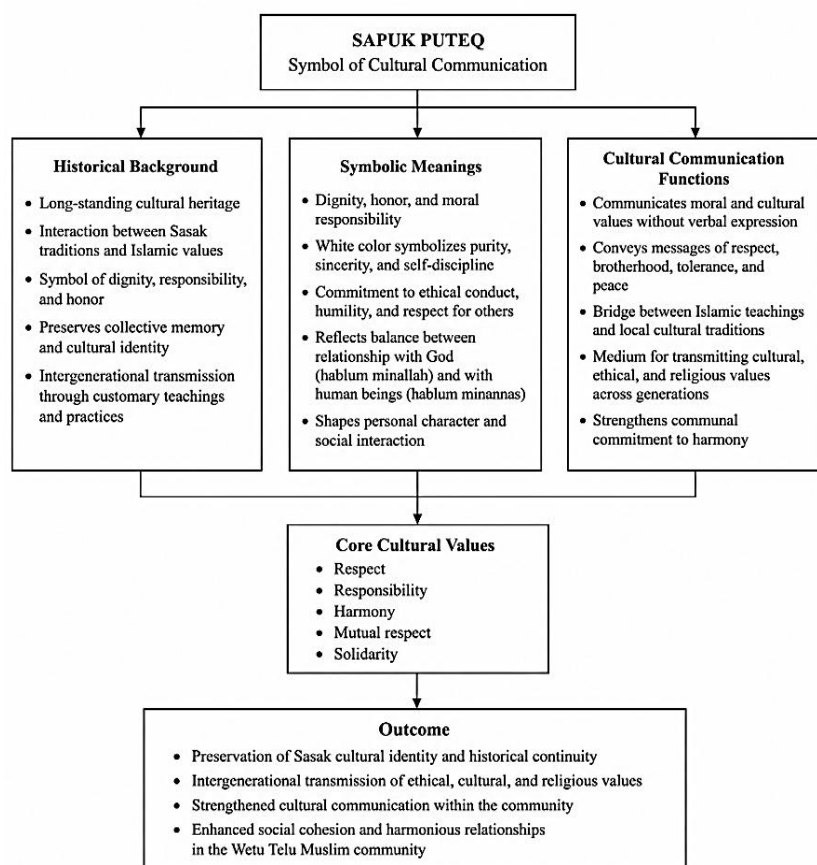


Figure 2. Sapuk Puteq as a Symbol of Cultural Communication in the Wetu Telu Muslim Community of Lombok

Source: Developed from interview, observation, and document analysis findings 2026

Figure 2 demonstrates that *Sapuk Puteq* functions as a multidimensional symbol of cultural communication rather than merely as traditional attire. Its historical background

reflects the continuity of Sasak cultural heritage and the integration of local traditions with Islamic values, while its symbolic meanings embody dignity, purity, moral responsibility, and collective identity. As a medium of cultural communication, *Sapuk Puteq* conveys shared ethical and social values through customary and religious practices, reinforcing respect, harmony, solidarity, and communal responsibility. These interconnected dimensions ultimately contribute to preserving Sasak cultural identity, facilitating the intergenerational transmission of ethical, cultural, and religious values, strengthening cultural communication, and enhancing social cohesion within the Wetu Telu Muslim community of Lombok.

2. Cultural and Religious Values Represented through *Sapuk Puteq* within the Wetu Telu Tradition

a. Cultural Values Embedded in *Sapuk Puteq*

The findings indicate that *Sapuk Puteq* embodies fundamental cultural values that continue to shape the social life of the Wetu Telu Muslim community in Lombok. Across all participant groups, the symbol was consistently associated with respect for ancestral heritage, collective identity, social solidarity, and communal responsibility. Rather than functioning solely as ceremonial attire, *Sapuk Puteq* serves as a cultural code through which the Sasak community expresses shared norms and strengthens social relationships. These values continue to be maintained through customary ceremonies, religious gatherings, and everyday community life.

One of the dominant themes emerging from the interviews was respect for local customs and ancestral heritage. Traditional leaders explained that wearing *Sapuk Puteq* signifies appreciation for the wisdom inherited from previous generations and reflects a commitment to preserving Sasak cultural identity.

One traditional leader explained:

"Sapuk Puteq is inseparable from the identity of the Sasak people. Whenever someone wears it during customary or religious ceremonies, the community immediately recognizes it as a sign of respect for ancestral traditions, local customs, and the Islamic values that have long guided the Wetu Telu community." (P03, Male, Traditional Leader, Lombok, Interview, June 12, 2026).

A community elder further emphasized the continuity of cultural heritage:

"Sapuk Puteq connects the past with the present. It reminds us how our ancestors preserved brotherhood, resolved conflicts through deliberation, and lived together in mutual respect. Those values remain relevant for our community today." (P10, Female, Community Elder, Lombok, Interview, June 10, 2026).

The findings also demonstrate that *Sapuk Puteq* represents collective identity and social solidarity. Participants consistently described the symbol as creating a strong sense of equality and belonging during customary and religious activities. Regardless of social status, individuals wearing *Sapuk Puteq* are regarded as members of the same cultural community who share collective responsibility for maintaining social harmony.

One community member stated:

"For me, Sapuk Puteq does not distinguish one person from another; instead, it unites us. During customary ceremonies, traditional leaders, religious leaders, and ordinary community members stand together with the same responsibility to preserve harmony and strengthen our sense of togetherness." (P15, Male, Adult Community Member, Lombok, Interview, June 26, 2026).

Similarly, a youth representative expressed:

"Whenever I wear Sapuk Puteq during cultural activities, I feel connected to the long history of the Sasak people. It reminds me that I belong to a community whose identity is built upon shared cultural values and mutual respect." (P18, Female, Youth Representative, Lombok, Interview, June 15, 2026).

Another important cultural value identified in this study is *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and communal responsibility. Participants explained that *Sapuk Puteq* is consistently worn during collective activities such as customary ceremonies, community meetings, and religious events, symbolizing each individual's willingness to contribute to the welfare of the community.

One participant explained:

"Whenever Sapuk Puteq is worn during customary ceremonies, the atmosphere becomes more orderly and respectful. People listen to one another, prioritize deliberation, and work together to maintain harmony. For us, the symbol has become part of a culture that teaches cooperation and brotherhood." (P13, Male, Adult Community Member, Lombok, Interview, May 19, 2026).

Likewise, a youth participant stated:

"For the younger generation, preserving Sapuk Puteq also means preserving the values contained within it, such as mutual cooperation, tolerance, deliberation, and concern for others. These values remain highly relevant in today's society." (P19, Male, Youth Representative, Lombok, Interview, July 04, 2026).

Field observations supported these findings. Throughout customary ceremonies, community members wearing *Sapuk Puteq* actively participated in preparing ceremonial equipment, organizing communal meals, welcoming guests, and assisting one another regardless of age or social status. These activities demonstrated strong social solidarity and confirmed that the cultural values represented by *Sapuk Puteq* continue to be practiced in everyday community life (*Observation, June 08, 2026; Observation, July 16, 2026*).

Document analysis also reinforced the interview findings. Community customary records describe *Sapuk Puteq* as an important cultural symbol representing unity, cooperation, respect for elders, and collective responsibility. The documents further emphasize that preserving *Sapuk Puteq* contributes not only to safeguarding Sasak cultural heritage but also to maintaining the ethical principles and social values inherited from previous generations (*Document Analysis, Sasak Customary Heritage Documentation, June 2026; Document Analysis, Community Cultural Preservation Record, July 2026*).

Overall, these findings demonstrate that *Sapuk Puteq* embodies essential cultural values that continue to strengthen the social life of the Wetu Telu Muslim community. Beyond representing ancestral heritage, the symbol reinforces collective identity, social solidarity, mutual cooperation, and communal responsibility while functioning as a cultural communication symbol that sustains social cohesion across generations.

b. Religious Values Reflected in *Sapuk Puteq*

The findings revealed that *Sapuk Puteq* embodies important religious values that are deeply integrated into the cultural life of the Wetu Telu Muslim community. Participants consistently explained that the symbol represents simplicity, humility, sincerity, and moral responsibility while reflecting the harmonious relationship between Islamic teachings and Sasak cultural traditions. Rather than being regarded merely as a customary attribute, *Sapuk Puteq* is understood as a symbolic expression of Islamic ethics that guides individual behavior in both religious and social contexts.

One of the dominant themes emerging from the interviews was the value of simplicity and humility. Religious leaders explained that the white color of *Sapuk Puteq* symbolizes purity of intention and encourages individuals to act sincerely without arrogance or social superiority. Wearing *Sapuk Puteq*, therefore, represents a moral commitment rather than a symbol of prestige.

One religious leader explained:

"The true meaning of Sapuk Puteq lies not in its appearance or the way it is worn, but in the values it represents. Its white color reminds every individual to maintain a pure heart, remain humble, and live according to both Islamic teachings and the cultural traditions inherited from our ancestors." (P05, Male, Religious Leader, Lombok, Interview, May 16, 2026).

Another religious leader similarly stated:

"Anyone who wears Sapuk Puteq is expected to uphold good conduct, honesty, and responsibility before God as well as toward fellow human beings. For this reason, the symbol has always been closely associated with noble moral character." (P06, Male, Religious Leader, Lombok, Interview, June 01, 2026).

The findings further indicate that *Sapuk Puteq* reflects the harmonious relationship between Islamic teachings and local traditions. Participants consistently rejected the perception that customary traditions contradict Islam. Instead, they explained that local customs have been preserved because they embody ethical principles that are consistent with Islamic values, including mutual respect, deliberation (*musyawarah*), compassion, and social harmony.

One religious leader explained:

"For the Wetu Telu community, custom and religion are not opposing elements. Sapuk Puteq symbolizes that Islamic values can coexist harmoniously with local traditions as long as both promote goodness, brotherhood, and respect for others." (P07, Male, Religious Leader, Lombok, Interview, June 18, 2026).

This perspective was reinforced by a community elder:

"We do not regard Sapuk Puteq merely as a cultural heritage. It reminds us to maintain a balance between practicing Islamic teachings and respecting the customs that have been passed down by our ancestors." (P12, Female, Community Elder, Lombok, Interview, July 19, 2026).

Another important finding concerns the integration of religious beliefs and cultural practices. Participants explained that Islamic values are communicated not only through religious sermons but also through cultural symbols and customary traditions. Within this

context, *Sapuk Puteq* functions as a symbolic medium that enables religious values to be practiced naturally in everyday community life.

One adult community member explained:

"Whenever we wear Sapuk Puteq during customary or religious activities, we are not simply preserving tradition. We are also reminding ourselves to remain honest, respect others, and live peacefully within our community." (P14, Female, Adult Community Member, Lombok, Interview, June 09, 2026).

Likewise, a youth representative stated:

"Young people continue to view Sapuk Puteq as a meaningful cultural symbol because it teaches Islamic values in ways that are easily understood and practiced in everyday life." (P20, Female, Youth Representative, Lombok, Interview, July 22, 2026).

Field observations further supported these findings. During religious ceremonies, customary gatherings, and communal prayers, participants wearing *Sapuk Puteq* consistently demonstrated respectful attitudes, modest behavior, and harmonious social interaction. Religious leaders frequently related the symbolic meaning of *Sapuk Puteq* to Islamic moral teachings when providing guidance to younger community members, indicating that religious and cultural values continue to be transmitted simultaneously (*Observation, June 14, 2026; Observation, July 20, 2026*).

Document analysis also confirmed that local customary documents describe *Sapuk Puteq* as a symbol of moral integrity, sincerity, harmony, and respect. These documents emphasize that customary traditions remain an important medium for strengthening Islamic ethical values while preserving Sasak cultural identity (*Document Analysis, Community Religious and Customary Guideline, June 2026; Document Analysis, Sasak Cultural Heritage Archive, July 2026*).

Overall, these findings demonstrate that *Sapuk Puteq* represents a meaningful integration of religious and cultural values within the Wetu Telu tradition. Beyond its ceremonial function, the symbol communicates Islamic ethical principles, promotes harmony between religion and local culture, and encourages individuals to practice simplicity, humility, sincerity, and moral responsibility in their daily lives. Consequently, *Sapuk Puteq* functions as a cultural communication symbol through which religious beliefs and local traditions continuously reinforce one another within the Wetu Telu Muslim community.

c. *Sapuk Puteq* as a Representation of Local Wisdom

The findings revealed that *Sapuk Puteq* represents an important manifestation of local wisdom that continues to preserve the cultural identity and religious values of the Wetu Telu Muslim community in Lombok. Participants consistently described the symbol as an ancestral heritage embodying indigenous knowledge, ethical principles, and social norms. Rather than existing merely as a traditional artifact, *Sapuk Puteq* functions as a living expression of local wisdom through which the community preserves its cultural heritage while adapting to contemporary social changes.

One of the dominant themes emerging from the interviews was the role of *Sapuk Puteq* in preserving indigenous cultural heritage. Traditional leaders explained that safeguarding the symbol is equivalent to preserving the collective memory and identity of the Sasak people. Accordingly, cultural preservation involves protecting not only the physical object but also the philosophical meanings embedded within it.

One traditional leader explained:

"Sapuk Puteq is an ancestral heritage that must be preserved because it embodies our history, cultural values, and moral teachings that shape the identity of the Sasak people. If this symbol disappears, an important part of our cultural identity will disappear with it." (P02, Male, Traditional Leader, Lombok, Interview, May 21, 2026).

Similarly, another traditional leader stated:

"Preserving Sapuk Puteq does not simply mean preserving a traditional object. More importantly, it means preserving the values of life inherited from our ancestors so that they continue to guide future generations." (P04, Male, Traditional Leader, Lombok, Interview, July 05, 2026).

The findings further indicate that *Sapuk Puteq* plays a crucial role in the intergenerational transmission of cultural and religious values. Community elders explained that children become familiar with the symbolic meanings of *Sapuk Puteq* through direct participation in customary ceremonies, religious activities, and family traditions. This process enables younger generations to understand not only how to wear the symbol but also the ethical responsibilities associated with it.

One community elder explained:

"Our children learn about Sapuk Puteq not from textbooks but through direct participation in customary activities. They observe, listen, and experience the values of respect, togetherness, and responsibility

that are embodied in this cultural symbol." (P09, Male, Community Elder, Lombok, Interview, May 29, 2026).

Another community elder added:

"We continue to pass down the values represented by Sapuk Puteq because culture can only survive when it is practiced collectively, not merely remembered or discussed." (P12, Female, Community Elder, Lombok, Interview, July 19, 2026).

The interviews also revealed a strong community commitment to sustaining local wisdom in contemporary society. Although participants acknowledged the influence of modernization and globalization, they believed that *Sapuk Puteq* remains highly relevant because it communicates universal values such as respect, responsibility, tolerance, and social harmony. Youth representatives emphasized that preserving cultural symbols should be accompanied by continuous efforts to reinterpret their meanings in ways that remain meaningful for younger generations.

One youth representative explained:

"As members of the younger generation, we hope that Sapuk Puteq will continue to be recognized not only as traditional clothing but also as a cultural symbol that teaches tolerance, unity, and respect for others. These values remain highly relevant in modern society." (P18, Female, Youth Representative, Lombok, Interview, June 15, 2026).

Likewise, another participant stated:

"The preservation of Sapuk Puteq should be strengthened through education, cultural activities, and digital media so that young people understand its philosophical meaning instead of simply wearing the symbol." (P20, Female, Youth Representative, Lombok, Interview, July 22, 2026).

Field observations further supported these findings. Throughout the research period, *Sapuk Puteq* continued to be worn during customary ceremonies, religious celebrations, and community meetings involving participants from different generations. Elder community members were observed introducing the philosophical meanings of the symbol to children and adolescents before ceremonial activities, demonstrating that local wisdom continues to be transmitted through direct participation and lived cultural experiences (*Observation, June 18, 2026; Observation, July 24, 2026*).

Document analysis also confirmed that community customary records identify *Sapuk Puteq* as an important element of Sasak cultural heritage that should be preserved through

cultural education, traditional ceremonies, and active community participation. These documents consistently emphasize that safeguarding *Sapuk Puteq* contributes to preserving indigenous knowledge, strengthening cultural identity, and maintaining harmonious social relationships (*Document Analysis, Sasak Cultural Heritage Documentation, June 2026; Document Analysis, Community Cultural Preservation Guideline, July 2026*).

Overall, these findings demonstrate that *Sapuk Puteq* represents a dynamic form of local wisdom that extends beyond its function as traditional attire. It preserves indigenous cultural heritage, facilitates the intergenerational transmission of cultural and religious values, and reflects the community's collective commitment to sustaining local wisdom in contemporary society. Consequently, *Sapuk Puteq* continues to function as a symbol of cultural communication that reinforces Sasak identity while ensuring the continuity of the Wetu Telu tradition across generations.

Figure 3 presents the core cultural and religious values embodied in *Sapuk Puteq* within the Wetu Telu tradition.

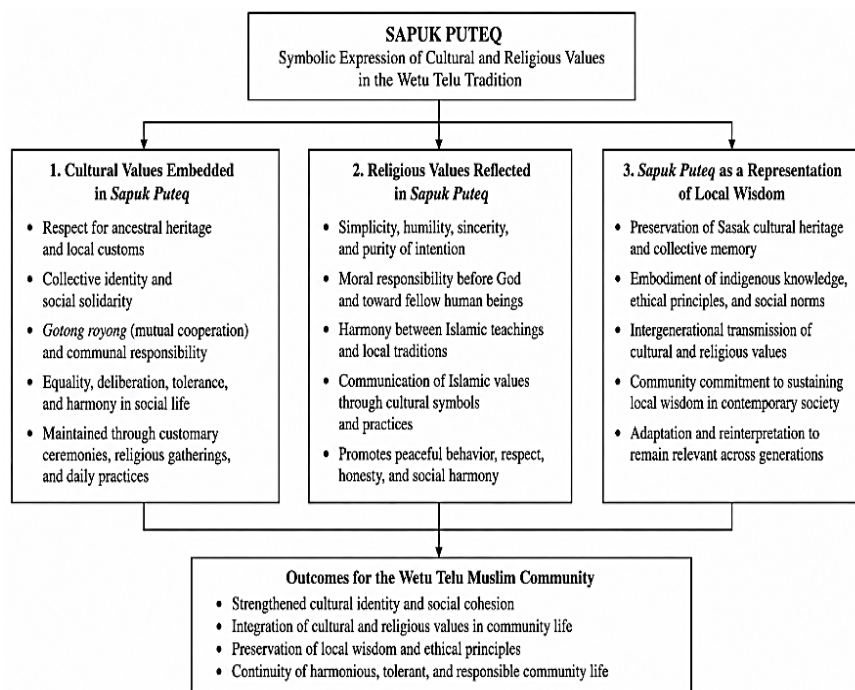


Figure 3. Cultural and Religious Values Represented through Sapuk Puteq within the Wetu Telu Tradition

Source: Developed from interview, observation, and document analysis findings 2026

Figure 3 demonstrates that *Sapuk Puteq* represents three interconnected dimensions within the Wetu Telu Muslim community. First, it embodies cultural values, including respect for ancestral heritage, collective identity, social solidarity, mutual cooperation (gotong

royong), and communal responsibility. Second, it reflects religious values by promoting simplicity, humility, sincerity, moral responsibility, and the harmonious integration of Islamic teachings with local traditions. Third, it represents local wisdom through the preservation of indigenous cultural heritage, the intergenerational transmission of ethical and religious values, and the community's commitment to maintaining cultural relevance in contemporary society. Together, these dimensions reinforce cultural identity, strengthen social cohesion, preserve local wisdom, and sustain harmonious community life, confirming that Sapuk Puteq serves as a dynamic symbol of cultural communication that bridges culture, religion, and social values within the Wetu Telu tradition.

1. The Contribution of *Sapuk Puteq* to Strengthening Religious Moderation in the Wetu Telu Muslim Community of Lombok

a. *Sapuk Puteq* as a Medium for Promoting Religious Moderation

The findings demonstrate that *Sapuk Puteq* plays a significant role in promoting religious moderation within the Wetu Telu Muslim community. Participants consistently explained that the symbol communicates the values of tolerance, mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and inclusiveness through cultural practices rather than formal religious instruction. Through its continued use in customary ceremonies, religious activities, and communal gatherings, *Sapuk Puteq* functions as a medium of cultural communication that strengthens harmonious relationships among individuals from different social backgrounds. Rather than serving merely as a traditional attribute, the symbol has become an effective cultural instrument for communicating moderate Islamic values within the local context.

One of the dominant themes emerging from the interviews was that *Sapuk Puteq* communicates tolerance and mutual respect. Traditional leaders explained that everyone participating in customary ceremonies is expected to respect one another regardless of social status or personal background. Wearing *Sapuk Puteq* symbolizes a shared commitment to preserving peace, equality, and social harmony.

One traditional leader explained:

"Sapuk Puteq teaches that everyone participating in customary activities must respect one another and maintain brotherhood. No one is considered superior or inferior because everyone comes with the same purpose—to preserve peace and strengthen harmony within the community." (P01, Male, Traditional Leader, Lombok, Interview, May 08, 2026).

Similarly, another traditional leader stated:

"Whenever someone wears Sapuk Puteq, the community understands that the person comes with good intentions, respects customary traditions, and is prepared to resolve differences through dialogue and deliberation. This is the meaning of tolerance that our ancestors have passed down from generation to generation." (P03, Male, Traditional Leader, Lombok, Interview, June 12, 2026).

Religious leaders further explained that *Sapuk Puteq* promotes peaceful coexistence because it reflects Islamic teachings that emphasize compassion, justice, and harmony. According to the participants, local traditions provide an effective medium for communicating these values in ways that are culturally meaningful and easily accepted by the community.

One religious leader explained:

"Within the Wetu Telu tradition, Sapuk Puteq reminds the community that Islam teaches peace, compassion, and respect for others. These values are practiced through customary traditions, making them easier to understand and apply in everyday life." (P05, Male, Religious Leader, Lombok, Interview, May 16, 2026).

Another religious leader similarly stated:

"We regard Sapuk Puteq as a form of cultural da'wah. Through this symbol, the community learns that peaceful social life can be achieved by respecting local traditions while practicing Islamic teachings in a moderate and balanced way." (P07, Male, Religious Leader, Lombok, Interview, June 18, 2026).

Community members also emphasized that *Sapuk Puteq* strengthens inclusive social interaction by creating a sense of equality and belonging among participants during customary and religious activities.

One community member explained:

"Whenever everyone wears Sapuk Puteq during customary ceremonies, we feel like one family. There is no distinction between traditional leaders, religious leaders, or ordinary community members because everyone works together and respects one another equally." (P15, Male, Adult Community Member, Lombok, Interview, June 26, 2026).

Likewise, a youth representative stated:

"For young people, Sapuk Puteq demonstrates that culture can strengthen tolerance and unity. It teaches us to respect differences without losing our own cultural identity." (P18, Female, Youth Representative, Lombok, Interview, June 15, 2026).

Field observations reinforced these interview findings. During customary ceremonies and religious gatherings, participants wearing *Sapuk Puteq* consistently interacted respectfully regardless of age, occupation, or social status. Discussions were characterized by mutual listening, deliberation, and collective participation, demonstrating that the symbolic meaning of *Sapuk Puteq* was reflected not only in ceremonial appearance but also in everyday social behavior (*Observation, June 12, 2026; Observation, July 21, 2026*).

Document analysis also supported these findings. Community customary guidelines consistently describe *Sapuk Puteq* as a symbol of unity, mutual respect, and social harmony. The documents further emphasize that preserving this cultural symbol contributes to strengthening inclusive relationships and maintaining peaceful interaction through culturally grounded practices (*Document Analysis, Community Customary Guideline, June 2026; Document Analysis, Sasak Cultural Preservation Record, July 2026*).

Overall, these findings demonstrate that *Sapuk Puteq* functions as an effective medium for promoting religious moderation within the Wetu Telu Muslim community. By communicating the values of tolerance, mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and inclusiveness through cultural symbolism, *Sapuk Puteq* strengthens harmonious social interaction and illustrates how indigenous cultural traditions can support the practical implementation of religious moderation in multicultural societies.

b. *Sapuk Puteq* and Social Cohesion

The findings indicate that *Sapuk Puteq* contributes significantly to strengthening social cohesion within the Wetu Telu Muslim community. Participants consistently explained that the symbol not only represents cultural identity but also reinforces trust, solidarity, cooperation, and collective responsibility. Through its use in customary ceremonies, religious gatherings, and communal activities, *Sapuk Puteq* creates a shared sense of belonging that strengthens relationships among traditional leaders, religious leaders, youth, and community members. Consequently, the symbol functions as an effective medium of cultural communication for sustaining social harmony.

One of the dominant themes identified in the interviews was that *Sapuk Puteq* strengthens trust and solidarity within the community. Traditional leaders explained that individuals wearing *Sapuk Puteq* are expected to demonstrate honesty, responsibility, and commitment to collective interests. Consequently, the symbol has become closely associated with mutual trust and social integrity.

One traditional leader explained:

"Whenever someone wears Sapuk Puteq during customary ceremonies, the community believes that the person comes with sincere intentions to preserve brotherhood and serve the common good. Therefore, the symbol strengthens mutual trust among community members." (P02, Male, Traditional Leader, Lombok, Interview, May 21, 2026).

Another traditional leader similarly stated:

"Sapuk Puteq constantly reminds us that a harmonious society can only be built upon trust, honesty, and a shared sense of responsibility. These values have enabled our community to remain united across generations." (P04, Male, Traditional Leader, Lombok, Interview, July 05, 2026).

The findings further reveal that *Sapuk Puteq* strengthens relationships between traditional leaders, religious leaders, and the wider community. Participants explained that customary ceremonies provide opportunities for these groups to work together in organizing cultural and religious activities. The shared use of *Sapuk Puteq* symbolizes equality, cooperation, and collective leadership rather than social hierarchy.

One religious leader explained:

"During every customary ceremony, traditional leaders, religious leaders, and community members gather together through deliberation. Sapuk Puteq symbolizes that we all share the same responsibility to preserve unity, harmony, and peace within the community." (P06, Male, Religious Leader, Lombok, Interview, June 01, 2026).

This perspective was reinforced by a community elder:

"The relationship between traditional leaders, religious leaders, and the community remains strong because everyone respects the cultural symbols inherited from our ancestors. Sapuk Puteq is one of the symbols that continuously unites us." (P11, Male, Community Elder, Lombok, Interview, June 27, 2026).

Another important finding concerns the role of *Sapuk Puteq* in maintaining social harmony through shared cultural practices. Participants explained that customary ceremonies involving *Sapuk Puteq* encourage dialogue, cooperation, mutual assistance, and peaceful

conflict resolution. These collective activities strengthen interpersonal relationships while preserving local traditions.

One adult community member explained:

"During every customary gathering, we work together without considering differences in social status. Sapuk Puteq reminds us that our primary responsibility is to preserve harmony and strengthen brotherhood within the community." (P16, Female, Adult Community Member, Lombok, Interview, July 08, 2026).

Likewise, a youth representative stated:

"For the younger generation, Sapuk Puteq is not only a cultural symbol but also a symbol of unity. It teaches us that preserving culture also means maintaining good relationships with everyone in the community." (P19, Male, Youth Representative, Lombok, Interview, July 04, 2026).

Field observations reinforced these interview findings. During customary meetings and religious ceremonies, the researcher observed close collaboration among traditional leaders, religious leaders, youth representatives, and community members in organizing ceremonial activities. Decision-making was consistently conducted through *musyawarah* (deliberation), while participants demonstrated mutual respect, cooperation, and shared responsibility throughout the events (*Observation, June 22, 2026; Observation, July 25, 2026*).

Document analysis also supported these findings. Community customary records consistently describe *Sapuk Puteq* as a symbol of unity, collective responsibility, and social solidarity. The documents further emphasize that preserving shared cultural symbols contributes to maintaining harmonious relationships and strengthening community resilience amid contemporary social change (*Document Analysis, Community Customary Council Documentation, June 2026; Document Analysis, Sasak Community Cultural Archive, July 2026*).

Overall, these findings demonstrate that *Sapuk Puteq* plays a substantial role in strengthening social cohesion within the Wetu Telu Muslim community. By fostering trust, reinforcing cooperation among traditional and religious leaders, and sustaining harmonious social interaction through shared cultural practices, *Sapuk Puteq* functions as an effective symbol of cultural communication that promotes social integration, collective responsibility, and community resilience.

c. Implications of *Sapuk Puteq* for Religious Moderation

The findings demonstrate that *Sapuk Puteq* has important implications for strengthening religious moderation within the Wetu Telu Muslim community. Participants

consistently explained that the symbol enables the community to preserve its cultural identity while embracing Islamic values in a harmonious and balanced manner. Rather than positioning local traditions and religion as opposing forces, *Sapuk Puteq* illustrates how cultural heritage can function as an effective medium for communicating moderation, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence. Consequently, the symbol represents not only Sasak cultural identity but also a practical model of cultural communication for promoting religious moderation in multicultural societies.

One of the major findings is that *Sapuk Puteq* enables the preservation of cultural identity while reinforcing Islamic values. Participants explained that maintaining customary traditions has never diminished their commitment to Islamic teachings. Instead, culture and religion complement one another by promoting moral responsibility, mutual respect, and social harmony.

One religious leader explained:

"For the Wetu Telu community, preserving Sapuk Puteq means preserving our cultural heritage while maintaining Islamic values. We do not perceive any contradiction between custom and religion because both teach goodness, brotherhood, and peaceful coexistence." (P07, Male, Religious Leader, Lombok, Interview, June 18, 2026).

Similarly, a traditional leader stated:

"Sapuk Puteq demonstrates that cultural identity does not prevent someone from becoming a good Muslim. On the contrary, local culture provides a meaningful pathway for practicing Islamic values in everyday life." (P03, Male, Traditional Leader, Lombok, Interview, June 12, 2026).

The findings further indicate that *Sapuk Puteq* reinforces religious moderation through local cultural symbols. Participants emphasized that moderate attitudes are cultivated not only through religious instruction but also through cultural practices that encourage dialogue, tolerance, cooperation, and collective responsibility. Consequently, the symbolic meaning of *Sapuk Puteq* contributes to developing moderation that is deeply rooted in local wisdom.

One community elder explained:

"The values of religious moderation are not taught only through religious sermons but also through cultural symbols such as Sapuk Puteq. When people understand its meaning, they naturally become more

willing to respect differences and preserve social harmony." (P10, Female, Community Elder, Lombok, Interview, June 10, 2026).

Likewise, an adult community member stated:

"In my opinion, Sapuk Puteq teaches us to respect everyone regardless of their background. Such values are essential for maintaining peaceful and harmonious relationships within a culturally diverse society." (P14, Female, Adult Community Member, Lombok, Interview, June 09, 2026).

Another important finding concerns the broader relevance of *Sapuk Puteq* as a model of cultural communication for promoting religious moderation in multicultural societies. Participants believed that the values embedded in *Sapuk Puteq*—including tolerance, mutual respect, solidarity, and peaceful coexistence—are universal principles that can inspire other culturally diverse communities.

One youth representative explained:

"I believe Sapuk Puteq is not only meaningful for the Sasak community. The values it represents—tolerance, respect, unity, and peaceful coexistence—can serve as an example for other multicultural communities facing social and religious diversity." (P20, Female, Youth Representative, Lombok, Interview, July 22, 2026).

Another youth participant added:

"Local cultural traditions such as Sapuk Puteq demonstrate that diversity does not have to become a source of conflict. Instead, culture provides a way for people to understand one another and build peaceful social relationships." (P18, Female, Youth Representative, Lombok, Interview, June 15, 2026).

Field observations further reinforced these findings. Throughout the research period, customary ceremonies involving *Sapuk Puteq* consistently reflected inclusive participation among traditional leaders, religious leaders, youth representatives, and community members. Cultural activities promoted dialogue, cooperation, and mutual respect, demonstrating that local traditions continue to function as practical mechanisms for nurturing religious moderation within everyday community life (*Observation, June 28, 2026; Observation, July 27, 2026*).

Document analysis also supported these findings. Community cultural documents consistently portray *Sapuk Puteq* as a symbol of unity, harmony, and cultural continuity. The documents emphasize that preserving local cultural symbols contributes not only to safeguarding indigenous heritage but also to strengthening social integration, intercultural

understanding, and religious moderation within contemporary society (*Document Analysis, Sasak Cultural Preservation Guideline, July 2026; Document Analysis, Community Customary Documentation, July 2026*).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that *Sapuk Puteq* extends beyond its role as a traditional cultural symbol by functioning as a practical instrument for strengthening religious moderation. Through preserving cultural identity, integrating Islamic values with local traditions, and communicating the principles of tolerance, solidarity, and peaceful coexistence, *Sapuk Puteq* provides a culturally grounded model of religious moderation that is relevant not only to the Wetu Telu Muslim community but also to other multicultural societies. These findings constitute the principal contribution of this study by conceptualizing *Sapuk Puteq* as a symbol of cultural communication through which the values of religious moderation are continuously constructed, communicated, and sustained across generations.

Figure 4 presents the conceptual contribution of *Sapuk Puteq* to strengthening religious moderation within the Wetu Telu Muslim community of Lombok.



Figure 4. The Contribution of Sapuk Puteq to Strengthening Religious Moderation in the Wetu Telu Muslim Community of Lombok

Source: Developed from interview, observation, and document analysis findings 2026

Figure 4 demonstrates that Sapuk Puteq serves as the central mechanism through which cultural communication reinforces religious moderation in the Wetu Telu Muslim community. The framework highlights three interconnected dimensions: (1) Sapuk Puteq as a medium for promoting religious moderation by communicating tolerance, mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and inclusiveness through cultural practices; (2) its contribution to strengthening social cohesion by fostering trust, solidarity, cooperation (gotong royong), collective responsibility, and harmonious relationships among traditional leaders, religious leaders, youth, and community members; and (3) its broader implications as a culturally grounded model of religious moderation that integrates Islamic values with Sasak local wisdom while preserving cultural identity. Through symbolic communication, intergenerational value transmission, and active participation in customary and religious practices, Sapuk Puteq ultimately contributes to sustainable religious moderation characterized by social harmony, cultural continuity, community resilience, and peaceful coexistence, providing a conceptual model that may also be applicable to other multicultural societies.

DISCUSSION

1. Results Analysis

This study aimed to examine Sapuk Puteq as a symbol of cultural communication within the Wetu Telu Muslim community of Lombok and to analyze its contribution to strengthening religious moderation. The findings demonstrate that Sapuk Puteq functions beyond its physical form as traditional attire; it represents a dynamic cultural symbol through which identity, ethical values, religious meanings, and social relationships are communicated and preserved. Three major findings emerged from this study: (1) Sapuk Puteq operates as a medium of cultural communication that transmits collective meanings and cultural identity; (2) it embodies interconnected cultural and religious values rooted in Sasak local wisdom and Islamic ethics; and (3) it contributes to religious moderation by strengthening tolerance, social cohesion, and peaceful coexistence within the Wetu Telu Muslim community.

The first finding indicates that Sapuk Puteq functions as a cultural communication symbol rather than merely a traditional accessory. Its significance lies in the meanings collectively constructed by the community through customary practices, religious activities, and social interactions. The continued use of Sapuk Puteq demonstrates that cultural symbols

can preserve historical memory and communicate social expectations without relying solely on verbal expressions. The symbol conveys messages of dignity, respect, responsibility, and communal identity, allowing cultural values to remain meaningful across generations. This finding suggests that the strength of Sapuk Puteq is not derived from its material form but from the shared interpretation and cultural understanding attached to it by the Wetu Telu community.

The second finding reveals that Sapuk Puteq represents an integration between Sasak cultural values and Islamic ethical principles. The symbolic meanings associated with purity, humility, sincerity, responsibility, and respect demonstrate that local traditions can serve as a medium for expressing religious values within a culturally relevant context. The findings indicate that the preservation of Sapuk Puteq does not merely maintain cultural heritage but also sustains moral teachings that guide individual and collective behavior. This reflects the ability of indigenous traditions to function as a source of ethical orientation by connecting ancestral knowledge with contemporary religious and social life.

The third finding demonstrates that Sapuk Puteq contributes to strengthening religious moderation through symbolic communication. The values represented by Sapuk Puteq, including tolerance, mutual respect, solidarity, and peaceful coexistence, encourage community members to develop harmonious relationships despite social differences. The findings indicate that religious moderation within the Wetu Telu community is not only produced through formal religious education or institutional discourse but also through everyday cultural practices that embed moderate values into social life. Therefore, Sapuk Puteq becomes a practical mechanism through which religious moderation is experienced, communicated, and reproduced.

These findings directly answer the research objectives concerning the communicative function, embedded values, and social contribution of Sapuk Puteq. Regarding the first objective, the study confirms that Sapuk Puteq functions as a cultural communication medium because it transmits shared meanings, cultural identity, and moral messages through symbolic representation. Regarding the second objective, the findings demonstrate that Sapuk Puteq contains cultural and religious values, particularly respect for tradition, humility, responsibility, harmony, and social solidarity. Regarding the third objective, the study confirms that Sapuk Puteq contributes to religious moderation by facilitating tolerance,

strengthening community relationships, and maintaining peaceful coexistence among members of the Wetu Telu Muslim community.

The findings reveal a sequential relationship among the symbolic, cultural, and religious dimensions of Sapuk Puteq. First, Sapuk Puteq functions as a cultural symbol that represents Sasak identity and collective memory. Second, through cultural communication processes, the symbol becomes a medium for transmitting values, including respect, responsibility, cooperation, and religious ethics. Third, these internalized values influence social behavior by encouraging dialogue, solidarity, and harmonious relationships. Finally, these social outcomes strengthen religious moderation within the community. Thus, Sapuk Puteq can be understood as a symbolic pathway connecting cultural identity, value transmission, social cohesion, and moderate religious practices.

The findings can be interpreted through the perspective of cultural communication theory, which views culture as a system of meanings communicated through symbols, traditions, and social practices. In this study, Sapuk Puteq represents a communicative medium through which the Wetu Telu community expresses collective identity and transmits ethical meanings. Cultural symbols are not passive objects but active mechanisms that enable communities to construct and reproduce shared meanings through social interaction (Hutchings et al., 2026; Jackson, 2025). Therefore, the symbolic function of Sapuk Puteq demonstrates how cultural communication preserves collective values while maintaining social relationships across generations.

From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, the meaning of Sapuk Puteq is created through collective interpretation rather than existing solely within the physical object. The community's understanding of its white color, ceremonial use, and philosophical meaning reflects a continuous process of social construction. Through repeated cultural practices, community members attach meanings of purity, dignity, humility, and responsibility to the symbol. This interpretation confirms that cultural symbols become meaningful because individuals and communities negotiate and maintain shared understandings through interaction.

Furthermore, the findings are consistent with the concept of religious moderation, which emphasizes the importance of balancing religious commitment with respect for cultural diversity and peaceful social relations. The integration of Islamic values with local wisdom through Sapuk Puteq illustrates how religious moderation can emerge from

culturally embedded practices rather than only from formal religious discourse. Previous perspectives on local wisdom indicate that cultural traditions provide effective channels for communicating tolerance, mutual respect, and social harmony because communities understand values more easily through familiar cultural expressions (Diab et al., 2022; Fuadi et al., 2024). In this sense, Sapuk Puteq functions as a local cultural medium that enables Islamic ethical values to be practiced within the social realities of the Wetu Telu community.

The findings also support the theoretical understanding of local wisdom as a living cultural resource. Local traditions remain sustainable when they continue to provide social meaning and respond to contemporary needs. Sapuk Puteq demonstrates that indigenous symbols can preserve cultural identity while simultaneously promoting inclusive and harmonious social relations. Local wisdom therefore operates not only as cultural heritage but also as a communication mechanism that maintains social cohesion and religious harmony (Fiani et al., 2024; Keban et al., 2025).

Based on the findings, this study proposes an integrated conceptual understanding of Sapuk Puteq as a cultural communication mechanism. The process begins with Sapuk Puteq as a symbolic representation of Sasak identity, which carries historical and cultural meanings. Through continuous cultural interaction, the symbol communicates cultural and religious values, including respect, humility, responsibility, tolerance, and solidarity. These values are then internalized through customary and religious practices, producing social cohesion and harmonious relationships. Ultimately, this process contributes to the strengthening of religious moderation within the Wetu Telu Muslim community.

Therefore, the contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that a traditional cultural symbol can function as a multidimensional communication system connecting identity, religion, and social harmony. Sapuk Puteq is not merely an element of cultural preservation but also a mechanism through which moderate religious values are constructed and sustained within indigenous Muslim communities.

The interpretation of these findings provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the broader significance of Sapuk Puteq as a cultural communication symbol. While this study demonstrates its symbolic functions and contribution to religious moderation, further discussion is required to examine how these findings correspond with, extend, or differ from previous studies on Wetu Telu Islam, local wisdom, cultural communication, and religious moderation. The following section therefore compares the

present findings with existing scholarly perspectives to identify the position and contribution of this research within the broader academic discourse.

2. Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study contribute to and extend previous discussions on the relationship between cultural symbols, indigenous traditions, and religious moderation. The results demonstrate that Sapuk Puteq functions as a cultural communication symbol that transmits identity, ethical values, and religious meanings within the Wetu Telu Muslim community of Lombok. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing that cultural symbols serve as communication systems through which communities preserve collective memory, negotiate identity, and maintain social relationships. Cultural communication is not limited to verbal interaction but also occurs through symbolic practices that represent shared meanings and social values (Jackson, 2025; Hutchings et al., 2026). Therefore, the role of Sapuk Puteq confirms that local cultural symbols can operate as communicative instruments that sustain community identity and cultural continuity.

The findings regarding the historical and symbolic meanings of Sapuk Puteq are consistent with previous studies on Wetu Telu Islam, which explain that the tradition represents a historical interaction between Islamic teachings and Sasak cultural practices rather than an isolated religious expression. Previous research has demonstrated that Wetu Telu developed through processes of cultural adaptation and accommodation, enabling Islamic values and local traditions to coexist within community life (Sirnopati, 2021; Sirnopati et al., 2022). The present study extends this perspective by showing that such cultural accommodation is not only reflected in religious practices but also embedded within symbolic objects such as Sapuk Puteq. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on the historical development, identity, or socio-cultural transformation of Wetu Telu, this research highlights the communicative dimension of a specific cultural symbol.

The finding that Sapuk Puteq embodies values of dignity, humility, responsibility, solidarity, and respect also supports previous research emphasizing the role of local wisdom in maintaining social harmony. Studies have shown that indigenous cultural practices provide meaningful frameworks for transmitting ethical values because communities understand and internalize moral principles through familiar cultural expressions (Diab et al., 2022; Fuadi et al., 2024). Similarly, research on cultural communication indicates that local traditions strengthen social cohesion by transforming cultural heritage into shared spaces for

interaction and value transmission (Fiani et al., 2024; Keban et al., 2025). The present study confirms these arguments while providing a more specific explanation of how a symbolic cultural element communicates such values within an indigenous Muslim context.

Furthermore, the integration between Islamic values and Sasak cultural traditions identified in this study is consistent with previous literature concerning religious moderation in Indonesia. Earlier studies have emphasized that religious moderation can be strengthened through approaches that connect religious teachings with local wisdom, cultural education, and community-based practices (Rijal et al., 2023; Lestari & Nopiana, 2024); Khamdan & Wiharyani, 2024). The findings of this study support this perspective by demonstrating that Sapuk Puteq becomes a culturally embedded medium through which Islamic ethical values, such as respect, compassion, responsibility, and peaceful coexistence, are practiced within everyday social interactions. However, this study advances previous discussions by illustrating that religious moderation can be communicated symbolically through traditional cultural representations rather than only through formal educational or religious institutions.

The contribution of Sapuk Puteq to social cohesion also corresponds with previous studies highlighting the role of local traditions in strengthening community solidarity and peaceful coexistence. Research on indigenous cultural practices has shown that shared traditions create social spaces where communities develop cooperation, mutual trust, and collective responsibility (Sari et al., 2025). Similarly, studies on Sasak society indicate that customary practices continue to reinforce civic values, collective participation, and social integration despite modernization and social change (Asrifitri & Zubair, 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2024). The present study supports these findings by demonstrating that Sapuk Puteq functions as a symbolic mechanism that encourages equality, cooperation, and harmonious relationships among traditional leaders, religious leaders, adults, and younger generations.

Nevertheless, this study provides a different emphasis from previous research by shifting attention from cultural preservation to cultural communication. Earlier studies on Wetu Telu have predominantly examined historical development, religious identity, cultural adaptation, and educational implications (Sirnopati, 2021; Nasri et al., 2024; Masriyani et al., 2026). While these studies have contributed significantly to understanding Wetu Telu as an indigenous Islamic tradition, limited attention has been given to how specific cultural symbols communicate values and contribute to religious moderation. The present study

addresses this gap by conceptualizing Sapuk Puteq as an active communication medium that constructs, transmits, and sustains moderate religious values within community life.

The findings also reinforce theoretical perspectives that cultural symbols function as mechanisms for meaning-making and social integration. Symbolic interaction perspectives emphasize that meanings attached to cultural objects emerge through collective interpretation and continuous social interaction. In line with this perspective, the meaning of Sapuk Puteq is not determined merely by its physical characteristics but by the collective understanding developed through customary practices and community experiences. This finding complements previous arguments that cultural symbols serve as dynamic resources for identity formation and social cohesion rather than static representations of tradition (Muhajir, 2022; Mumtaza et al., 2026).

Overall, the comparison with previous studies demonstrates both consistency and contribution. The findings confirm existing arguments regarding the importance of local wisdom, cultural communication, and religious moderation, while extending the discussion by revealing the communicative role of Sapuk Puteq as a specific indigenous symbol within the Wetu Telu Muslim community. This study therefore contributes a new perspective by showing that religious moderation can be strengthened through culturally meaningful symbols that connect tradition, Islamic values, and social harmony.

3. Implications of Findings

The findings contribute to the fields of cultural communication, indigenous Islam, and religious moderation by demonstrating that traditional symbols can function as active communication media for transmitting cultural and religious values. This study reconceptualizes Sapuk Puteq not merely as a cultural artifact but as a symbolic system that connects Sasak identity, Islamic values, and social harmony within the Wetu Telu Muslim community.

Theoretically, this study expands cultural communication perspectives by showing that symbolic practices preserve collective meanings, strengthen identity, and facilitate value transmission through social interaction (Jackson, 2025; Hutchings et al., 2026). The findings also enrich religious moderation discourse by revealing that moderate religious values, including tolerance, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence, can be constructed through culturally embedded practices rather than only through formal religious institutions (Fuadi et al., 2024; Keban et al., 2025).

Practically, the study highlights the importance of integrating local wisdom into cultural preservation, Islamic education, and community development programs. Sapuk Puteq can serve as an educational medium for promoting values of responsibility, respect, and harmony while strengthening cultural identity among younger generations. Therefore, preservation efforts should focus not only on maintaining the physical symbol but also on sustaining its philosophical meanings through education, cultural activities, and digital documentation.

4. Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the research was conducted within the specific cultural context of the Wetu Telu Muslim community in Lombok; therefore, the findings provide contextual understanding rather than broad generalization to other indigenous communities. Second, the study involved 20 participants selected through purposive and snowball sampling, which may not represent all perspectives within the wider community.

Additionally, as a qualitative phenomenological study, the findings are based on participants' interpretations and cultural experiences, although credibility was strengthened through triangulation of interviews, observations, and documents. Future studies may employ comparative, ethnographic, or mixed-method approaches to examine similar cultural symbols across different communities and explore how globalization and digital transformation influence the sustainability of indigenous traditions.

Despite these limitations, this study provides a meaningful contribution by demonstrating that cultural symbols such as Sapuk Puteq can function as communication mechanisms that preserve identity, transmit values, and strengthen religious moderation in multicultural societies.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Sapuk Puteq functions as a dynamic symbol of cultural communication that plays an important role in preserving cultural identity, transmitting values, and strengthening religious moderation within the Wetu Telu Muslim community of Lombok. The findings demonstrate that Sapuk Puteq is not merely a traditional head covering but a meaningful cultural symbol through which the Sasak community

communicates collective identity, historical memory, ethical principles, and social responsibility. Its symbolic meanings, including dignity, purity, humility, respect, and responsibility, are continuously constructed and reproduced through customary ceremonies, religious activities, and everyday social interactions. Therefore, Sapuk Puteq represents a form of nonverbal cultural communication that enables the intergenerational transmission of cultural and religious values.

Furthermore, this study reveals that Sapuk Puteq serves as a bridge between Sasak local wisdom and Islamic values by integrating cultural traditions with principles of religious moderation. Through its symbolic function, Sapuk Puteq communicates values of tolerance, mutual respect, solidarity, peaceful coexistence, and collective responsibility. These values contribute to strengthening social cohesion among traditional leaders, religious leaders, elders, adults, and younger generations within the Wetu Telu community. The study therefore provides a new conceptual understanding that religious moderation can be constructed not only through formal religious discourse but also through culturally embedded symbols that become meaningful within community life. In this regard, Sapuk Puteq represents a culturally grounded model of communication that connects identity, religion, and social harmony.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. The research was conducted within a specific socio-cultural context of the Wetu Telu Muslim community in Lombok, involving a limited number of participants selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Consequently, the findings provide a contextual and interpretive understanding rather than broad statistical generalization. In addition, as a qualitative phenomenological study, the findings are influenced by participants' experiences and interpretations, although credibility was strengthened through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, document analysis, and member checking.

Future research is recommended to explore similar cultural symbols in other indigenous Muslim communities to identify broader patterns of cultural communication and religious moderation. Comparative studies across different regions, ethnographic investigations, and mixed-method approaches may provide deeper insights into how traditional symbols adapt to globalization, digital transformation, and changing social contexts. Moreover, further studies may examine the role of cultural symbols in education,

youth engagement, and public discourse as strategies for preserving local wisdom while promoting inclusive and peaceful religious life in multicultural societies.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing scholarship on cultural communication, indigenous Islam, and religious moderation by demonstrating that local cultural symbols can function as powerful mechanisms for maintaining cultural continuity while simultaneously promoting harmonious and moderate religious practices. Sapuk Puteq illustrates that tradition and religion are not necessarily opposing domains; rather, they can interact productively to create meaningful pathways toward social cohesion, cultural resilience, and peaceful coexistence.

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