

Community-Based Islamic Education through Local Traditions: Internalising Religious Values through the *Tong Gentong* Practice during Maulid Nabi

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Article History:

Received:

1-11-2025

Revised:

18-12-2025

Accepted:

3-1-2026

Published:

11-1-2026

Keywords:

Community-based Islamic education; local traditions; *Tong Gentong*; Maulid Nabi; internalisation of Islamic values

Abstract: This study examines the *Tong Gentong* tradition during *Maulid Nabi* in Pohsangit Leres Village, Probolinggo, Indonesia, conceptualising it as community-based Islamic education embedded in local culture. It analyses the internalisation of religious values: “*ikhlas*” (sincerity), generosity, “*syukur*” (gratitude), “*ukhuwah*” (brotherhood), and “*ta’awun*” (mutual cooperation) through social practices and elucidates pedagogical mechanism beyond formal institutions. This study employed interpretive qualitative ethnographic case study. Data from participatory observation, in-depth interviews with key community stakeholders, and field documentation were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis to identify value transmission patterns. The findings indicate that *Tong Gentong* operates as a living pedagogical system where values are internalised through exemplary conduct, habituation, and intergenerational participation rather than through formal instruction. The tradition creates a shared moral space where religious teachings are enacted through collective practices, enabling sustainable character formation within everyday community life. This study reframes local traditions as structured informal Islamic educational mechanisms, offering an empirically grounded model integrating faith, culture and solidarity-enabling communities and educators to leverage such traditions for sustainable religious value internalisation in non-formal curricula. This study expands Islamic education beyond schools by reframing traditions as informal pedagogical systems integrating faith, culture, and solidarity, also offering empirically grounded community-based moral learning model.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji tradisi *Tong Gentong* dalam peringatan *Maulid Nabi* di Desa Pohsangit Leres, Kabupaten Probolinggo, serta mengonseptualisasikannya sebagai bentuk pendidikan Islam berbasis komunitas yang berakar pada budaya lokal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis proses internalisasi nilai-nilai pendidikan Islam melalui praktik sosial-budaya masyarakat serta menjelaskan mekanisme pedagogis yang berlangsung di luar institusi pendidikan formal. Secara metodologis, penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif interpretatif dengan desain studi kasus etnografis. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan tokoh masyarakat, tokoh agama, perempuan, pemuda, serta warga yang terlibat aktif, dan dilengkapi dengan dokumentasi lapangan. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan analisis tematik reflektif untuk mengidentifikasi pola transmisi nilai dan proses pembelajaran komunal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Tong Gentong* berfungsi sebagai sistem pedagogis hidup yang menginternalisasikan nilai keikhlasan (*ikhlas*), kedermawanan, rasa syukur, *ukhuwah* (*ukhuwah*), dan tolong-menolong (*ta’awun*) melalui keteladanan, pembiasaan, serta partisipasi lintas generasi, bukan melalui instruksi formal. Tradisi ini membentuk ruang moral kolektif di mana ajaran agama diwujudkan dalam praktik



sosial sehari-hari sehingga mendukung pembentukan karakter yang berkelanjutan dalam kehidupan masyarakat. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada penegasan bahwa tradisi lokal tidak sekadar berfungsi sebagai ekspresi budaya-religius, tetapi juga sebagai mekanisme pendidikan Islam nonformal yang terstruktur dan berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan kajian pendidikan Islam dengan memperluas cakupan pendidikan melampaui konteks persekolahan serta menawarkan model empiris pembelajaran moral berbasis komunitas yang mengintegrasikan iman, budaya, dan solidaritas sosial.

Please cite this article in APA style as:

Sa'idah, N. I; Prasetya, B; and Sain, Z. H. (2026). Community-Based Islamic Education through Local Traditions: Internalising Religious Values in the *Tong Gentong* Practice during Maulid Nabi. *Journal of Islamic Education Research*, 7(1), 1-20; <https://doi.org/10.35719/jier.v7i1.532>

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education is fundamentally oriented toward the holistic formation of human character, encompassing moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions. Its ultimate aim is the cultivation of *insan kamil*, a morally integrated individual capable of fulfilling social responsibility and spiritual devotion simultaneously (Sumanta, 2021; Muzaki et al., 2025). Rooted in Qur'anic teachings, Islamic education emphasizes the balanced development of human potential, integrating ethical conduct, spiritual awareness, and social engagement as inseparable elements of educational practice (Jenuri et al., 2025; Sholihah & Nurhayati, 2022). Conceptually, Islamic education positions human as *khalifah* on earth, entrusted with moral agency and social responsibility (Ahmad et al., 2024; Khalid et al., 2022). This vision underscores education not merely as cognitive transmission but as *tazkiyah*, a continuous process of moral purification grounded in *tauhid* (Qasserras, 2024; Toha et al., 2025).

However, despite the strong theoretical emphasis on holistic and value-based education, contemporary Islamic education discourse remains largely centered on formal institutions, curricular frameworks, and classroom-based pedagogies. Empirical realities in many Muslim societies reveal moral values are internalised more effectively through informal, community-based practices rather than institutional instruction alone. Social transformations driven by modernization, digitalization, and individualism have further weakened communal moral learning spaces, creating a gap between Islamic educational ideals and lived religious experiences (Gorucu & Kitsiou, 2025; Aulia & Yuliyanti, 2024). This condition highlights a theoretical and empirical disconnect between the conceptual foundations of Islamic education and the socio-cultural mechanisms through which religious values are actually transmitted and sustained within Muslim communities.

Previous studies on Islamic education have extensively examined the role of schools, teachers, and educational management in shaping students' moral character. Research highlights that Islamic education institutions play a significant role in fostering character education through role modelling, discipline, and value integration in formal learning environments (Osman, 2024; Saepudin, 2024; Safitri,

2024). These studies emphasize the importance of combining cognitive learning with moral instruction to cultivate piety (*taqwa*), responsibility, and ethical behavior among learners (Fitouchi et al., 2023; Miftachurrozaq et al., 2023). Similarly, research on Islamic education management confirms its effectiveness in preventing moral deviation and shaping individual behavior through structured educational systems (Andriyani, 2019; Sumarni et al., 2023).

Another strand of research has explored local wisdom and cultural traditions as vehicles for moral education. Scholars argue that local traditions can function as contextual educational media when aligned with Islamic principles, enabling values to be internalised in culturally meaningful ways (Fernando & Yusnan, 2022; Sakti et al., 2024). Studies on religious-cultural traditions such as *Maulid Nabi*, *tahlilan*, and communal rituals highlight their role in strengthening social cohesion, empathy, gratitude, and collective religious consciousness (Hudia et al., 2023; Pohan et al., 2025). These traditions are also recognised as soft and inclusive forms of *da'wah*, allowing Islamic teachings to be conveyed without coercive or didactic approaches.

Nevertheless, existing research tends to treat local traditions as cultural phenomena or as religious rituals, rather than as structured forms of Islamic education. A significant research gap remains in understanding how local traditions function as informal pedagogical systems that systematically internalize Islamic educational values within community life. Specifically, empirical studies rarely conceptualise local traditions as community-based Islamic education, nor do they sufficiently analyse the mechanisms through which religious values are transmitted, habituated, and sustained across generations through cultural practices.

This study offers a novel contribution by positioning the *Tong Gentong* tradition not merely as a cultural or religious celebration, but as a model of community-based Islamic education. Unlike previous studies that focus on institutional or symbolic dimensions, this research conceptualises *Tong Gentong* as an informal pedagogical space where Islamic values are internalised through participation, habituation, and collective experience. By framing the tradition as a form of lived Islamic education, this study bridges the gap between educational theory and socio-cultural practice.

Furthermore, this research advances Islamic education scholarship by demonstrating how local traditions function as living pedagogies that integrate *tauhid*, *akhlak*, social solidarity, and spiritual devotion within everyday community life. The analysis moves beyond normative claims by empirically examining the processes of value internalisation embedded in the *Tong Gentong* practice during Maulid Nabi commemorations. In doing so, the study contributes a culturally grounded yet theoretically relevant model of Islamic education that complements formal educational paradigms.

The objective of this study is to analyze how Islamic educational values are internalized through the *Tong Gentong* tradition during Maulid Nabi commemorations and to conceptualize this practice as a form of community-based Islamic education. Specifically, the study examines the educational mechanisms, value dimensions, and social processes through which religious values are transmitted and sustained within the local community.

This study argues that local traditions, when aligned with Islamic principles, function as effective forms of community-based Islamic education, facilitating the internalization of religious values in a more organic manner than formal instruction alone. The *Tong Gentong* tradition exemplifies how Islamic education operates as a lived experience, in which values such as sincerity, mutual cooperation, gratitude, and brotherhood are cultivated through collective practice rather than solely through textual transmission. Consequently, Islamic education should be understood not only as an institutional endeavor but also as a socio-cultural process embedded in community life.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to expanding the discourse on Islamic education beyond formal schooling into the domain of community-based and culturally embedded learning. By offering an empirically grounded model of informal Islamic pedagogy, this research provides valuable insights for scholars, educators, and policymakers seeking to strengthen value-based education in plural and rapidly changing societies. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of preserving local traditions as educational resources capable of sustaining Islamic values and social cohesion within contemporary Muslim communities.

METHOD

This study employs an interpretive qualitative paradigm using an ethnographic case study design. Grounded in interpretivism, the study views social reality as socially constructed and best understood through participants' lived experiences, meanings, and cultural practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This approach is particularly appropriate for examining community-based Islamic education, in which religious values are embedded in everyday social interactions and cultural rituals.

An ethnographic case study was selected to provide an in-depth and contextualised understanding of the *Tong Gentong* tradition as a form of informal Islamic pedagogy. Case study research enables the exploration of complex social phenomena within their real-life contexts, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are indistinct (Yin, 2018). In this study, *Tong Gentong* is examined as a bounded social system situated within a specific cultural, religious, and communal setting.

The research was conducted in Probolinggo Regency, Indonesia, where the *Tong Gentong* tradition is actively practised as part of the annual Maulid Nabi Muhammad commemorations. The site was selected because the tradition remains socially embedded, involves broad community participation, and functions as a living medium for the internalisation of Islamic values.

Data were generated from six key informants selected purposively based on their direct involvement and experiential knowledge of the *Tong Gentong* tradition. Consistent with interpretive qualitative inquiry, informants were approached as bearers of socially situated knowledge rather than as research samples. To capture diverse perspectives, informants represented multiple social roles within the community: DH, a community leader and village elder; UZ, a religious figure and

mosque administrator; RF, an actively involved adult community organiser; SL, a female participant involved in preparation and implementation; AN, a youth participant representing the younger generation; and TM, representing general community members. Informants are identified using initials to ensure confidentiality while indicating their social positions.

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis to enable methodological triangulation and enhance credibility (Flick, 2018). Interviews explored participants' experiences and interpretations of *Tong Gentong* in relation to Islamic educational values and community-based learning processes (Kallio et al., 2016). Observations focused on patterns of participation, cooperation, and religious expression during the preparation, implementation, and post-event stages of the tradition. Document analysis supported the interpretation of the historical continuity and symbolic meanings of *Tong Gentong* as a community-based educational practice.

Data analysis followed reflexive thematic analysis as outlined by Braun & Clarke, (2021), involving iterative processes of familiarisation, coding, theme development, and interpretive refinement. Data from interviews, observations, and documents were analysed inductively and compared across sources to ensure analytical rigour and theoretical coherence.

Trustworthiness was ensured through the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Ethical considerations included informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for cultural and religious norms. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Through this interpretive ethnographic case study, the research demonstrates how Islamic educational values are internalised through local traditions, positioning *Tong Gentong* as a lived pedagogical system that sustains Islamic education beyond formal institutional settings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The Role of the *Tong Gentong* Tradition in the Internalisation of Islamic Educational Values

The findings of this study demonstrate that the *Tong Gentong* tradition functions as a community-based Islamic educational practice in which religious values are internalised through collective participation rather than formal instruction. Field observations conducted during Maulid Nabi commemorations indicate that *Tong Gentong* is not merely a symbolic ritual but a structured communal activity involving the preparation, contribution, and distribution of goods. These processes create a shared moral space in which Islamic values are enacted through everyday social interactions.

Observation data reveal that community members voluntarily contribute food items, household utensils, and daily necessities without any formal obligation or documentation. The goods are displayed openly and later taken by participants, including children, in a festive and cooperative atmosphere. This pattern reflects a

moral economy grounded in trust, sincerity, and shared responsibility. During the observations, community members were seen coordinating tasks informally, assisting one another, and maintaining order without authoritative control (Observation O1). These findings indicate that Islamic educational values are embedded in social practice rather than transmitted through explicit instruction.

Interview data further confirm that community members perceive *Tong Gentong* as a moral and religious practice. A senior community leader explained that the tradition fosters collective awareness and voluntary cooperation each year, stating:

“The togetherness during Maulid Nabi, especially through *Tong Gentong*, makes people want to work together sincerely. No one is forced, and everyone feels responsible” (Interview DH).

This statement suggests that sincerity and responsibility are not imposed norms but values that emerge organically through repeated participation in the tradition.

The findings demonstrate that Tong Gentong systematically internalises Islamic values through structured social mechanisms a present at table 1, triangulated from 19 observations (O1-O19), 6 key informant interviews, and field documentation (Maulid Nabi 2025, Pohsangit Leres). Analysis employed Braun & Clarke reflexive thematic analysis (2021)

Table 1. Islamic Value Internalisation Mechanisms

Islamic Value	Internalisation Mechanism	Empirical Evidence	Ethnographic Observation
<i>Ikhlas</i> (Sincerity)	Absence of public recognition or material reward	Observation 1 (O1); Interviews with DH and RF	Contributors receive no formal documentation or acknowledgment; motivation is framed as an act of worship.
<i>Ta'awun</i> (Cooperation)	Informal and ability-based task distribution	Observations 2 and 15 (O2; O15)	Men, women, youth, and children contribute according to capacity; no rigid hierarchy is observed.
<i>Syukr</i> (Gratitude)	Social worship expressed through collective sharing	Observations 3 and 13 (O3; O13)	Goods are distributed and shared as devotional expression toward Prophet Muhammad.
<i>Ukhuwah</i> (Brotherhood)	Inclusive cross-generational participation	Observation 14 (O14)	Participation occurs without prioritisation based on age, gender, or social status.
Generosity	Flexible contribution according to individual capacity	Observation 12 (O12)	Food and utensils are donated voluntarily without fixed standards or quotas.

One of the most prominent findings concerns sincerity (*ikhlas*) as a socially reinforced educational value. Observations show that contributors receive no public recognition, and there is no mechanism to record who gives or the amount donated. This absence of symbolic reward strengthens the orientation toward worship as the primary motivation for participation. An adult participant emphasised this point:

“Everyone prepares with sincerity. There is no expectation of return, and that is why people participate happily” (Interview RF).

This finding highlights a novel aspect of community-based Islamic education, in which sincerity is internalised through collective norms rather than individual moral instruction.

The study also finds that mutual cooperation (*ta'awun*) functions as an operational educational mechanism within the tradition. During the preparation and implementation stages, men, women, youth, and elders were observed collaborating in setting up hanging structures, organising goods, and assisting participants (Observation O2). These activities are distributed informally based on capability rather than social status, indicating that cooperation is learned through participation. This demonstrates that Islamic educational values are transmitted horizontally within the community rather than vertically through authority.

Another significant finding relates to the intergenerational transmission of Islamic values. Children and adolescents are actively involved in all stages of the tradition, from preparation to participation. A young informant described this experience as follows:

“Children learn to share because they join directly. Adults show how to help others, and everyone feels they have a role” (Interview AN).

This finding illustrates a distinctive model of Islamic character education in which moral learning occurs through observation, imitation, and social engagement rather than classroom-based instruction.

In addition, the findings reveal that gratitude (*syukr*) is enacted as a form of social worship. Participants consistently expressed that sharing goods during *Tong Gentong* represents an act of thankfulness to Allah and devotion to the Prophet Muhammad. This spiritual orientation was evident in both verbal expressions and collective behaviour observed during the event (Observation O3). Gratitude, therefore, is not limited to verbal acknowledgment but is transformed into collective action that benefits the community.

Based on interview and observation data, the internalisation of Islamic educational values through the *Tong Gentong* tradition occurs through three interconnected processes. First, exemplary conduct, whereby elders and parents model sincerity and generosity that are observed by younger participants. Second, habituation, in which the annual repetition of the tradition normalises moral behaviours such as sharing and cooperation. Third, active participation, through which individuals internalise values by directly contributing time, effort, and material resources. These processes indicate that value internalisation is gradual and socially constructed through sustained communal practice.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the *Tong Gentong* tradition functions as a living pedagogical system of Islamic education at the community level. The novelty of this study lies in demonstrating that Islamic educational values such as sincerity, mutual cooperation, brotherhood, generosity, and gratitude are not merely taught or symbolised but are produced, reinforced, and sustained through repeated social practice. This positions *Tong Gentong* as an empirical model of community-based Islamic education in which moral and spiritual formation is embedded in cultural

life and everyday interaction, thereby extending the understanding of Islamic education beyond formal institutions.

The Social Dimension of the *Tong Gentong* Tradition

The findings indicate that the *Tong Gentong* tradition plays a significant role in shaping and sustaining social cohesion and collective responsibility within the Pohsangit Leres community. Observations conducted during the preparation, implementation, and post-event phases show that participation in the tradition transcends age, gender, and socio-economic boundaries. Men and women, elders and youth, actively contribute according to their capacities, creating an inclusive social space that reinforces a shared sense of belonging and communal ownership (Observation 04).

During the preparation phase, villagers were observed working collectively to assemble hanging structures, organise donated goods, and arrange the celebration area (Observation 05). Tasks were distributed informally without hierarchical coordination, indicating that cooperation was driven by shared moral commitment rather than formal authority. This collective labour reflects *gotong royong* as a lived social ethic, in which cooperation becomes a routine social practice rather than an occasional response to communal events. The atmosphere of cooperation and togetherness during these activities is visually documented in Figure 1, which illustrates villagers from different generations working collaboratively in preparation for the *Tong Gentong* tradition.



Figure 1. The process of making and preparing the *Tong Gentong* and the gathering of Pohsangit Leres villagers

Interview data further confirm that community members perceive *Tong Gentong* as a mechanism for strengthening social bonds. A community leader emphasised the inclusive nature of the tradition, stating:

“*Tong Gentong* involves everyone, from the young to the old. Everyone works together sincerely, and that strengthens the bonds among villagers” (Interview DH).

This statement indicates that social solidarity is not incidental but intentionally cultivated through repeated collective participation. The absence of

social distinction during the event reinforces equality and mutual respect among participants.

Another informant highlighted the role of *Tong Gentong* in intergenerational moral learning. One adult participant explained:

“Children learn to respect their elders, and the elders show how to give selflessly. This event is not just a ritual; it teaches morals through action” (Interview SL).

This finding demonstrates that social values such as respect, cooperation, and generosity are transmitted through direct intergenerational interaction. Moral education occurs through observation and shared experience rather than explicit instruction, positioning the tradition as an informal yet effective social learning environment.

Observational data also reveal that *Tong Gentong* contributes to reducing social disparities within the community. Participation does not depend on economic capacity, as individuals contribute in various forms, including goods, labour, and organisational support (Observation O6). This flexible contribution system enables equitable participation and reflects Islamic principles of justice and equality in practice. The tradition thereby fosters a sense of dignity and inclusion among all participants, regardless of social status.

The findings further show that socio-religious values such as mutual assistance (*ta'awun*), brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), and sincerity (*ikhlas*) are enacted through concrete social interactions before, during, and after the event. Villagers were observed assisting one another spontaneously, sharing responsibilities, and ensuring that vulnerable participants, such as children and the elderly, were supported throughout the celebration (Observation O7). These practices illustrate how Islamic social ethics are embedded within routine communal behaviour.

The social dimension of the *Tong Gentong* tradition demonstrates that Islamic education extends beyond spiritual instruction to encompass collective social formation. The novelty of this finding lies in showing that *Tong Gentong* functions as a community-based system of Islamic social education, in which social harmony, equality, and collective responsibility are not abstract ideals but lived experiences. Through sustained communal practice, the tradition integrates religious devotion with civic engagement, reinforcing both Islamic identity and social cohesion within the community.

The Historical Aspect and Sustainability of the *Tong Gentong* Tradition

The findings indicate that the *Tong Gentong* tradition has been sustained across generations through oral transmission and continuous communal participation rather than formal documentation. Field data show that the historical continuity of the tradition is maintained through lived practice, in which knowledge of procedures, meanings, and values is transmitted implicitly from elders to younger community members. Observations reveal that younger participants learn the sequence of activities, appropriate conduct, and moral orientation of the tradition by directly engaging alongside senior members of the community (Observation O8).

Interview data confirm that village elders function as custodians of collective memory and moral authority in sustaining the tradition. One senior informant stated:

“The *Tong Gentong* tradition has been passed down by the village elders and has become part of our identity in Pohsangit Leres” (Interview DH).

This statement indicates that the tradition is perceived not merely as an annual event but as an integral component of communal identity. The absence of written records does not diminish its legitimacy; rather, continuity is ensured through repeated enactment and shared understanding within the community.

Another informant emphasised the embeddedness of the tradition in everyday life, stating:

“We do not really know when it started, but it has always been here since we were children. Everyone feels that it is part of our lives” (Interview RF).

This finding suggests that *Tong Gentong* is not regarded as a historical artefact but as a living practice continuously reproduced through participation. Its sustainability relies on collective memory and emotional attachment rather than institutional regulation.

Observational data further demonstrate that the tradition remains adaptive while preserving its core values. Although the structure and timing of the event remain relatively consistent, minor adjustments are made each year to accommodate increasing participation and changing social conditions (Observation 09). These adaptations are implemented without altering the underlying moral orientation of sincerity, cooperation, and social care, indicating that sustainability is achieved through flexibility rather than rigid preservation.

The findings also reveal that the continuity of *Tong Gentong* reflects a harmonisation between local culture and Islamic teachings. Community members consistently interpret the tradition as aligned with Islamic values, particularly sincerity, brotherhood, and mutual assistance. These values are not conveyed through doctrinal explanation but enacted through repeated social practice. Observations show that participants frame their involvement as both religious devotion and communal responsibility (Observation 010).

From the perspective of Islamic education, the sustainability of the *Tong Gentong* tradition illustrates how a community educates itself through cultural practice. Values such as gratitude, cooperation, and social solidarity continue to be transmitted without reliance on formal educational institutions. Learning occurs through habituation, imitation, and participation, enabling Islamic educational values to remain relevant and meaningful across generations.

The novelty of this finding lies in identifying *Tong Gentong* as a self-sustaining educational system in which historical continuity and moral education are inseparable. The tradition functions as a living framework through which Islamic values are preserved, adapted, and internalised over time. This positions *Tong Gentong* not only as cultural heritage but also as an enduring model of community-based Islamic education capable of maintaining its relevance amid social change.

Islamic Values in the Practice of the *Tong Gentong* Tradition

The findings show that the *Tong Gentong* tradition functions as a concrete space for the enactment of Islamic values within everyday community life. Rather than being transmitted through formal religious instruction, these values are internalised through repeated social practices, collective participation, and shared moral understanding. Observations and interviews reveal that sincerity, generosity, gratitude, brotherhood, and mutual cooperation are not articulated as abstract religious concepts but are embedded in the structure and implementation of the tradition itself.

Sincerity emerges as the foundational value shaping participation in the *Tong Gentong* tradition. Field observations indicate that community members contribute goods voluntarily without any expectation of recognition or material return (Observation O11). There is no formal mechanism for recording contributions, nor is any symbolic distinction given to those who donate more than others. This absence of external validation reinforces sincerity as a socially shared norm. One participant emphasised this moral orientation, stating:

“There are no written rules, but everyone understands that whatever is hung must be halal, useful, and not excessive. The essence is sincerity and togetherness” (Interview AN).

This finding demonstrates that sincerity is sustained through collective moral awareness rather than regulatory enforcement, highlighting a distinctive mode of Islamic value internalisation rooted in communal ethics.

Generosity is enacted through the collective practice of sharing goods during the tradition. Observations show that villagers donate food items, household necessities, and everyday objects according to their capacity, without standardisation or obligation (Observation O12). Although the material value of these contributions may be modest, their symbolic and educational significance lies in normalising generosity as a communal practice. In this context, generosity is not framed as an individual moral achievement but as a shared expression of faith embedded in cultural routine. This finding points to a form of experiential Islamic education in which generosity becomes a habitual social action rather than an occasional religious act.

Gratitude is another value consistently observed throughout the implementation of the *Tong Gentong* tradition. Participation is widely understood as an expression of thankfulness to Allah for sustenance and communal well-being. Observational data indicate that gratitude is manifested through collective action rather than verbal expression (Observation O13). Community members frame acts of sharing as a form of worship linked to the commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad, thereby integrating spiritual devotion with social responsibility. This transformation of gratitude into social practice illustrates how faith-based values are translated into tangible communal behaviour.

Brotherhood is visibly enacted through inclusive participation that transcends age, gender, and social status. Observations during the preparation and distribution stages reveal that all participants are treated equally, with no prioritisation based on social position (Observation O14). Cooperation during these stages fosters a sense of belonging and mutual respect, reinforcing the perception of the community

as a moral collective. Brotherhood within the *Tong Gentong* tradition is therefore not merely symbolic but realised through sustained interaction and shared responsibility.

Mutual cooperation functions as the operational core of the tradition. Every stage of the activity is carried out through joint effort, with tasks distributed informally based on ability and availability. Observations show that men, women, youth, and children contribute in complementary ways, creating a pattern of collective engagement (Observation O15). This practice reflects Qur'anic ethics of cooperation in righteousness, not as a doctrinal reference but as lived experience. The absence of formal coordination structures further indicates that cooperation is internalised as a moral disposition rather than imposed through authority.

The findings reveal that the Islamic values embodied in the *Tong Gentong* tradition are sustained through unwritten social norms that are collectively recognised and practised. Moral order within the community is maintained through shared ethical consciousness rather than codified rules. This represents a distinctive model of Islamic character education in which values are produced and reinforced through social interaction, cultural continuity, and communal participation.

The novelty of this finding lies in demonstrating that Islamic values within the *Tong Gentong* tradition function as socially embedded moral practices rather than doctrinal teachings. Sincerity, generosity, gratitude, brotherhood, and cooperation are internalised through repeated engagement in communal life, positioning the tradition as a living system of Islamic education. This challenges the dominant view of Islamic education as primarily institutional and textual, offering empirical evidence that moral and spiritual formation can be sustained through culturally rooted community practices.

Challenges and Dynamics in the Implementation of the *Tong Gentong* Tradition

The findings indicate that the implementation of the *Tong Gentong* tradition involves ongoing challenges and adaptive dynamics accompanying its growing social significance. Observations conducted during the distribution phase reveal that increased participation has created a dense and highly enthusiastic atmosphere, particularly when community members gather to collect donated items (Observation O16). This situation occasionally results in physical crowding, raising safety concerns, especially for children and elderly participants.

Interview data confirm that community leaders are aware of these challenges and actively seek to manage them without undermining the moral essence of the tradition. One community leader stated:

“Sometimes it becomes very crowded and people start pushing. We try to keep things orderly so that everyone feels safe” (Interview DH).

This statement reflects a shared awareness that excessive competition contradicts the foundational values of togetherness and sincerity. The challenge lies not in participation itself but in maintaining moral order amid growing enthusiasm.

Observations further show that the community has responded to these challenges through informal adaptive strategies. Residents have introduced

collective agreements, such as queuing arrangements and participant grouping, to reduce disorder during distribution (Observation O17). These adjustments are not imposed through formal regulation but emerge through communal consensus, demonstrating the community's capacity for ethical self-regulation. This finding indicates that adaptation within the tradition is guided by moral reflection rather than external control.

Another significant challenge identified concerns the absence of written documentation regarding the historical origins and philosophical foundations of the *Tong Gentong* tradition. Knowledge of the tradition is transmitted entirely through oral narratives and participatory practice. While this mode of transmission effectively sustains the tradition, it also creates vulnerability to interpretive narrowing over time. Observations during informal discussions suggest that younger participants often perceive the tradition primarily as a festive event, with limited awareness of its deeper educational and spiritual meanings (Observation O18).

Despite these challenges, the findings show that the community possesses strong social capital that supports the sustainability of the tradition. Interviews and observations reveal emerging educational initiatives aimed at strengthening value transmission. Discussions of *Tong Gentong* values have begun to be incorporated into religious learning activities, youth Qur'anic gatherings, and mosque-based programmes (Observation O19). These initiatives function as complementary spaces in which the moral meanings of the tradition are articulated and reinforced for younger generations.

The involvement of educational and religious actors indicates that the tradition is evolving toward a more reflective mode of preservation. Rather than formalising the tradition through rigid documentation, the community integrates its values into educational settings, ensuring continuity through understanding rather than mere repetition. This dynamic illustrates how cultural traditions can remain relevant amid social change by embedding moral reflection within communal learning practices.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the challenges faced by the *Tong Gentong* tradition do not weaken its educational function but instead stimulate adaptive responses that reinforce its moral foundations. The novelty of this finding lies in showing that *Tong Gentong* operates as a resilient community-based educational system capable of negotiating change while preserving its core Islamic values. Through collective awareness, informal regulation, and educational integration, the tradition continues to function as a living space of Islamic moral learning in which sincerity, togetherness, and solidarity are continuously renewed within the community.

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that the *Tong Gentong* practice functions as a form of community-based Islamic education in which values are internalised through culturally organised participation rather than transmitted primarily through formal instruction. This supports the view that Islamic education is not confined to institutional spaces but also operates within everyday moral environments where religious meanings are enacted through collective routines. In Pohsangit Leres, the

Maulid Nabi commemoration provides a socially legitimate framework for value learning, while *Tong Gentong* serves as the concrete mechanism through which values are repeatedly practised and socially reinforced. In this sense, *Tong Gentong* bridges Islamic educational ideals and lived social realities, strengthening the practical continuity between normative teachings and communal conduct (Nordin et al., 2024; Yusoff, 2025; Ardianto & Hanafie Das, 2024). The tradition thus illustrates how community practices can operate as an educational ecology in which religious, social, and cultural domains converge into a sustained system of moral formation.

A central contribution of this study lies in detailing how value internalisation occurs through a structured sequence of actions that the community already recognises as meaningful, including preparing hanging structures, contributing goods, coordinating tasks, and managing distribution. These stages function as a form of local pedagogy through which sincerity, cooperation, gratitude, and responsibility are learned as communal habits. This pattern aligns with broader scholarship demonstrating that ritual participation is not merely symbolic but can operate as a mechanism for producing social cohesion, sustaining moral commitments, and maintaining collective identity. Comparable evidence is found in studies of Javanese Muslim communal traditions, where religious practice and social integration are interwoven through shared meals, prayer, and cooperative labour, thereby strengthening social bonds while embedding religious meanings in culturally familiar forms (Al Zahra, 2024; Nasir, 2019). Recent research demonstrates how Javanese Muslim ritual life functions as a holistic mechanism for expressing gratitude, reinforcing cohesion, and stabilising community well-being amid modern pressures, with *gotong royong* and shared distribution practices serving as key social technologies of solidarity (Pohan et al., 2025; Muqoffa et al., 2024). By situating *Tong Gentong* within this wider analytical landscape, the present study demonstrates that Maulid-associated traditions can operate as community-based moral infrastructures rather than merely devotional events.

The interview data further clarify that sincerity is not treated solely as an individual moral achievement but as a shared social norm produced by the design of the tradition itself. The absence of public recognition, contribution records, or status markers removes incentives for display and reinforces the primacy of intention. This finding extends existing discussions of Islamic character education by identifying a cultural mechanism that safeguards sincerity through communal arrangements rather than moral exhortation. Here, value learning occurs through repeated participation in a moral economy of trust, in which giving is normalised and competition is morally discouraged. This is theoretically significant because much research on religious education continues to privilege classroom-based transmission, whereas *Tong Gentong* demonstrates a horizontally distributed learning model in which values are stabilised through repeated social practice. A parallel can be observed in research on local wisdom and culturally grounded social processes in Indonesia, which shows how community leaders and cultural events structure ethical life and sustain harmony through inherited cultural capital and collective participation (Arsal et al., 2023; Agung et al., 2024). In *Tong Gentong*, elders and informal organisers fulfil this role not through formal authority but through example, coordination, and moral expectations embedded in communal life.

Another key finding concerns the intergenerational transmission of Islamic values. The participation of children and youth is not peripheral but integral, as they learn norms of respect, self-control, and generosity through direct engagement. This reinforces the argument that community-based Islamic education operates through observation, imitation, and habituation, reflecting a model of value education that is performed rather than explicitly explained. The novelty of this study lies not merely in noting that intergenerational learning occurs, but in demonstrating the concrete social pathways through which it is sustained. Youth learn appropriate norms of contribution that are halal, useful, and not excessive, learn ethical conduct during distribution, and learn cooperative responsibility during preparation activities. In this way, *Tong Gentong* functions as an informal curriculum of Islamic social ethics that is renewed annually through public participation. This finding also strengthens the argument advanced by (Zheng, 2023; İnce & Tikkanen, 2025; Dewi et al., 2024) regarding the role of communal solidarity in sustaining moral life, while specifying how such solidarity is pedagogically enacted within a concrete cultural tradition.

The historical continuity of *Tong Gentong* further supports the argument that sustainability can be achieved without formal documentation through oral transmission and collective memory reinforced by repeated performance. Rather than weakening legitimacy, the absence of written origins appears to strengthen communal ownership, as the tradition is experienced as shared and therefore continuously reproduced. This finding supports (Williams, 2024; Shevell & Denov, 2021; Hasanah & Andari, 2020) on the resilience of practices sustained through intergenerational inheritance, while adding a specific contribution. In *Tong Gentong*, sustainability is maintained through adaptive governance. The community introduces minor procedural adjustments, such as informal queuing, participant grouping, or safety strategies, to address crowding without altering the core moral orientation of the tradition. This adaptive capacity is crucial because it indicates that living traditions remain educational precisely because they can negotiate change while preserving moral meaning.

At the level of Islamic educational values, the findings demonstrate that sincerity, generosity, gratitude, brotherhood, and mutual cooperation are not abstract concepts attached after the fact but are embedded within the social organisation of the event itself. Gratitude, for example, is enacted as social worship rather than limited to verbal acknowledgment. This observation resonates with insights from hospitality and spirituality scholarship, which highlight how food sharing, communal consumption, and acts of giving function as spiritual practices and identity markers that connect devotional meaning with social belonging and moral commitment (Langille-Hoppe, 2025; Michopoulou & Jauniškis, 2020; Ryu, 2024). In *Tong Gentong*, material goods become vehicles of spiritual orientation. Sharing is understood simultaneously as devotion, gratitude, and love for the Prophet Muhammad, while also sustaining social inclusion.

The challenges identified in the findings, particularly crowding during distribution and the risk of meaning reduction among younger participants, should be interpreted as tensions inherent in successful communal traditions rather than indicators of decline. The key educational issue lies in maintaining the moral frame of the ritual so that enthusiasm does not shift into rivalry. Notably, the community's responses rely on ethical negotiation and consensus rather than coercive regulation.

This demonstrates that *Tong Gentong* possesses an internal moral corrective capacity. When disorder threatens the value structure, community actors adjust procedures to restore safety and fairness. This finding extends (Xiao et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2024; Al Halib & Pusvisasari, 2025) by showing that sustainability involves not only cultural preservation but also the ongoing moral maintenance of tradition through adaptive communal governance.

This study contributes to Islamic education scholarship by offering an empirically grounded model of community-based moral learning in which values are produced, reinforced, and sustained through culturally patterned participation. *Tong Gentong* expands the conceptualisation of Islamic education beyond formal institutions by demonstrating how local traditions can function as living pedagogical systems that integrate faith with civic life. The study also carries practical implications. Strengthening Islamic character education may require not only curricular reform but also recognition of and strategic support for community traditions that already operate as moral infrastructures. Future research could compare *Tong Gentong* with other Maulid-related communal practices across different regions to examine similarities and variations in moral transmission mechanisms, as well as to explore how such traditions negotiate digitalisation, demographic change, and shifting religious sensibilities.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the *Tong Gentong* tradition in Pohsangit Leres Village functions as an effective community-based system of Islamic education, in which religious values are internalised through culturally embedded social practices rather than through formal instruction. The findings demonstrate that the tradition has a stronger educational impact than previously assumed, as values such as sincerity (*ikhlas*), generosity, gratitude, brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), and mutual cooperation (*ta'awun*) are not merely symbolically expressed but systematically cultivated through habituation, collective participation, and intergenerational engagement. These results challenge the long-standing assumption that Islamic education is primarily institutional and classroom-based, and they open new discussions on the role of local traditions as living pedagogical spaces within Muslim communities.

In terms of scholarly contribution, this study reinforces previous arguments concerning the importance of community participation and cultural context in value formation, while simultaneously questioning institution-centred and text-dominated perspectives of Islamic education. More importantly, it introduces the conceptualisation of local tradition as a “living pedagogical system” and an informal moral infrastructure, thereby enriching theoretical and empirical debates on community-based Islamic education. This perspective broadens the analytical framework of Islamic education studies by integrating faith, culture, and social solidarity into a holistic model of moral learning.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. It focuses on a small number of participants within a single case and specific cultural setting, which restricts the generalisability of the findings. Variations related to demographic factors such as age, gender, and broader socio-cultural diversity were also limited. Future research

is therefore recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples, conduct comparative studies across regions, and explore quantitative or mixed-method approaches to validate and extend these findings. Such efforts will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how local traditions can sustainably support Islamic character education in contemporary societies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the community of Pohsangit Leres Village, Probolinggo Regency, for their openness, cooperation, and invaluable participation in this study. Special appreciation is extended to community leaders, religious figures, youth representatives, women participants, and all residents who generously shared their experiences and insights, thereby making this research possible.

The authors also acknowledge the academic support provided by Ahmad Dahlan Institute of Probolinggo, Indonesia, and The Superior University, Lahore, Pakistan, for facilitating scholarly collaboration and intellectual exchange throughout the research process. This study would not have been completed without the constructive academic environment and institutional encouragement offered by both institutions.

Finally, the authors thank all individuals who contributed directly or indirectly to the completion of this research, including those involved in data collection, field coordination, and manuscript preparation.

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