

The Role of Women in the Ngembaru Padi Tradition as Local Wisdom in The Dayak Lawangk Community in Sungai Laur District, Ketapang Regency

Ni Gusti Ayu Komang Aurea¹, Pitalis Mawardi Baging², Hana Mauludea³

¹ Student of Master Program at Social Studies Education, PGRI University of Pontianak, Indonesia

^{2,3} Assistant Professor of Master's Program at Social Studies Education, PGRI University of Pontianak, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Background: Indigenous women play a crucial yet frequently underrecognised role in the preservation and intergenerational transmission of cultural values within traditional communities.

Objective: This study examined the role of women in the Ngembaru Padi tradition among the Dayak Lawangk community in Sinar Kuri Village, Sungai Laur District, Ketapang Regency.

Methods: A qualitative method with an ethnographic design was employed. Employing a feminist ethnographic design, data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and were analysed using the interactive model. Data validity was ensured through source and methodological triangulation.

Findings: The findings reveal three principal dimensions of women's roles. First, women serve as active guardians of the tradition, bearing primary responsibility for the preparation of ceremonial food and ritual materials and coordinating communal activities across all stages of the ceremony. Second, women function as agents of local wisdom preservation, sustaining and transmitting the social, spiritual, and moral values — including mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), communal solidarity, honesty, and integrity — that constitute the ethical foundation of Dayak Lawangk community life. Third, and most distinctively, women act as deliberate pedagogical actors who consciously transform the ritual space of the tradition into a medium of character education, most notably through moral dialogues with children during the rice seed selection process.

Conclusion: The study contributes to feminist ethnographic scholarship on indigenous women in Indonesia and to the broader literature on ethnopedagogy and character education, with practical implications for heritage preservation policy and locally grounded educational practice.

KEYWORDS: Ngembaru Padi tradition; Dayak Lawangk; women's agency; local wisdom; intergenerational transmission; feminist ethnography; character education.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the world's most culturally diverse nations, home to hundreds of distinct ethnic communities whose traditions, rituals, and systems of local wisdom have long served as the moral and social foundations of community life. Among these communities, indigenous women have historically functioned not merely as participants in cultural practices but as primary custodians of intergenerational knowledge — transmitting values, rituals, and ethical frameworks to successive generations through embodied practice and daily interaction (UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2022; Atikah et al., 2022). Yet feminist scholars have consistently noted that women's epistemic roles within indigenous rituals are frequently rendered invisible in academic literature, where their contributions tend to be framed in logistical or supportive terms rather than as expressions of intellectual and moral agency (Niko et al., 2024; Astono et al., 2024). This study takes its departure from that critical observation, arguing that a feminist ethnographic lens is essential for recovering and documenting the full scope of women's agency within indigenous ceremonial life.

The Dayak Lawangk community of Sungai Laur District, Ketapang Regency, West Kalimantan, exemplifies this broader pattern. The majority of this community depends on rice farming for their livelihood, and women occupy a central role in both the domestic sphere and the agricultural and ritual cycles associated with rice cultivation. According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of



Ketapang Regency, the population of Sungai Laur District numbers approximately 19,571, with a near-equal distribution between men (10,418) and women (9,455) — a demographic composition that underscores the significance of women's social and cultural participation. Central to the community's ritual calendar is the Ngembaru Padi tradition, an annual harvest thanksgiving ceremony in which community members collectively offer produce, perform traditional dances, and share a meal of newly harvested rice. Beyond its ceremonial dimensions, Ngembaru Padi reflects a cosmological relationship between humans, nature, and the Creator, and serves as a vehicle for transmitting core social values — including honesty, responsibility, mutual cooperation, and discipline — that the Dayak Lawangk community collectively understands as integrity. Rice farming is not merely an economic activity for this community; it is the axis around which social, spiritual, and moral life is organized (Sugianto & Salfarini, 2020).

Scholarly attention to women's roles in Dayak harvest traditions has grown in recent years, though important gaps remain. Izzah et al. (2023) documented women's participation in harvest thanksgiving ceremonies, highlighting their responsibility for preparing ritual offerings and performing ceremonial dances. Wina and Habsari (2017) examined the Naik Dango ceremony among Kanayan Dayak women in Landak Regency, finding that women serve as crucial secondary actors in ritual preparation and execution, while primary leadership remains with men. Sugianto and Salfarini (2020) similarly noted women's central roles in the preparation, implementation, and transmission of symbolic meaning in Ngembaru Padi. More broadly, studies on indigenous women in West Kalimantan have increasingly employed feminist and ecofeminist frameworks to recover women's voices and roles as guardians of ecological and cultural knowledge (Astono et al., 2024; Niko, 2018; Niko et al., 2024). At the same time, scholarship on character education in Indonesia has demonstrated that local wisdom embedded in indigenous traditions constitutes a powerful medium for transmitting moral values such as honesty, integrity, and social responsibility, particularly when transmitted through direct community participation and intergenerational interaction (Sakti et al., 2024; Suparjan et al., 2024; Amalia et al., 2024). Hidajat's (2025) theoretical framework of hermeneutics and symbolic interactionism provides a further lens through which rituals such as Ngembaru Padi can be understood as generators of collective meaning, reinforcing shared values of cooperation, responsibility, and honesty as constitutive elements of communal integrity.

Despite this growing body of work, three interconnected gaps persist in the literature. First, existing ethnographic studies of Dayak harvest rituals have been geographically concentrated in Landak Regency and its surroundings (Habsari, 2017; Tando, 2024; Olendo, 2020), leaving communities in Ketapang Regency — including the Dayak Lawangk of Sungai Laur — largely undocumented. Second, prior scholarship has consistently positioned women as logistical supporters of ritual rather than as primary agents of cultural and moral reproduction. This framing, as feminist scholars have argued (Niko et al., 2024; Astono et al., 2024), reflects a broader tendency to undervalue women's epistemic contributions within indigenous ceremonial life. Third, and most significantly, the pedagogical dimensions of women's ritual roles — specifically, their capacity to transform traditional ceremonies into intentional spaces of character education — have not been systematically examined in the Dayak context. Preliminary fieldwork for the present study revealed a distinctive local practice that substantiates this gap: during the rice seed selection phase of the Ngembaru Padi ceremony, mothers in Sinar Kuri Village engage in deliberate moral dialogue with their children, using the act of selecting quality seeds as a symbolic lesson in honesty and personal integrity. This practice, which has not been documented in studies of comparable traditions in Landak Regency or elsewhere, positions women not as passive participants but as conscious pedagogical actors — women who actively transform a traditional agricultural ritual into a medium for the intergenerational transmission of integrity values. Furthermore, agricultural modernization policies in Ketapang Regency promoting hybrid seeds and mechanized farming have progressively displaced traditional collective practices, while rural-to-urban migration and industrial encroachment have eroded the social norms that once sustained them (BPS Ketapang, 2022). In this context, women have increasingly assumed the role of the last line of defense in preserving the ethical and pedagogical dimensions of the Ngembaru Padi tradition.

This study therefore aimed to explore and describe the roles of women in the Ngembaru Padi tradition in Sinar Kuri Village, Sungai Laur District, Ketapang Regency, with particular attention to how women function as primary agents in the intergenerational transmission of integrity values through ritual practice. Using a feminist ethnographic approach, this research seeks to document the forms of women's participation in the tradition, identify the pedagogical mechanisms through which integrity values are transmitted, and describe the social and symbolic significance of women's roles within the broader context of the Dayak Lawangk community. By centering women's agency rather than treating it as incidental to ritual practice, this study makes two principal contributions. First, it extends the geographic scope of Dayak ethnographic scholarship to a community and tradition that have been



largely absent from prior research. Second, and more broadly, it advances feminist approaches to the study of indigenous ritual by demonstrating that women's roles in harvest ceremonies extend well beyond logistical support — constituting, in the case of Sinar Kuri Village, a sophisticated and intentional practice of character education that is both culturally specific and of wider comparative significance

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed an ethnographic research design, which was selected because ethnography is particularly suited to examining the cultural practices, values, and social meanings of a community from the perspective of its members (Creswell, 2014). Ethnographic inquiry allowed for sustained, direct engagement with the Dayak Lawangk community, enabling a nuanced and contextually grounded understanding of women's roles in the Ngembaru Padi tradition. The research was conducted in Sinar Kuri Village, Sungai Laur District, Ketapang Regency, West Kalimantan Province. This site was selected because the village is among the few communities in the region that continues to actively maintain the Ngembaru Padi tradition as a living practice embedded in the local rice farming system, making it an especially appropriate setting for the research objectives.

The primary subjects of this study were women from the Dayak Lawangk community who are actively involved in the Ngembaru Padi tradition. These women participated across various stages of the tradition, including the preparation of ceremonial activities, the performance of ritual practices, and social activities associated with the tradition. Women were selected as primary subjects because they play a central and multifaceted role in maintaining, enacting, and transmitting the cultural and moral values embedded in the tradition to succeeding generations. In addition to the primary subjects, this study also engaged supporting informants to obtain more comprehensive and triangulated data. These informants included traditional leaders of the Dayak Lawangk community, community leaders in Sungai Laur District, and community members with established knowledge and understanding of the Ngembaru Padi tradition. The involvement of supporting informants served to strengthen data validity by incorporating multiple perspectives on the tradition's role in community life. All research subjects were selected purposively on the basis that they possess direct experience, active involvement, and contextual knowledge relevant to the research focus (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The profiles of the research informants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Informant Profiles

Informant	Age	Occupation	Role in the Ngembaru Padi Tradition
Informant A	38	Farmer	Preparing food and ceremonial offerings
Informant B	47	Homemaker	Assisting in ritual preparation
Informant C	62	Traditional Leader (<i>Tokoh Adat</i>)	Leading the ritual ceremony

This study drew on both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected directly from the research subjects through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. These sources encompassed the accounts and practices of the primary women informants as well as the perspectives of supporting informants, including traditional leaders and knowledgeable community members. Secondary data were obtained from relevant literature, including academic books, peer-reviewed journals, previous research findings, and traditional documents pertaining to the Ngembaru Padi tradition and the socio-cultural life of the Dayak Lawangk community. Additional secondary sources included official village documents, archives of traditional activities, photo documentation, and written records related to the implementation of the tradition. Together, these primary and secondary sources ensured that the analysis was grounded in both empirical fieldwork and the existing scholarly and documentary record.

Data were collected using three principal methods consistent with ethnographic fieldwork practice: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation enabled the researcher to directly witness and record the enactment of the Ngembaru Padi tradition across its various stages, capturing the embodied and contextual dimensions of women's participation that would not be accessible through interviews alone (Spradley, 1980). In-depth interviews were conducted with both primary and supporting informants to elicit detailed accounts of women's roles, the values transmitted through the tradition, and the broader social and cultural significance of the practice. Documentation was used to gather visual, archival, and textual materials that corroborated and enriched the observational and interview data. The corresponding data collection instruments were an



observation guideline, an interview guideline, and documentation tools, each developed in accordance with the research objectives and the ethnographic framework of the study.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldāna (2014), comprising three interconnected and iterative stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data reduction stage, field notes and interview transcripts were systematically reviewed, and relevant information was selected and condensed. In the data display stage, the condensed data were organized into coherent descriptive narratives that reflected the patterns and themes emerging from the fieldwork. Conclusion drawing was carried out through iterative interpretation of these narratives, with findings continually verified against the raw data to ensure analytical rigour. Throughout the analysis, emphasis was placed on understanding the behaviour, practices, and cultural meanings of the Ngembaru Padi tradition from the perspective of the community members themselves, in keeping with the interpretive and emic orientation of ethnographic inquiry.

The validity of the data was ensured through triangulation, as recommended by Creswell (2014). Two forms of triangulation were applied. Source triangulation was conducted by cross-checking and comparing data obtained from multiple informants — including Dayak Lawangk women directly involved in the tradition, traditional leaders, and community leaders in Ketapang Regency — to identify convergences and discrepancies across accounts. Methodological triangulation was conducted by comparing data generated through the three collection methods: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies related to women's roles in the Ngembaru Padi tradition as a medium for the internalization of integrity values. The application of these triangulation strategies strengthened the credibility, consistency, and scientific accountability of the findings.

RESULTS

Research Site Overview

Sungai Laur District is an administrative area within Ketapang Regency, West Kalimantan Province, known for the vitality of its community life and the continued transmission of local cultural values across generations. The majority of the population belongs to the Dayak ethnic group, with the Dayak Lawangk sub-ethnic group constituting the primary focus of this study. From a cultural anthropological perspective, traditional societies such as the Dayak Lawangk possess an integrated system of values, norms, and social practices shaped through long-standing interactions among people, the natural environment, and ancestral cultural heritage.

Geographically, the district is characterized by tropical forests, hills, and rivers that serve as the primary source of livelihood for the community. These environmental conditions have shaped distinctive patterns of adaptation, particularly in the development of traditional agricultural systems that follow natural cycles. Rivers function not only as water sources but also as traditional transportation routes connecting residential settlements. The largely intact natural environment has enabled the community to sustain dryland rice farming as both an economic activity and a cultural practice.

In social terms, the Dayak Lawangk community is organized around kinship ties, communal solidarity, and the authority of traditional leaders who oversee ceremonial life, dispute resolution, and cultural preservation. Social interaction is realized through collective activities such as farming, traditional ceremonies, and communal gatherings, all of which are underpinned by the values of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) and social solidarity. For the Dayak Lawangk people, dryland rice is not only a staple crop but also carries symbolic meaning associated with life, family well-being, and spiritual gratitude — values that find their most concentrated expression in the Ngembaru Padi tradition.

The Ngembaru Padi Tradition

The Ngembaru Padi tradition is an annual harvest thanksgiving ceremony maintained by the Dayak Lawangk community of Sungai Laur District. Closely linked to the dryland rice farming cycle, the tradition encompasses a series of ritual, social, and cultural activities that collectively express the community's gratitude for the harvest and reaffirm their relationship with nature and the Creator. From a cultural anthropological perspective, the tradition exemplifies the integration of economic activities with cultural value systems, wherein agricultural practice is inseparable from spiritual and communal life.

The 2026 observance of the Ngembaru Padi tradition was held on 22 February 2026 at the Multipurpose Building of Sungai Kuri Village, Sungai Laur District. The event was attended by traditional leaders, community leaders, and members of the Dayak Lawangk community who participated across the full series of customary activities. The tradition unfolded in three main, interconnected stages: a preparation stage, a ritual implementation stage, and a closing stage. Each stage carries distinct social and cultural significance and is described in detail below.



Figure 1. Preparation of the Ngembaru Padi Ceremony (Source: Researcher, 2026)

Preparation Stage

Preparatory activities began several days before the main ceremony. In early February 2026, community members — both men and women — collaborated in gathering and arranging the materials required for the ritual. These preparations extended beyond logistical necessity; they constituted a social process in which the act of working together strengthened communal bonds among participants. Central to this stage was the selection and preparation of young rice from the harvest, which served as the primary symbolic offering. Community members chose the finest rice as a gesture of gratitude for a successful farming season, thereafter cleaning and arranging it according to customary procedures passed down from ancestors.

Traditional leaders played a guiding role throughout the preparation stage, instructing community members on the required ritual equipment — including traditional containers, ceremonial tools, and objects carrying symbolic meaning within the ritual process — and ensuring compliance with customary regulations. Women assumed a particularly central role during this stage, taking primary responsibility for preparing the traditional foods to be served at the ceremony. Cooking was carried out collectively in a spirit of intimacy and cooperation, and this communal activity served simultaneously as a form of cultural transmission, with older women sharing knowledge of traditional recipes, ritual procedures, and cultural values with younger participants.

Ritual Implementation Stage

The ritual implementation stage constitutes the ceremonial core of the Ngembaru Padi tradition. On the morning of 22 February 2026, community members gathered at the Multipurpose Building of Sungai Kuri Village. The atmosphere combined a sense of collective joy with solemnity, as participants understood the event to be part of a tradition of significant cultural and spiritual importance. Traditional leaders arranged the ritual equipment and harvested rice in designated positions according to customary protocol, assisted by community members familiar with the procedures.

Before the ritual commenced, the traditional leader addressed the assembled community, explaining the meaning and purpose of the ceremony. The ritual prayers and traditional mantras recited by the traditional leader served as a formal expression of gratitude to God and a supplication for continued safety and abundant harvests in the coming season. As the prayers were offered, the assembled community observed a respectful silence, reflecting both their reverence for the tradition and their acknowledgement of the spiritual authority of their customary leaders. The pre-prepared rice, positioned near the traditional leader, functioned as a tangible symbol of the community's gratitude.



Figure 2. Opening Ritual Led by the Dayak Lawang Traditional Leader (Source: Researcher, 2026)



Figure 3. Carrying Rice from Outside into the Multipurpose Building (Source: Researcher, 2026)

A notable element of the ritual implementation stage was the communal consumption of palm wine (tuak). This practice carries symbolic significance beyond the consumption of a fermented beverage; it functions as a ritual expression of togetherness, solidarity, and collective celebration. Palm wine was served following the main ritual procession and consumed collectively, reinforcing social bonds across community members regardless of social status. This practice reflects the values of mutual cooperation and egalitarianism that are central to Dayak Lawangk community life.

Closing Stage

The closing stage marked the transition from ritual solemnity to communal celebration. Following the completion of the ritual procession, the community gathered for a shared meal, with food that had been prepared collectively by the women served to all attendees. This communal meal took place in a relaxed and convivial atmosphere, with participants sitting together, sharing conversation, and reinforcing social ties. On this occasion, several community members also performed traditional dances as an expression of collective joy at the successful harvest. The ceremony concluded with a prayer of thanksgiving led by the traditional leader, offering gratitude for the harvest and requesting blessings and safety for the community in the coming planting season.

Women's Roles in the Ngembaru Padi Tradition

Women's Domestic Role: Food Preparation as Cultural Practice

Women's domestic contributions to the Ngembaru Padi tradition are most visibly expressed through the collective preparation of food for the ceremony. Based on field observations, women bear primary responsibility for cooking the traditional dishes served at the event, a practice understood within the community not merely as a domestic task but as a meaningful cultural contribution. Cooking is carried out collectively by village women in the days preceding the ceremony, creating a communal space in which traditional culinary knowledge, ritual procedures, and cultural values are shared and reinforced across generations.

This dimension of women's participation was articulated directly by one of the primary informants, whose account underscores both the practical and relational significance of this role: *"When there is a Ngembaru Padi event, we women usually prepare the food for the people who come. We cook together so the work gets done faster."* [Female Informant A, Interview, February 2026].



Figure 4. Gathering Rice at the Designated Ceremonial Area (Source: Researcher, 2026)



Figure 5. Rice Threshing (Mengirit Padi) (Source: Researcher, 2026)



Figure 6. Community Gathering Before the Ritual Ceremony (Source: Researcher, 2026)

This account illustrates that collective food preparation serves a dual function: it fulfills a practical ceremonial need while simultaneously enacting the values of communal solidarity and cooperation that the tradition as a whole seeks to transmit. The intergenerational nature of this activity — in which older women pass on knowledge of traditional recipes and ceremonial procedures to younger participants — positions domestic practice as a significant, if often underacknowledged, mechanism of cultural transmission.



Figure 7. Rice Roasting (Menggongseng Padi) (Source: Researcher, 2026)



Figure 8. Pounding Rice into Rice Crackers (Emping) (Source: Researcher, 2026)



Figure 9. Processed Rice Crackers (Emping) (Source: Researcher, 2026)

Women's Social Role: Coordination and Community Support

Beyond food preparation, women participate actively in a range of organizational and coordinative activities that support the smooth conduct of the ceremony. Researchers observed that women assist in arranging the ritual equipment, organizing the serving of communal meals, and managing various logistical aspects of the event. These activities demonstrate women's broader social responsibility within the tradition and reflect a pattern of cooperative division of labor in which men tend to coordinate the arrangement of the venue and oversee the formal ritual proceedings, while women manage the preparation and service of food and the organization of communal activities.

It is important to note that this division of roles does not indicate structural inequality but rather reflects a form of complementary cooperation that has developed organically within the Dayak Lawangk community. Women's social contributions are understood by community members as indispensable to the successful realization of the tradition, reinforcing their status as active and valued participants rather than peripheral supporters.

Women's Role in Cultural Preservation and Intergenerational Transmission

Women's most significant contribution to the Ngembaru Padi tradition extends beyond their immediate ritual and social roles to encompass their function as primary agents of cultural preservation and intergenerational transmission. Through their active involvement in the tradition, women serve as living repositories of cultural knowledge — carrying and conveying to younger generations not only the practical skills associated with the ceremony, such as the preparation of traditional foods and the procedures for ritual activities, but also the values of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and integrity that constitute the moral foundation of the tradition.

Researchers observed that women frequently engage younger community members — including children and adolescents — directly in ceremonial activities, teaching them through participation rather than formal instruction. This informal pedagogical process reflects what scholars of ethnopedagogy have identified as a culturally embedded form of character education, in which moral values are transmitted through embodied practice and intergenerational interaction (Sakti et al., 2024). Women's role in this process is not incidental but deliberate; it positions them as conscious educators who utilize the ritual space of the Ngembaru Padi tradition as a medium for cultivating integrity, responsibility, and cultural identity in the next generation.



The Ngembaru Padi Tradition as Local Wisdom

The Ngembaru Padi tradition constitutes a comprehensive expression of the local wisdom of the Dayak Lawangk community, encompassing social, spiritual, and cultural educational values that guide community life across generations. Each of these dimensions is examined in turn below.

Social Values: Mutual Cooperation and Communal Solidarity

The most immediately observable value expressed through the Ngembaru Padi tradition is that of mutual cooperation (gotong royong). Field observations confirmed that all stages of the tradition — from the preparation of ritual equipment and the cooking of ceremonial food to the arrangement of the venue and the conduct of the ritual itself — are carried out collectively, with community members contributing according to their respective capacities and customary roles. This collective mode of participation reinforces social ties among community members and expresses a shared sense of responsibility for the continuation of the community's cultural heritage.

The communal meal that forms part of the closing stage of the tradition is a particularly concentrated expression of social solidarity: participants sit together, share food prepared collectively, and engage in conversation that strengthens interpersonal bonds. This activity embodies the egalitarian spirit of the tradition, in which all community members — regardless of social status — participate on equal terms in the celebration of the harvest.

Religious and Spiritual Values: Gratitude and Harmony with Nature

The Ngembaru Padi tradition carries profound religious and spiritual significance for the Dayak Lawangk community. The ritual prayers and traditional mantras recited by the traditional leader at the outset of the ceremony constitute a formal act of thanksgiving to God and a supplication for ongoing protection and agricultural abundance. For the Dayak Lawangk people, rice is not merely a food source but a symbol of life, family welfare, and the spiritual bond between the community and the natural world. The careful and reverential treatment of rice throughout the ritual process reflects this understanding.

The tradition also articulates the community's vision of harmonious coexistence with the natural environment. Agricultural activities are understood not merely in economic terms but as expressions of a spiritual relationship between humans and nature that must be maintained through ritual observance. Drawing on Clifford Geertz's interpretation of cultural symbols and rituals as a means by which communities express their values and beliefs (Geertz, 1973), the Ngembaru Padi tradition can be understood as a form of spiritual expression through which the Dayak Lawangk people affirm and renew their commitment to living in balance with the natural world.

Cultural Educational Values: Character Formation and Identity

The Ngembaru Padi tradition serves as an important medium of cultural education and character formation within the Dayak Lawangk community. The active involvement of younger generations in ceremonial activities provides a context in which cultural knowledge — including ritual procedures, the value of communal solidarity, and the importance of maintaining a respectful relationship with nature — is transmitted through direct experience rather than formal instruction. This informal, practice-based mode of learning constitutes what may be understood as an indigenous form of character education, consistent with broader findings in the Indonesian ethnopedagogy literature that cultural traditions serve as powerful vehicles for the transmission of moral values such as integrity, responsibility, and social solidarity (Sakti et al., 2024; Suparjan et al., 2024).

The tradition also functions as a marker of cultural identity for the Dayak Lawangk community. Through the continued performance of the Ngembaru Padi ceremony, the community maintains and renews its distinctive cultural identity in the face of modernizing pressures. From a cultural anthropological perspective, cultural identity is constituted and reproduced through the sustained enactment of cultural practices (Geertz, 1973). In this sense, the Ngembaru Padi tradition serves not only as a ritual activity but as an ongoing affirmation of the cultural distinctiveness and continuity of the Dayak Lawangk people.

DISCUSSION

Situating the Findings within the Existing Literature

The findings of this study both affirm and extend prior scholarship on women's roles in Dayak harvest rituals. Earlier studies conducted in Landak Regency characterized women primarily as logistical contributors — responsible for food preparation and the arrangement of ceremonial materials — while reserving primary cultural authority for male traditional leaders (Habsari, 2017; Wina & Habsari, 2017; Olendo, 2020; Tando, 2024). The present study does not dispute that women in the Ngembaru Padi tradition

perform these preparatory functions; rather, it demonstrates that such functions carry a significance that has been systematically underestimated in the existing literature. In Sinar Kuri Village, women's involvement in the tradition is not confined to practical support but encompasses cultural stewardship, moral education, and the intergenerational transmission of integrity values — roles that position women as primary agents of cultural reproduction rather than peripheral participants.

This finding is consistent with a growing body of feminist ethnographic scholarship on indigenous women in Indonesia, which has increasingly challenged the logistical framing of women's ritual roles and foregrounded their epistemic and cultural agency (Niko et al., 2024; Astono et al., 2024). It also resonates with the UN Special Rapporteur's recognition that indigenous women globally function as primary custodians of intergenerational knowledge, transmitting cultural values, ritual practices, and moral frameworks to succeeding generations through embodied and relational practice (UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2022). The Ngembaru Padi tradition in Sinar Kuri Village provides a locally specific and ethnographically rich illustration of this broader pattern.

Women as Guardians of Tradition: Beyond Logistical Support

A central finding of this study is that women in the Dayak Lawangk community function as active guardians of the Ngembaru Padi tradition, ensuring its continuity not merely through practical participation but through a conscious commitment to preserving its cultural and moral dimensions. This guardianship is enacted across all stages of the tradition — from the preparation of ceremonial food and ritual materials to the organization of communal activities during the closing stage — and reflects what Soekanto (2012) describes as the enactment of culturally assigned social roles tied to positional expectations within a community's social structure.

Critically, however, women's roles as tradition guardians in Sinar Kuri Village exceed what a purely structural-functionalist account of social roles would predict. Women do not simply fulfill assigned positions within a pre-given ritual order; they actively interpret, transmit, and reproduce the values embedded in the tradition through deliberate engagement with younger generations. This distinction — between role fulfillment and active cultural agency — is central to the feminist contribution of the present study. Where earlier scholarship positioned women as secondary actors within a male-led ritual framework (Habsari, 2017; Olendo, 2020), the ethnographic evidence from Sinar Kuri Village reveals women as intellectually active agents who sustain the tradition's cultural and moral vitality from within.

Women as Agents of Local Wisdom Preservation

The findings further demonstrate that women serve as primary agents in the preservation of the local wisdom embedded in the Ngembaru Padi tradition. Through their sustained involvement in ceremonial activities, women maintain and transmit social values — including mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), communal solidarity, gratitude toward nature, and personal integrity — that constitute the moral foundation of Dayak Lawangk community life. This role extends beyond the ritual context; through daily family interactions and community activities, women continuously reinforce the cultural knowledge and value systems that the Ngembaru Padi tradition embodies.

From a theoretical standpoint, this dimension of women's agency aligns with Hidajat's (2025) application of hermeneutics and symbolic interactionism to Dayak ritual practice, which argues that ceremonies such as Ngembaru Padi function as generators of collective meaning that reinforce community values as lived, embodied realities. Women, in this framework, are not passive recipients of symbolic meaning but active producers and transmitters of it. Their involvement ensures that the tradition's symbolic content — its values of honesty, responsibility, and togetherness — remains legible and meaningful to new generations. This finding also resonates with broader Indonesian scholarship demonstrating that the integration of local wisdom into community practices constitutes a robust foundation for the preservation of cultural identity and moral resilience in the face of modernization and globalization (Sakti et al., 2024; Lestari et al., 2024).

Women as Intergenerational Bridges: Ritual as Pedagogy

Perhaps the most significant finding of this study is the identification of women as deliberate pedagogical actors within the Ngembaru Padi tradition — individuals who consciously utilize the ritual space of the ceremony as a medium for transmitting integrity values to younger generations. This finding was most clearly illustrated by the practice observed during the rice seed selection phase of the tradition, in which mothers engaged their children in moral dialogue about the importance of selecting quality seeds as a symbol of personal honesty and integrity. This practice, which has not been documented in comparable studies of Dayak

harvest rituals elsewhere (Habsari, 2017; Tando, 2024), positions women as natural educators who transform an agricultural activity into a lesson in character formation.

This pedagogical dimension of women's roles is consistent with the concept of ethnopedagogy — the use of indigenous cultural knowledge and tradition as a medium of education — which has received increasing scholarly attention in the Indonesian context (Sakti et al., 2024; Suparjan et al., 2024). Ethnopedagogical approaches recognize that moral values such as integrity, responsibility, and social solidarity are most effectively transmitted not through formal instruction but through direct participation in culturally meaningful practices. The Ngembaru Padi tradition, as enacted in Sinar Kuri Village, exemplifies this model: women do not lecture about integrity but embody and enact it, teaching through doing and through the moral narratives they weave into the fabric of ritual activity.

The intergenerational transmission facilitated by women through the Ngembaru Padi tradition also carries important implications for cultural sustainability. As agricultural modernization, rural-to-urban migration, and industrial encroachment increasingly erode the social norms and collective practices that once sustained this tradition (BPS Ketapang, 2022), women's roles as cultural educators become correspondingly more significant. In this context, women are not merely guardians of a stable tradition but active agents of cultural adaptation — finding ways to preserve and transmit core values even as the external conditions of community life change. This finding echoes the observations of Niko et al. (2024) and Astono et al. (2024) regarding the adaptive cultural agency of indigenous women in West Kalimantan, and contributes a new, pedagogically focused dimension to that emerging body of scholarship.

Feminist Contribution and Broader Significance

Taken together, the findings of this study make a substantive contribution to feminist ethnographic scholarship on indigenous women in Indonesia. By demonstrating that women in the Ngembaru Padi tradition function as cultural guardians, agents of local wisdom preservation, and deliberate pedagogical actors, this study deconstructs the logistical framing that has characterized much prior scholarship on Dayak women's ritual roles (Habsari, 2017; Olendo, 2020; Tando, 2024) and replaces it with a more complete and analytically rigorous account of women's agency. This reframing has both descriptive and normative implications: it corrects an empirical gap in the literature and, in doing so, affirms the intellectual and moral significance of women's contributions to the cultural life of the Dayak Lawangk community.

More broadly, this study contributes to the growing body of Indonesian scholarship on the relationship between local wisdom, character education, and cultural sustainability. The Ngembaru Padi tradition in Sinar Kuri Village demonstrates that indigenous ritual practices are not merely ceremonial but constitute active, living systems of moral education — and that women are the primary architects of that educational function. As pressures of modernization and globalization continue to challenge the vitality of indigenous traditions across the archipelago, the documentation and recognition of women's pedagogical agency within these traditions becomes an urgent scholarly and cultural priority (Sakti et al., 2024; Lestari et al., 2024; UN Special Rapporteur, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Summary of Principal Findings

This study explored and described the roles of women in the Ngembaru Padi tradition among the Dayak Lawangk community of Sinar Kuri Village, Sungai Laur District, Ketapang Regency, West Kalimantan. Using a feminist ethnographic approach, the research documented women's participation across all stages of the tradition and examined the social, cultural, and pedagogical dimensions of their involvement. Three principal findings emerge from the study.

First, women occupy a central and multidimensional role in the implementation of the Ngembaru Padi tradition that extends well beyond technical or logistical support. Women bear primary responsibility for the preparation of ceremonial food and ritual materials, coordinate the organization of communal activities, and contribute to every stage of the ceremony from preparation through to the closing communal meal. Critically, these contributions reflect not merely domestic responsibility but a conscious cultural commitment to ensuring the smooth and meaningful enactment of the tradition. This finding challenges prior characterizations of Dayak women as secondary ritual actors (Habsari, 2017; Olendo, 2020) and establishes women in the Sungai Laur context as primary agents of cultural practice.

Second, the Ngembaru Padi tradition itself constitutes a rich and living form of local wisdom that integrates social, spiritual, and cultural educational values. As a collective expression of gratitude for the harvest and a reaffirmation of the community's



relationship with nature and the Creator, the tradition functions simultaneously as a ritual ceremony, a social bonding mechanism, and a vehicle for the transmission of core moral values — including mutual cooperation (gotong royong), communal solidarity, honesty, and integrity. These values are not merely symbolic; they are enacted and reinforced through the collective activities that comprise the tradition, making it a living moral framework for the Dayak Lawangk community.

Third, and most significantly, women function as the primary agents of intergenerational cultural transmission within the Ngembaru Padi tradition. Through their deliberate engagement of children and younger community members in ceremonial activities, and through the moral dialogues that accompany practices such as rice seed selection, women transform the ritual space of the tradition into an intentional site of character education. This pedagogical role — which has not been previously documented in studies of comparable Dayak harvest rituals — positions women not as passive custodians of tradition but as active educators who consciously transmit values of integrity, responsibility, and cultural identity to succeeding generations. This finding represents the most distinctive scholarly contribution of the present study.

Feminist and Pedagogical Contributions

Taken together, these findings advance the feminist ethnographic literature on indigenous women in Indonesia in two important ways. By demonstrating that women in the Ngembaru Padi tradition serve as cultural guardians, agents of local wisdom, and deliberate pedagogical actors, this study provides an empirically grounded corrective to the logistical framing that has dominated prior scholarship on Dayak women's ritual roles. It affirms that women's contributions to indigenous ceremonial life are intellectually and morally substantive — not supplementary — and calls for a more agentic framework in future ethnographic studies of women's ritual participation.

The study also contributes to the growing Indonesian scholarship on ethnopedagogy and character education by demonstrating that indigenous ritual traditions, when sustained by women's active agency, function as powerful and culturally authentic systems of moral education. The values transmitted through the Ngembaru Padi tradition — integrity, honesty, mutual cooperation, and respect for nature — are precisely those that character education programs in formal schooling have sought to cultivate, often with limited success (Sakti et al., 2024; Suparjan et al., 2024). The present study suggests that indigenous ritual practice, mediated by women's pedagogical agency, may offer a more contextually grounded and culturally resonant alternative.

Practical Implications and Directions for Future Research

The findings of this study carry important practical implications for cultural policy, heritage preservation, and education. First, the recognition of women as primary agents of cultural transmission in the Ngembaru Padi tradition provides a compelling basis for their meaningful inclusion in formal heritage preservation programs at the local and regional levels. Cultural policies that overlook women's pedagogical agency risk undermining the very mechanisms through which indigenous traditions are sustained. Policymakers and cultural institutions in Ketapang Regency and West Kalimantan Province should therefore consider how women's roles can be formally recognized, supported, and protected, particularly in the context of increasing pressures from agricultural modernization, rural-to-urban migration, and industrial encroachment.

Second, the study's findings suggest that the moral values embedded in the Ngembaru Padi tradition — and transmitted through women's pedagogical practice — offer a valuable resource for locally grounded character education initiatives. Educational programs at the primary and secondary levels in the region could draw on the tradition as a contextually meaningful framework for cultivating integrity, communal responsibility, and environmental stewardship among young people.

Several directions for future research emerge from this study. First, longitudinal research is needed to examine how agricultural modernization, digital technology, and rural-to-urban migration are affecting women's capacity to fulfill their pedagogical and cultural roles within the Ngembaru Padi tradition over time. Second, future studies should investigate the perspectives of younger generations on the relevance and meaning of the tradition in their contemporary lives, as generational shifts in engagement with indigenous ritual practice remain poorly understood. Third, comparative ethnographic research across Dayak sub-ethnic communities in Ketapang and other regencies of West Kalimantan would help to establish whether the patterns of women's agency documented in this study are specific to the Dayak Lawangk community or reflect a wider regional pattern. Finally, future research might explore how digital documentation and community-based archiving initiatives could support women's roles as cultural educators and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the Ngembaru Padi tradition.



In conclusion, this study demonstrates that women are not peripheral figures in the Ngembaru Padi tradition but its moral and educational core. Their agency sustains not only the ritual form of the ceremony but the living values that give it meaning — and, in doing so, sustains the cultural identity of the Dayak Lawangk community itself. Recognizing, documenting, and supporting this agency is both a scholarly imperative and a matter of cultural justice.

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