

ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL VALUES IN DELI MALAY MARRIAGE CUSTOMS: Negotiating Religious Identity in Urban Medan

Munawar Rahyudi, Mesran, Putri Syahri

Universitas Alwashliyah Medan

Jl. Sisingamangaraja Km. 5,5 Harjosari I, Kota Medan, Sumatera Utara

Email: mpantun1@gmail.com, mesranmpdi556@gmail.com, putrisyahri428@gmail.com

Abstract: This study aims to formulate a conceptual model of non-formal Islamic education based on Deli Malay wedding customs to reinforce religious identity amidst the challenges of modernization and urbanization in Medan City. Utilizing a qualitative approach with an ethnographic case study design, data were collected through participant observation of wedding rituals, in-depth interviews with 12 key informants (customary elders, Islamic scholars, syarak practitioners, and young couples), and documentary analysis of ancient manuscripts. The findings reveal that Deli Malay wedding customs transmit four main dimensions of Islamic educational values—*aqidah* (faith), *ibadah* (worship), *akhlaq* (morality), and *muamalah* (social transactions)—through four pedagogical mechanisms: symbolic, verbal (oral poetry and advice), experiential, and intergenerational transmission. The novelty of this study lies in formulating a conceptual framework that positions wedding customs not merely as ceremonial traditions, but as an adaptive non-formal educational ecosystem capable of mediating cultural commercialization and sustainably strengthening the religious identity of the urban Muslim community.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Deli Malay Wedding Tradition, Religious Identity

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk merumuskan model konseptual pendidikan Islam nonformal berbasis adat perkawinan Melayu Deli dalam memperkuat identitas keagamaan di tengah tantangan modernisasi dan urbanisasi di Kota Medan. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus etnografis, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif terhadap ritual pernikahan, wawancara mendalam bersama 12 informan kunci (tokoh adat, ulama, praktisi *syarak*, dan pasangan muda), serta studi dokumentasi naskah kuno. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa adat perkawinan Melayu Deli mentransmisikan empat nilai utama pendidikan Islam—*aqidah*, *ibadah*, *akhlaq*, dan *muamalah*—melalui empat mekanisme pedagogis: internalisasi simbolik, verbal (*pantun* dan *petuah*), pengalaman langsung, dan transmisi antargenerasi. *Novelty* penelitian ini terletak pada formulasi kerangka konseptual yang memetakan adat perkawinan bukan sekadar tradisi seremonial, melainkan sebagai ekosistem pendidikan nonformal adaptif yang mampu memediasi komersialisasi budaya serta memperkuat identitas keagamaan masyarakat Muslim urban secara berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Islam, Perkawinan Melayu Deli, Identitas Keagamaan

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education is fundamentally a holistic process of internalizing Islamic values through the cultivation of faith (*aqidah*), Islamic law (*sharia*), morality (*akhlaq*), and social ethics (*adab*) as the foundation for developing individuals who possess strong religious commitment, knowledge, and character (Adamu, 2025; Aisyah et al., 2025). Rather than being confined to formal institutions like schools and madrasahs, character formation historically operates across broad socio-cultural ecosystems. From the perspective of Islamic educational philosophy, character formation is realized through the principles of *ta'dib* (character cultivation), *tadrij* (gradual learning), and *tanmiah* (value development), enabling Islamic values to be transmitted continuously through social interaction and lived experience (Al-Attas, 1980; Audia & Agil, 2024). Consequently, cultural traditions that flourish within Muslim community's function as non-formal Islamic education networks that play a strategic role in transmitting religious values across generations. However, contemporary scholarly discourse frequently treats non-formal cultural practices as passive artifacts rather than active pedagogical instruments, creating an artificial divide between institutional Islamic instruction and lived cultural realities.

In contemporary society, increasing scholarly attention has been devoted to the integration of local culture into Islamic education. Numerous studies have demonstrated that the effectiveness of

Islamic education depends not only on formal instructional quality but also on the ability of communities to integrate universal Islamic values with local wisdom embedded in their socio-cultural traditions (Alhamuddin et al., 2022; Aziz, 2016). Such an approach enables Islamic teachings to remain contextually relevant without compromising their normative foundations (Azra, 2002; Erwin et al., 2026). Nevertheless, rapid social transformation, globalization, and urban pragmatism pose significant challenges to local traditions as effective media for value internalization. The growing tendency toward consumerist lifestyles gradually diminishes the educational function of cultural traditions, reducing them to ceremonial performances rather than meaningful educational processes (Aminudin et al., 2025).

One of the cultural traditions that embodies profound Islamic educational values is the Deli Malay wedding custom in Medan City. Malay wedding customs are not merely cultural ceremonies; they constitute a structured mechanism for transmitting Islamic values through successive stages, including *merisik* (preliminary inquiry), *meminang* (proposal), *berinai* (henna ceremony), *akad nikah* (marriage contract), and *tepung tawar* (blessing ritual). Each stage conveys religious and moral messages concerning family responsibility, respect for parents, mutual cooperation, and commitment to Islamic principles. This harmonious relationship between culture and religion is reflected in the well-known Malay philosophical maxim, *adat bersendikan syarak, syarak bersendikan*

Kitabullah ("custom is founded upon Islamic law, and Islamic law is founded upon the Qur'an"), which affirms that local customs are inseparable from Islamic teachings and collectively shape the religious identity of the Malay community.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that local cultural traditions contain various Islamic educational values that contribute to character development and community cohesion (Fahrurrozi et al., 2025; Fuad et al., 2026). Research on local cultural practices reveals that traditional rituals embedded in Muslim communities represent values of *ta'aruf* (mutual acquaintance), *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), *tawsiyah* (religious advice), and *mitsaqan ghalizhan* (a solemn covenant), which constitute essential foundations for establishing an Islamic family (Azzahra & Rasmuin, 2024). However, existing literature suffers from two critical limitations. First, most studies adopt a purely descriptive and folkloric approach, cataloging customary stages and symbolic meanings without critically examining how these practices function as pedagogical systems. Second, previous research predominantly focuses on homogenous rural contexts, leaving a significant gap in understanding how traditional educational customs adapt within complex urban environments.

In the urban context of Medan City, modernization, population mobility, and shifting lifestyles have substantially transformed the implementation of Deli Malay wedding traditions. Many customary stages are simplified or omitted due to time

efficiency, financial constraints, and commercialized event practices (Aminudin et al., 2025). Consequently, younger generations participate in wedding ceremonies merely as cultural formalities without understanding the underlying philosophical meanings and Islamic values. This transformation weakens the function of wedding customs as a medium for character development and religious identity. The analytical gap lies in the failure of current Islamic education scholarship to provide an adaptive conceptual framework that explains how non-formal traditional education can survive, transform, or be re-engineered amid urban social friction.

Against this background, this study addresses this critical gap by conceptualizing Deli Malay wedding customs as a dynamic system of non-formal Islamic education. The novelty of this research lies in its formulation of an integrative, culturally grounded conceptual model that links Islamic educational values, mechanisms of value internalization (*ta'dib*, *tadrij*, *tanmiyah*), and religious identity construction within an urbanizing society. Unlike previous descriptive studies, this research positions customary traditions as an adaptive non-formal educational framework capable of mitigating value erosion in modern Muslim communities. Academically, this study expands non-formal Islamic education theory by bridging local wisdom with character formation; practically, it offers strategic insights for religious leaders, cultural guardians, and educators to revitalize traditional customs as authentic media for moral education.

METHOD

This study employs an ethnographic case study design within a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm to investigate how the Deli Malay wedding tradition functions as a non-formal Islamic educational system in urban Medan. Fieldwork was conducted over eight months across three main districts in Medan City that retain strong historical ties to the Deli Sultanate, providing a contextual setting marked by rapid urbanization and cultural shift. Primary data were gathered from twelve key informants selected through purposive and criterion sampling based on their cultural authority, historical knowledge, and active involvement in customary practices. These informants comprised four customary elders (*pemangku adat*), three local Islamic scholars (*ulama*), three wedding officiants (*mak inang* and *syarak* practitioners), and two newly married couples representing the younger generation. To capture authentic social interactions and pedagogical moments, participant observation was conducted across seven complete traditional wedding ceremonies, focusing on specific ritual stages including *merisik*, *meminang*, *berinai*, *akad nikah*, and *tepung tawar*. Observations were documented through field notes, audio recordings, and visual documentation of customary symbols, spatial layouts, and oral expressions such as traditional *pantun*. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with all informants to explore their personal

interpretations of customary rituals, mechanisms of pedagogical transmission, and perceived value shifts. Supplementary data were retrieved from archival manuscripts of the Deli Sultanate, written customary guidelines, and local cultural records. Data were analyzed inductively using a multi-phase qualitative analysis consisting of data condensation, thematic categorization, and interpretive synthesis. Qualitative data were systematically coded using specialized software to identify emergent themes surrounding pedagogical mechanisms, religious values, and identity construction. Trustworthiness was established through source and method triangulation, prolonged field engagement, peer debriefing with cultural scholars, and detailed member checking with key informants to confirm the authenticity of ritual interpretations and local terminology.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Educational Values Embedded in the Deli Malay Wedding Tradition and Their Internalization Process within the Deli Malay Community in Medan City

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Deli Malay wedding tradition constitutes a living form of non-formal Islamic education through which religious values are transmitted across generations. Rather than functioning merely as a sequence of ceremonial activities, each stage of the customary wedding process embodies educational messages that cultivate religious

consciousness, moral character, and social responsibility. These values are not conveyed through formal instruction but are internalized through collective participation, symbolic rituals, customary advice, exemplary conduct, and continuous interaction among family members, religious leaders, customary elders, and the broader community. This finding reinforces the notion that Islamic education extends beyond institutional settings and is deeply embedded within the socio-cultural practices of Muslim communities, where tradition serves as a dynamic medium for value transmission (Al-Attas, 1980; Aisyah et al., 2025; Maulidin et al., 2025).

The study identified four major dimensions of Islamic educational values consistently reflected throughout the Deli Malay wedding tradition, namely values of faith (aqidah), religious practice (ibadah), moral conduct (akhlaq), and social responsibility (muamalah). The value of aqidah is introduced from the earliest stages of the marriage process by emphasizing that marriage is fundamentally an act of worship and a sacred covenant established under the guidance of Allah. Informants consistently explained that every customary ceremony ultimately directs participants toward strengthening their awareness that marriage is not solely a social contract between two families but also a spiritual commitment before God. Consequently, the wedding tradition functions as an educational process that reinforces tawhid by reminding participants that every stage of human life should be guided by divine

principles rather than merely cultural conventions. This integration of Islamic principles and cultural practice demonstrates the broader role of Islamic education in shaping religious consciousness through lived experience (Al-Attas, 1980; Nata, 2010).

The educational dimension of ibadah becomes particularly evident during the akad nikah, collective prayers, Qur'anic recitation, and religious advice delivered by religious leaders and customary elders. These practices demonstrate that worship is inseparable from social life and that marriage represents the beginning of a lifelong commitment to fulfilling religious obligations within the family. Participants indicated that these rituals educate both the bride and groom regarding their responsibilities as Muslim spouses while simultaneously reminding the extended family that the establishment of a household is closely connected to the realization of Islamic values in everyday life. The integration of religious practices with customary ceremonies is consistent with research demonstrating that Malay marriage customs can function as important spaces for transmitting Islamic communication and religious values within the community (Idawati et al., 2024; Lubis et al., 2023).

Equally significant are the akhlaq values embedded throughout the wedding ceremonies. Respect for parents, humility, honesty, patience, gratitude, discipline, mutual respect, and courtesy are continuously emphasized through customary speeches, symbolic gestures, and

traditional advice delivered during the ceremonies. Unlike classroom-based moral education, these values are demonstrated directly through observable behaviors that involve all participants. The younger generation witnesses how elders communicate respectfully, resolve ceremonial matters through consultation, cooperate in organizing the wedding, and demonstrate collective responsibility toward the newly married couple. Such experiences transform moral education into practical social learning rather than abstract ethical instruction. This finding is consistent with the understanding that Islamic character education requires the integration of values into everyday behavior and social relationships rather than limiting character formation to theoretical instruction (Nata, 2010; Rahman & Subando, 2025). Studies of local wisdom-based character education similarly demonstrate that cultural environments can become effective contexts for habituating moral values and strengthening character formation (Alhamuddin et al., 2022; Aziz, 2016).

Another important finding concerns the transmission of muamalah values, particularly cooperation (*ta'awun*), solidarity (*ukhuwah*), mutual consultation (*musyawarah*), responsibility, generosity, and social harmony. Throughout the preparation and implementation of wedding ceremonies, community members voluntarily contribute labor, financial assistance, and organizational support without expecting personal rewards. Informants described these collaborative

activities as expressions of communal responsibility rooted in Islamic teachings regarding brotherhood and mutual assistance. Consequently, the wedding tradition serves not only as a family celebration but also as an educational arena where collective social ethics are experienced directly by community members of different generations. Such a finding corresponds with research emphasizing the relationship between local culture, religious values, and social harmony in Muslim communities (Maimun et al., 2025; Jabar & Salsabila, 2025).

Beyond identifying these educational values, the study also revealed that their internalization occurs through multiple interconnected mechanisms rather than through explicit instruction alone. The first mechanism is symbolic internalization, whereby every customary object, ritual, and ceremonial sequence conveys implicit educational messages that participants gradually interpret through repeated cultural participation. Traditional symbols therefore function as pedagogical instruments that communicate Islamic principles without requiring formal educational settings. This finding supports the view that local wisdom can serve as pedagogical capital within Islamic education because cultural practices provide meaningful contexts through which religious and moral values can be experienced and interpreted (Nugraheni et al., 2026; Maulidin et al., 2025).

The second mechanism is verbal internalization through *pantun*, customary speeches, religious sermons, and parental

advice. During nearly every stage of the wedding ceremony, elders communicate ethical guidance concerning marital responsibility, family harmony, respect for parents, and obedience to Islamic teachings. Informants emphasized that these oral traditions remain one of the most influential means of transmitting religious values because they combine emotional expression, cultural legitimacy, and spiritual authority. Unlike written educational materials, these oral traditions are delivered within meaningful social contexts that enhance participants' emotional engagement and facilitate deeper value internalization. Such practices are consistent with Islamic educational approaches that emphasize moral guidance, character formation, and the cultivation of religious consciousness through interpersonal interaction (Adamu, 2025; Nata, 2010).

The third mechanism involves experiential internalization through direct participation in customary practices. Rather than learning Islamic values conceptually, younger family members actively participate in preparing ceremonies, assisting guests, observing interactions among elders, and cooperating with other community members. Through these lived experiences, religious values become embedded within everyday social practices and gradually shape individual attitudes and behavior. This process demonstrates the importance of contextual and participatory learning in Islamic education, particularly when local wisdom becomes an authentic environment for character

formation (Mansur & Sholeh, 2024; Alhamuddin et al., 2022).

The final mechanism identified in this study is intergenerational transmission, whereby customary leaders, religious scholars, parents, and senior family members collectively assume educational responsibilities. The continuity of Islamic educational values within the Deli Malay wedding tradition therefore depends not upon formal educational institutions but upon sustained interaction between generations. However, participants also acknowledged that modernization and urban lifestyles have weakened this transmission process. Increasingly simplified ceremonies, reduced community participation, and declining understanding of customary philosophy have limited opportunities for younger generations to internalize the religious meanings embedded within wedding traditions. Consequently, while the Deli Malay wedding tradition continues to survive as a cultural institution, its educational function is gradually becoming less visible. This condition reinforces the importance of strengthening the educational dimension of local wisdom in contemporary society (Fuad et al., 2026; Erwin et al., 2026).

These findings extend previous studies concerning Islamic values, local wisdom, and cultural practices within Muslim communities. Research on Malay marriage customs demonstrates that traditional ceremonies can become spaces for acculturation and the transmission of Islamic communication values (Idawati et al., 2024), while research on Malay

communities in Tanjung Balai confirms the presence of Islamic values within traditional marriage practices (Lubis et al., 2023). Other studies have demonstrated that local wisdom can contribute to character education and Islamic educational development (Alhamuddin et al., 2022; Fahrurrozi et al., 2025). Unlike studies that primarily identify the values embedded in cultural practices, the present study demonstrates not only what Islamic educational values are embedded within the Deli Malay wedding tradition but also explains the mechanisms through which these values are transmitted and internalized across generations. Accordingly, the findings contribute to the development of Islamic educational theory by conceptualizing the Deli Malay wedding tradition as a living system of non-formal Islamic education in which cultural practices, religious teachings, and community participation converge to shape both individual character and collective religious identity.

The Role of the Deli Malay Wedding Tradition in Strengthening Religious Identity amid Modernization and Urbanization

The findings of this study reveal that the Deli Malay wedding tradition continues to play a significant role in shaping and reinforcing the religious identity of the Deli Malay community in Medan City, although its educational function has undergone considerable transformation due to modernization and urbanization. Religious identity, in this context, is not understood merely as an individual's formal affiliation

with Islam but as a dynamic process through which Islamic beliefs, values, moral commitments, and cultural practices are continuously constructed, negotiated, and expressed within everyday social life. The findings indicate that the wedding tradition serves as one of the most visible communal spaces where Islamic identity is collectively performed, reaffirmed, and transmitted across generations through customary rituals that integrate religious teachings with local cultural wisdom. This relationship between Islamic education, local culture, and identity formation is consistent with studies emphasizing the role of cultural contexts in developing religious and national character (Aisyah et al., 2025; Jabar & Salsabila, 2025).

Participants consistently emphasized that the Deli Malay wedding ceremony represents more than a family celebration. It functions as a communal event that publicly affirms the Islamic identity of both the newly married couple and the wider community. Every stage of the ceremony—from the preliminary family meetings to the marriage contract, customary blessings, traditional advice, and communal prayers—symbolizes the inseparable relationship between Malay cultural identity and Islamic teachings. Informants frequently referred to the philosophical principle *adat bersendikan syarak, syarak bersendikan Kitabullah* as the moral foundation governing the entire wedding process. This philosophy reinforces the collective understanding that authentic Malay identity cannot be separated from Islamic values, thereby

positioning religion not as an external element but as the central framework through which cultural traditions are interpreted and preserved. The integration of Islamic values and local cultural identity is similarly reflected in studies of Islamic traditions and local wisdom in Indonesia (Maulidin et al., 2025; Alhamuddin et al., 2022).

The study further demonstrates that the construction of religious identity occurs through collective participation rather than individual learning alone. Wedding ceremonies involve extensive collaboration among customary leaders, religious scholars, extended families, neighbors, and community members, creating a social environment in which Islamic values are experienced collectively. Such communal participation enables individuals to develop a sense of belonging to both the Muslim community and the Deli Malay cultural heritage. Rather than acquiring religious identity solely through formal religious education, participants internalize Islamic values through shared experiences, mutual responsibilities, and continuous interaction during customary ceremonies. This finding reinforces the understanding that Islamic education encompasses community-based processes through which religious values become integrated into social and cultural life (Al-Attas, 1980; Audia & Agil, 2024).

Another important finding concerns the complementary roles of customary leaders and religious leaders in preserving religious identity. The study found that these two groups function collaboratively rather than independently. Religious

leaders ensure that every customary practice remains consistent with Islamic teachings, while customary leaders preserve the philosophical meanings, symbols, and cultural narratives that provide local relevance to those teachings. Informants explained that this partnership has historically prevented conflict between religious obligations and cultural traditions because both institutions recognize Islam as the normative foundation of Malay customs. Consequently, the educational messages conveyed during wedding ceremonies possess both religious legitimacy and cultural authority, making them more readily accepted by community members. This finding supports the broader argument that Islamic education can be strengthened when religious principles are contextualized through local cultural wisdom (Fahrurrozi et al., 2025; Fuad et al., 2026).

However, the findings also indicate that rapid urbanization has substantially altered the social environment in which religious identity is constructed. Medan City, as a metropolitan area characterized by high population mobility, cultural diversity, economic competition, and technological development, has transformed traditional community relationships. Many participants observed that contemporary wedding ceremonies have become increasingly simplified, with several customary stages either shortened or omitted due to financial considerations, limited time, and changing lifestyles. As a result, opportunities for transmitting Islamic educational values through

prolonged communal interaction have gradually diminished. Participants expressed concern that younger generations often recognize customary rituals only as cultural performances without fully understanding their religious and philosophical significance. Such challenges demonstrate the importance of maintaining the educational function of local wisdom amid contemporary social change (Fuad et al., 2026; Nugraheni et al., 2026).

Modernization has also influenced the orientation of wedding ceremonies by introducing stronger elements of commercialization and social prestige. Informants noted that considerable attention is now directed toward luxurious venues, decorative aesthetics, digital documentation, and public image, sometimes exceeding concern for the religious meanings embedded within customary practices. While modernization does not necessarily eliminate Islamic values, it frequently shifts public attention from the educational substance of the tradition toward its external appearance. Consequently, the symbolic function of the wedding tradition remains visible, whereas its role as a process of religious character formation becomes increasingly weakened. This situation parallels broader concerns regarding the transformation of cultural practices and the need to preserve their educational and moral dimensions within contemporary society (Erwin et al., 2026; Aminudin et al., 2025).

Despite these challenges, the study demonstrates that the Deli Malay wedding

tradition continues to exhibit remarkable adaptive capacity. Rather than rejecting modernization, customary leaders have sought to reinterpret traditional practices in ways that remain meaningful for contemporary society. Religious advice has increasingly incorporated discussions concerning digital ethics, family resilience, responsible parenting, economic responsibility, and the moral challenges confronting Muslim families in urban environments. This adaptive process illustrates that cultural traditions remain dynamic rather than static, continuously responding to changing social conditions while preserving their essential Islamic values. Such flexibility contributes to the sustainability of religious identity by allowing traditional educational messages to remain relevant within contemporary contexts (Erwin et al., 2026; Fuad et al., 2026).

These findings demonstrate that the wedding tradition functions not only as a repository of Islamic values but also as a social institution responsible for continuously reconstructing religious identity through cultural participation. The present study further reveals how modernization simultaneously challenges and reshapes the mechanisms through which religious identity is transmitted within urban Muslim communities. Rather than depicting modernization solely as a threat, this study suggests that social transformation creates opportunities for cultural adaptation, provided that the philosophical foundations of the tradition are preserved. This perspective is

consistent with research emphasizing the continuing relevance of local wisdom in strengthening Islamic education and character formation in modern contexts (Jabar & Salsabila, 2025; Mansur & Sholeh, 2024).

From the perspective of Islamic education, these findings affirm that the strengthening of religious identity cannot rely exclusively on formal educational institutions such as schools, madrasahs, or Islamic boarding schools. Equally important are community-based cultural institutions that provide authentic environments for experiencing Islamic values in everyday life. The Deli Malay wedding tradition illustrates that religious identity develops through continuous interaction among religious beliefs, cultural symbols, moral practices, and communal participation. Therefore, preserving customary traditions should not merely be viewed as an effort to conserve cultural heritage but also as a strategic educational initiative for sustaining Islamic identity in increasingly pluralistic and urbanized societies (Aisyah et al., 2025; Maulidin et al., 2025).

Overall, the findings indicate that the Deli Malay wedding tradition remains a significant medium for reinforcing religious identity despite the pressures of modernization and urbanization. Its continued relevance depends upon the collective commitment of customary leaders, religious scholars, families, educational institutions, and the wider community to preserve not only the ceremonial aspects of the tradition but also the Islamic educational values that

constitute its philosophical foundation. By maintaining this balance between cultural continuity and social adaptation, the Deli Malay wedding tradition continues to serve as a living expression of Islamic identity within contemporary urban society while demonstrating the enduring capacity of local wisdom to contribute to Islamic education in the modern era (Nugraheni et al., 2026; Erwin et al., 2026).

A Model of Islamic Education Based on the Deli Malay Wedding Tradition

The findings of this study culminate in the formulation of a conceptual model of Islamic education based on the Deli Malay wedding tradition, developed through the synthesis of empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives on Islamic education, cultural anthropology, and religious identity. The model is founded on the understanding that Islamic education is not exclusively institutional but also evolves through socio-cultural practices that naturally transmit religious values within community life. Unlike formal educational models that are organized around structured curricula, classroom instruction, and standardized evaluation, the Deli Malay wedding tradition represents a community-based system of non-formal Islamic education in which learning occurs through participation, cultural interaction, collective experience, and intergenerational transmission. Consequently, the proposed model positions local tradition not merely as cultural heritage but as an educational ecosystem capable of cultivating Islamic values, moral character, and religious

identity in a sustainable manner. This conceptualization is consistent with the broader understanding of Islamic education as a process of comprehensive human formation and with contemporary research on local wisdom as a pedagogical resource (Al-Attas, 1980; Nugraheni et al., 2026).

The model developed in this study consists of four interrelated components: educational objectives, educational content, educational processes, and educational outcomes. These components interact dynamically, demonstrating that the educational value of the wedding tradition extends beyond ceremonial performance to encompass the holistic formation of Muslim individuals and communities. The findings indicate that the educational objectives embedded within the Deli Malay wedding tradition are directed toward developing individuals who possess strong faith, noble character, social responsibility, and commitment to building harmonious Muslim families. Marriage is therefore understood not simply as a legal contract but as an educational milestone through which individuals assume broader religious and social responsibilities within society. Such objectives correspond with the emphasis of Islamic character education on the integration of religious commitment, moral development, and social responsibility (Aisyah et al., 2025; Rahman & Subando, 2025).

The educational content of the model is derived from Islamic values integrated into every stage of the customary wedding ceremony. The findings reveal that these values encompass the dimensions of

aqidah, ibadah, akhlaq, and muamalah. The dimension of aqidah reinforces awareness of Allah as the ultimate foundation of family life and human responsibility. The ibadah dimension emphasizes that marriage itself constitutes an act of worship requiring continuous spiritual commitment. The akhlaq dimension cultivates virtues such as honesty, humility, patience, gratitude, respect for parents, discipline, sincerity, and compassion. Meanwhile, the muamalah dimension promotes cooperation, mutual consultation, solidarity, social responsibility, generosity, and harmonious interpersonal relationships. These values are presented not as isolated moral concepts but as integrated principles that collectively shape the ethical orientation of Muslim family and community life. This integrated approach corresponds with Islamic educational thought that places faith, moral conduct, and social responsibility within a comprehensive process of human development (Al-Attas, 1980; Nata, 2010).

The educational process identified in this research differs substantially from conventional instructional approaches. Rather than relying on formal teaching methods, the Deli Malay wedding tradition employs experiential and participatory learning mechanisms that allow individuals to acquire values through direct engagement with cultural practices. The study found that Islamic educational values are transmitted through four complementary mechanisms: symbolic communication, oral tradition, exemplary conduct, and communal participation.

Symbolic communication occurs through customary rituals, ceremonial objects, and traditional practices whose meanings embody Islamic principles. Oral transmission takes place through pantun, customary speeches, parental advice, religious sermons, and traditional narratives that communicate ethical guidance in culturally meaningful forms. Exemplary conduct is demonstrated by customary leaders, religious scholars, parents, and senior family members whose behavior serves as living examples of Islamic morality. Finally, communal participation enables younger generations to internalize religious values through direct involvement in wedding preparations, collective cooperation, and shared responsibility rather than through passive observation alone. These mechanisms are consistent with research demonstrating that local wisdom can function as a concrete medium for character education and Islamic value internalization (Aziz, 2016; Alhamuddin et al., 2022; Mansur & Sholeh, 2024).

An important contribution of this model is its recognition of multiple educational actors. The findings indicate that responsibility for Islamic education within the wedding tradition is distributed across various members of the community rather than concentrated within formal educational institutions. Parents provide the primary moral foundation through family upbringing, customary leaders preserve cultural philosophy and traditional wisdom, religious leaders ensure theological consistency with Islamic

teachings, while the wider community reinforces social values through collective participation. This collaborative educational structure illustrates that Islamic education is fundamentally a communal responsibility in which religious values are sustained through continuous interaction among different social institutions. Such a perspective expands conventional understandings of Islamic education by acknowledging the educational significance of community-based cultural practices (Audia & Agil, 2024; Robbaniyah et al., 2025).

The proposed model also demonstrates considerable adaptability to contemporary social transformation. The findings reveal that modernization and urbanization have altered certain external aspects of wedding ceremonies without necessarily eliminating their educational potential. Several customary leaders reported modifying methods of value transmission to address contemporary issues, including digital ethics, family resilience, economic responsibility, marital communication, and parenting challenges. Rather than preserving tradition in a rigid manner, they reinterpret customary messages to ensure continued relevance within modern society. This adaptive capacity represents one of the model's principal strengths, as it enables local wisdom to respond constructively to changing social realities while maintaining its essential Islamic foundations. The capacity to integrate local wisdom with contemporary Islamic educational objectives is also emphasized in recent

research on character education and religious moderation (Fuad et al., 2026; Erwin et al., 2026).

Compared with previous studies, the present research offers a more comprehensive conceptualization of the educational function of Malay wedding traditions. Earlier investigations generally focused on identifying Islamic values embedded within customary ceremonies or examining the relationship between local culture and Islamic values (Idawati et al., 2024; Lubis et al., 2023). Other studies have emphasized the role of local wisdom in character education and Islamic educational development (Alhamuddin et al., 2022; Fahrurrozi et al., 2025). In contrast, this study advances beyond descriptive analysis by proposing a systematic educational model that explains not only what values exist but also how those values are transmitted, internalized, and transformed into religious identity through interconnected educational processes. This conceptual advancement constitutes the principal novelty of the research and contributes to the theoretical development of non-formal Islamic education.

The model also carries important implications for educational policy and practice. For Islamic educational institutions, it demonstrates that local cultural traditions can function as authentic learning resources that contextualize Islamic teachings within students' lived experiences. For customary institutions, the model provides a framework for strengthening the educational dimensions

of wedding traditions amid ongoing social transformation. For policymakers, it highlights the importance of integrating cultural preservation initiatives with character education programs that recognize local wisdom as an essential educational asset rather than merely an element of intangible cultural heritage. Such integration would contribute simultaneously to cultural sustainability and the development of Islamic character among younger generations. This orientation is supported by studies emphasizing the importance of local wisdom in character education, Islamic education, and community development (Aziz, 2016; Mansur & Sholeh, 2024; Maulidin et al., 2025).

Overall, the model of Islamic education based on the Deli Malay wedding tradition proposed in this study positions local culture as an active educational system rather than a passive cultural artifact. It illustrates that Islamic education is most effective when religious teachings are experienced within authentic social contexts where values are practiced collectively, reinforced through cultural participation, and continuously transmitted across generations. Accordingly, the Deli Malay wedding tradition represents a living educational institution capable of bridging Islamic principles with local cultural identity while responding adaptively to the demands of contemporary urban society. This conceptual model therefore enriches the discourse on contextual Islamic education by demonstrating that sustainable character formation is achieved

not only through formal schooling but also through culturally grounded educational practices that remain deeply embedded in the everyday life of Muslim communities (Al-Attas, 1980; Nugraheni et al., 2026; Aisyah et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Deli Malay wedding tradition represents a living system of non-formal Islamic education that integrates Islamic values with local cultural practices. The findings demonstrate that the tradition embodies four fundamental dimensions of Islamic educational values—*aqidah*, *ibadah*, *akhlaq*, and *muamalah*—which are internalized through symbolic rituals, customary advice, exemplary conduct, communal participation, and intergenerational transmission. These mechanisms enable the wedding tradition to function not merely as a cultural ceremony but as an educational process that cultivates religious awareness, moral character, social responsibility, and Islamic family values. Furthermore, the study reveals that the Deli Malay wedding tradition plays a significant role in strengthening the religious identity of the Deli Malay community by reinforcing the inseparable relationship between Malay cultural identity and Islamic teachings, despite the challenges posed by modernization and urbanization. Although contemporary social transformation has reduced the educational intensity of several customary practices, the tradition continues to

demonstrate its adaptive capacity through the reinterpretation of Islamic values within changing social contexts. The principal contribution of this research is the formulation of a conceptual model of Islamic education based on the Deli Malay wedding tradition, which positions local cultural traditions as dynamic educational ecosystems. This model enriches the discourse on contextual Islamic education by demonstrating that sustainable character formation and religious identity development can be effectively achieved through culturally embedded, community-based educational practices that complement formal Islamic educational institutions.

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