

Local Wisdom and Electoral Democracy: Exploring the Role of Malay Jambi Cultural Values in Strengthening Political Participation in Tebo Regency

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Jambi Malay local wisdom in strengthening political participation within the implementation of electoral democracy in Tebo Regency, Jambi Province, Indonesia. Amid concerns over declining civic engagement and the increasing influence of pragmatic political practices, local cultural values provide an important social foundation for fostering democratic participation that is ethical, inclusive, and community-oriented. Employing a qualitative research approach, this study draws on interviews, observations, and document analysis involving community leaders, traditional leaders, election organizers, and local residents. The findings reveal that core Jambi Malay cultural values, including *musyawarah* (deliberation), *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), respect for customary leadership, social harmony, and collective responsibility, continue to influence political behavior and encourage community involvement in electoral processes. These values contribute to strengthening political awareness, increasing voter participation, promoting peaceful elections, and enhancing public trust in democratic institutions. However, the study also identifies several challenges, such as political clientelism, generational shifts in cultural understanding, and the declining influence of traditional institutions in the digital era. The research argues that integrating local wisdom into civic and political education, electoral governance, and public policy can reinforce democratic resilience while preserving cultural identity. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on the relationship between indigenous cultural values and democratic governance, demonstrating that local wisdom remains a relevant resource for promoting meaningful political participation at the local level.

Keywords: *local wisdom; Jambi Malay culture; electoral democracy; political participation; Tebo Regency.*

Introduction

Democracy is widely recognized as a political system that depends not only on institutional arrangements but also on the active participation of citizens in public affairs.^{1 2} Electoral democracy, in particular, requires meaningful political participation to ensure that elections function as mechanisms of representation, accountability, and legitimacy. However, many contemporary democracies face challenges related to declining voter engagement, political apathy, clientelism, identity politics, and the increasing influence of money politics.^{3 4 5} These issues suggest that democratic consolidation cannot rely solely on formal electoral institutions but must also be supported by social and cultural values embedded within local communities. In many multicultural societies, local wisdom constitutes an important social resource that shapes political behavior and civic engagement.⁶ Local wisdom encompasses the collective values, traditions, norms, and customary practices that guide community interactions and decision-making across generations. Rather than existing in opposition to democratic principles, indigenous cultural values often complement democratic governance by promoting social cohesion, consensus-building, collective responsibility, and respect for communal interests.⁷ Consequently,

¹ Ahmad H Sa'di, "Democracy as a Utopia and Democracy as a Tool of Domination: The Structural Roles of Race, Class, and Coloniality in Western Democratic Regimes," *Politikon* 52, no. 1 (January 2, 2025): 81–98, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2025.2487323>.

² Kristian Widya Wicaksono and Komang Monday Sari, "Redefining Citizenship in Democratic States: Toward a Public-Centered Governance Paradigm in Indonesia," *Kebijakan : Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi* 17, no. 01 (2026): 109–19, <https://doi.org/10.23969/kebijakan.v17i01.39945>.

³ "Political Process : Public Opinion, Attitudes, Parties, Forces, Groups and Elections / Vie Politique : Opinion Publique, Attitudes, Partis, Forces, Groupes et Élections," *International Political Science Abstracts* 76, no. 3 (June 1, 2026): 520–83, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00208345261458466>.

⁴ Derick Brinkerhoff and Arthur Goldsmith, "Clientelism, Patrimonialism and Democratic Governance: An Overview and Framework for Assessment and Programming," January 1, 2002.

⁵ Daniel Corstange, "Clientelism in Competitive and Uncompetitive Elections," *Comparative Political Studies* 51 (March 9, 2017): 76–104, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414017695332>.

⁶ Jamie Davidson, "Dilemmas of Democratic Consolidation in Indonesia," *The Pacific Review* 22 (August 5, 2009): 293–310, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512740903068354>.

⁷ Rauna Kuokkanen and Sarah Maddison, "Reclaiming Democracy through Indigenous Self-Determination: What Does a 'Functioning Country' Mean?," *Settler Colonial Studies* 15, no. 3 (July 3, 2025): 603–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2025.2495459>.

scholars increasingly argue that democratic development should not be understood merely through institutional perspectives but also through socio-cultural dimensions that influence citizens' political attitudes and participation.

Indonesia provides a significant context for examining the relationship between local wisdom and democracy. Since the democratic reforms of 1998, Indonesia has experienced substantial political transformation characterized by competitive elections, decentralization, and expanded public participation.⁸⁹ Despite these achievements, electoral democracy continues to encounter numerous challenges, including declining public trust in political institutions, transactional politics, vote-buying, political polarization, and unequal political participation across regions. These conditions indicate that strengthening democracy requires approaches that are sensitive to local cultural contexts rather than relying exclusively on legal and institutional reforms.^{10 11} One important source of democratic values in Indonesia is local wisdom, which has historically functioned as a mechanism for maintaining social order and collective decision-making. Across various regions, customary traditions emphasize deliberation, mutual cooperation, social harmony, and collective responsibility, values that closely align with democratic ideals.¹² Such cultural practices not only preserve community identity but also encourage citizens to participate in solving public problems and maintaining political stability. Therefore, understanding how local wisdom contributes to democratic participation has become increasingly relevant in the context of Indonesia's decentralized political system.

⁸ Achdjam Syahfan Umasugi et al., "Identity Politics in the System of Regional Head Elections in a Democratic Rule of Law State," *Lex Localis – Journal of Local Self-Government* 23, no.

11 (2025): 1157–81, <https://lex-localis.org/index.php/LexLocalis/article/view/802145>.

⁹ Edward Aspinall and Ward Berenschot, *Democracy for Sale: Elections, Clientelism, and the State in Indonesia*, *Democracy for Sale*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501732997>.

¹⁰ Kristine Höglund, "Electoral Violence in Conflict-Ridden Societies: Concepts, Causes, and Consequences," *Terrorism and Political Violence – TERROR POLIT VIOLENCE* 21 (June 29, 2009): 412–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550902950290>.

¹¹ Mi'rojul Huda et al., "Indonesia's Struggle For Democratic Resilience: Issues and Institutional Reforms," *International Journal of Law and Society* 2 (February 1, 2025): 145–53, <https://doi.org/10.62951/ijls.v2i2.379>.

¹² Diah Fatma Sjoraida et al., "Negotiating Democracy Through Symbols and Social Media: A Thematic Analysis of Political Communication in West Java's Indigenous Communities," *Sage Open* 15, no. 4 (October 1, 2025): 21582440251405176, <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251405174>.

Among Indonesia's diverse cultural communities, the Malay community of Jambi possesses a rich tradition of local wisdom that continues to influence social and political life. Malay Jambi cultural values are reflected in principles such as *musyawarah* (deliberation), *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), respect for customary leadership, social solidarity, justice, and collective responsibility.^{13 14} These values are institutionalized through customary institutions and community practices that regulate social relationships while promoting peaceful conflict resolution and public consensus. In many rural communities, customary leaders remain influential figures who facilitate dialogue between citizens and government institutions, including during electoral processes.^{15 16} Tebo Regency represents an important setting for investigating the relationship between local wisdom and electoral democracy. As one of the regencies in Jambi Province, Tebo maintains relatively strong customary institutions alongside modern democratic governance. The coexistence of traditional authority and formal political institutions creates a unique environment in which cultural values continue to shape political participation. Electoral activities in the region are not merely administrative events but also social processes influenced by community norms, kinship networks, customary leadership, and collective deliberation. Consequently, examining how Malay Jambi cultural values operate within electoral democracy may provide valuable insights into the interaction between indigenous culture and democratic practices.¹⁷

¹³ Warni Warni and Rengki Afria, "The Content of Local Wisdom in Traditional Expressions: Revealing the Characteristics of Jambi Malay Community," *Sosial Budaya* 20 (December 31, 2023): 159, <https://doi.org/10.24014/sb.v20i2.19356>.

¹⁴ Warni Warni and Rengki Afria, "The Content of Local Wisdom in Traditional Expressions: Revealing the Characteristics of Jambi Malay Community," *Sosial Budaya* 20, no. 2 (2023): 159, <https://doi.org/10.24014/sb.v20i2.19356>.

¹⁵ Amin Tohari, Ainil Wahyudi, and Uin Sunan Ampel Surabaya, "Revitalizing Local Village Wisdom as a Mechanism for Social Conflict Resolution amid Economic Change Pressures and Urban Cultural Penetration," *The Journal of Academic Science* 3, no. 1 (2026): 9–18, <https://thejoas.com/index.php/thejoas/article/view/532>.

¹⁶ Mohammad Jamin, "SOCIAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION THROUGH EMPOWERMENT OF LOCAL WISDOMS," *Yustisia Jurnal Hukum* 9 (May 6, 2020): 1, <https://doi.org/10.20961/yustisia.v9i1.39430>.

¹⁷ Roy Moonti et al., "Living Constitution in Islamic Constitutional Law: A Comparative Study of Gorontalo Customary Constitutional Law in Majority and Minority Enclave Contexts," *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Syir'ah* 23 (December 30, 2025): 339, <https://doi.org/10.30984/jis.v23i2.3566>.

Although previous studies have examined political participation, electoral behavior, and local wisdom in Indonesia, several research gaps remain. First, existing studies generally analyze political participation from institutional, socioeconomic, or political communication perspectives, while relatively few investigate the contribution of local cultural values to strengthening democratic participation. Second, research concerning Malay Jambi local wisdom has primarily focused on cultural preservation, customary law, social identity, and conflict resolution rather than its role in electoral democracy. Third, empirical studies specifically addressing the interaction between Malay Jambi cultural values and electoral participation in Tebo Regency remain limited. As a result, there is insufficient understanding of how local wisdom functions as social capital that encourages citizens' engagement in democratic processes while reducing political conflict and strengthening electoral legitimacy.

Addressing these gaps is important because democratic participation cannot be fully explained through institutional variables alone. Cultural norms influence how citizens perceive political authority, exercise their voting rights, engage in public discussions, and build trust in democratic institutions. Understanding these socio-cultural dimensions contributes not only to the academic literature on democracy and political culture but also provides practical implications for policymakers, election management bodies, and local governments seeking culturally responsive strategies to improve electoral participation.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the role of Malay Jambi cultural values in strengthening political participation within electoral democracy in Tebo Regency. Specifically, the research investigates how local wisdom influences citizens' political behavior, encourages participation in electoral processes, supports democratic values, and contributes to peaceful and inclusive elections. By integrating perspectives from political culture, local wisdom, and democratic governance, this study contributes to expanding the discourse on culturally grounded democracy in Indonesia and demonstrates that local wisdom remains a relevant and strategic resource for reinforcing democratic resilience at the local level.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research¹⁸¹⁹ approach using a case study design to explore how Malay Jambi cultural values contribute to

¹⁸ Sugiyono, "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Bandung. Metode Penelitian Kualitatif," *Yogyakarta Press* 2, no. 6 (2020): 919-30.

strengthening political participation within the context of electoral democracy in Tebo Regency, Jambi Province, Indonesia. A qualitative approach was selected because the study seeks to understand meanings, social interactions, cultural practices, and community experiences that cannot be adequately explained through quantitative measurement. The case study design enables an in-depth investigation of the relationship between local wisdom and democratic practices within a specific socio-cultural setting.

Research Site

The research was conducted in Tebo Regency, Jambi Province, where Malay cultural traditions continue to influence community life and public decision-making. Tebo Regency was purposively selected because it represents an area in which customary institutions coexist with modern democratic governance, allowing an examination of how indigenous cultural values interact with electoral processes and political participation.

Participants

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their knowledge and involvement in community life and electoral activities. The participants consisted of:

- Traditional (customary) leaders (*tokoh adat*);
- Religious leaders;
- Community leaders;
- Officials of the General Election Commission (KPU) and the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu);
- Local government representatives;
- Village heads;
- Civil society organization representatives;
- Community members who had participated in recent elections.

Additional participants were identified through snowball sampling, enabling the researcher to obtain information from individuals recommended by previous informants because of their expertise or involvement in customary and democratic processes.

¹⁹ Kadija Perreault, "Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches," *Manual Therapy* 16, no. 1 (2011): 103, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.math.2010.09.003>.

Data Collection

Data were collected through three complementary techniques.

In-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview guides to explore participants' perceptions of Malay Jambi cultural values, political participation, electoral practices, and the role of customary institutions in encouraging democratic engagement.

Participant observation was carried out during community meetings, customary deliberations (*musyawarah adat*), civic activities, and public discussions whenever accessible. Observation enabled the researcher to understand how cultural values were practiced in everyday social interactions and political activities.

Document analysis included government regulations, election reports, local government publications, customary institution documents, village records, policy documents, academic literature, and media reports related to elections and local cultural practices in Tebo Regency.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The analysis involved four stages:

1. Data collection;
2. Data condensation through coding and categorization;
3. Data display to identify patterns and relationships;
4. Drawing conclusions and verification.

Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence were coded inductively to identify recurring themes concerning local wisdom, democratic values, electoral participation, customary leadership, social trust, and community engagement. The coding process was iterative, allowing themes to emerge directly from the data while being interpreted through the perspectives of political culture and democratic participation.

Trustworthiness

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed several validation strategies. Data triangulation was achieved by comparing information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentary sources. Source triangulation involved collecting perspectives

from different stakeholder groups, including customary leaders, election officials, government representatives, and community members. Member checking was conducted by confirming key interpretations with selected participants to ensure that the findings accurately reflected their experiences. In addition, peer debriefing with fellow researchers was undertaken to minimize researcher bias and strengthen analytical rigor.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, all participants were informed about the objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before interviews and observations were conducted. Participants' identities were anonymized to protect confidentiality, and all research procedures adhered to the ethical principles of respect, beneficence, and justice in social science research.

Results

The findings demonstrate that Malay Jambi local wisdom continues to play a significant role in shaping political participation in Tebo Regency. Although electoral democracy is formally regulated through national electoral institutions, community participation is strongly influenced by cultural norms, customary institutions, and collective social values that have been maintained across generations. Five major themes emerged from the analysis.

Deliberation (*Musyawarah*) as a Foundation for Democratic Participation

One of the strongest findings concerns the continuing importance of *musyawarah* (deliberation) in community decision-making. Participants explained that discussions related to public affairs, including elections, are commonly preceded by informal meetings among community members, customary leaders, religious leaders, and village officials. Rather than encouraging political confrontation, these deliberative traditions provide opportunities for citizens to exchange opinions, evaluate candidates' leadership qualities, and discuss community priorities. Informants emphasized that political choices are expected to be based on collective interests rather than personal conflict.

The findings indicate that deliberative culture strengthens political awareness because citizens become actively involved in political discussions before participating in elections. Consequently, electoral participation is viewed not merely as an individual right but also as a collective responsibility toward community development.

Customary Leaders as Political Mediators

The study found that customary leaders continue to serve as trusted mediators between citizens and formal political institutions. Although they do not officially endorse candidates, their moral authority encourages peaceful political communication and promotes responsible participation during elections.

Community members frequently seek advice from customary leaders regarding electoral ethics, conflict avoidance, and civic responsibilities. Election organizers also cooperate with traditional leaders to disseminate information concerning voter participation and peaceful elections. This collaboration contributes to increasing public confidence in electoral processes while reducing misunderstandings that may arise during political competition.

Mutual Cooperation (*Gotong Royong*) and Collective Responsibility

Another important finding is the influence of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) on democratic engagement. Participants described political participation as an extension of community solidarity rather than solely an individual political activity. Community members often work together in organizing public discussions, voter education activities, and election-related meetings. These collaborative practices strengthen interpersonal trust and encourage broader community involvement. The findings suggest that communities characterized by stronger traditions of cooperation tend to demonstrate higher levels of civic engagement and greater willingness to participate in electoral activities.

Local Wisdom Promotes Peaceful Elections

Participants consistently reported that Malay cultural values emphasize harmony, respect, and social cohesion. These principles reduce the likelihood of prolonged political conflict after elections. Although electoral competition occasionally creates differences in political preferences, customary norms encourage reconciliation through dialogue and mutual respect. Several informants explained that maintaining long-term social relationships is considered more important than temporary political

competition. As a result, elections are generally perceived as democratic processes that should strengthen rather than divide local communities.

Contemporary Challenges to the Sustainability of Local Wisdom

Despite its positive contribution, the findings also reveal several challenges affecting the implementation of local wisdom in electoral democracy. First, younger generations increasingly obtain political information from digital media rather than customary institutions. Consequently, the influence of traditional leaders has gradually declined in some communities. Second, participants expressed concern regarding the persistence of transactional politics and vote-buying practices, which weaken the moral values promoted by Malay culture. Economic considerations sometimes influence voting behavior more strongly than cultural norms. Third, rapid social change, urbanization, and increasing political competition have reduced opportunities for customary deliberation, particularly among younger citizens. These findings indicate that local wisdom remains influential but requires adaptation to contemporary democratic contexts.

Overall, the results demonstrate that Malay Jambi cultural values contribute to strengthening electoral democracy through several interconnected mechanisms. Deliberation (*musyawarah*) encourages informed political discussion, *gotong royong* promotes collective civic engagement, customary leadership enhances public trust, and cultural norms emphasizing harmony support peaceful electoral competition. Nevertheless, these contributions face growing challenges from political pragmatism, digital transformation, and changing patterns of social interaction.

The study therefore suggests that local wisdom functions as an important form of social capital that complements formal democratic institutions. Rather than replacing electoral regulations, Malay Jambi cultural values reinforce democratic participation by cultivating civic responsibility, social trust, and inclusive community engagement in Tebo Regency.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Malay Jambi local wisdom remains an important socio-cultural resource for strengthening electoral democracy in Tebo Regency. Rather than functioning merely as a cultural heritage, local wisdom actively shapes political behavior by encouraging civic responsibility, collective participation, and peaceful democratic engagement. These findings support the argument that democratic participation is influenced not only by formal political institutions but also by the cultural norms and social

values that govern everyday community life. One of the most significant findings concerns the role of *musyawarah* (deliberation) in encouraging political participation. The results indicate that community deliberation provides opportunities for citizens to exchange information, evaluate political candidates, and discuss issues affecting local development before elections. This practice reflects the principles of participatory democracy, which emphasize inclusive dialogue, public reasoning, and citizen involvement in collective decision-making. Unlike highly individualistic electoral behavior, the deliberative tradition observed in Tebo Regency reinforces political participation as a communal responsibility. This finding is consistent with democratic theories that regard public deliberation as an essential mechanism for strengthening democratic legitimacy and improving the quality of political participation. The study also highlights the continuing importance of customary leaders as intermediaries between communities and formal democratic institutions. Although electoral administration is carried out by state institutions, customary leaders continue to possess moral legitimacy and public trust that facilitate communication between citizens and election organizers. Their influence extends beyond traditional cultural ceremonies to include civic education, conflict mediation, and the promotion of peaceful elections.²⁰²¹ These findings suggest that customary institutions complement rather than compete with modern democratic governance. This supports previous scholarship arguing that traditional authority can coexist with democratic institutions when it promotes participation, accountability, and social cohesion instead of political domination.

Another important contribution of this study lies in demonstrating how *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) strengthens social capital that supports democratic participation. Community cooperation encourages collective responsibility for electoral activities, voter education, and public dialogue. From the perspective of social capital theory, networks of trust, reciprocity, and cooperation reduce barriers to civic engagement and increase citizens' willingness to participate in democratic processes.²²²³ The findings therefore

²⁰ Antonita Asriani Lensru, "The Cultural Influence of the Noken System on Political Participation in Papua," *Tamalanrea: Journal of Government and Development (JGD)* 2, no. 1 (2025): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.69816/jgd.v2i1.43564>.

²¹ Abel Eka Aristawidya and Rahmat Santoso Agus, "Consolidating Democracy: Political Communication and Public Trust in Early Leadership Post-Election in Indonesia" 6, no. 6 (2025): 6, <https://www.city.kawasaki.jp/500/page/0000174493.html>.

²² Hung-Chieh Chen, Tzu-Chao Lin, and Ying-Hui Chen, "The Impact of Social Capital and Community Empowerment on Regional Revitalization Practices: A Case Study on the Practice

reinforce the argument that democracy functions more effectively in communities characterized by high levels of interpersonal trust and collective solidarity.

The findings further reveal that Malay cultural values emphasizing harmony, respect, and consensus contribute significantly to peaceful electoral competition. Participants consistently described elections as opportunities for selecting leaders without damaging long-term social relationships. This illustrates how local wisdom can reduce political polarization and minimize conflicts arising from electoral competition. Such cultural mechanisms are particularly relevant in contemporary democracies where identity politics and political fragmentation increasingly threaten social cohesion. Consequently, the integration of indigenous cultural values into democratic practice represents an alternative approach to strengthening democratic resilience at the local level.

Nevertheless, the research also identifies several challenges that limit the contribution of local wisdom to electoral democracy. The growing influence of digital media has transformed patterns of political communication, particularly among younger generations who increasingly rely on online information rather than customary institutions. At the same time, transactional politics and vote-buying continue to undermine ethical political participation by encouraging short-term material interests instead of collective responsibility. These findings indicate that local wisdom alone cannot eliminate structural problems within democratic systems. Instead, cultural values should be supported by transparent electoral institutions, effective civic education, and consistent law enforcement. The findings have important implications for both theory and practice. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on political culture by demonstrating that indigenous cultural values remain relevant in explaining political participation within contemporary democratic systems. While previous studies have predominantly emphasized institutional reforms, socioeconomic conditions, or political communication, this research illustrates that cultural traditions continue to shape democratic behavior at the local level. The study therefore expands existing knowledge by

of University Social Responsibility Programs in Wanli and Jinshan Districts,” *Sustainability*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17104653>.

²³ Isabella Hatak, Richard Lang, and Dietmar Roessl, “Trust, Social Capital, and the Coordination of Relationships Between the Members of Cooperatives: A Comparison Between Member-Focused Cooperatives and Third-Party-Focused Cooperatives,” *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 27 (January 1, 2026): 1218–41, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-015-9663-2>.

positioning local wisdom as a form of democratic social capital that complements institutional approaches to electoral democracy.²⁴²⁵²⁶

Practically, the findings suggest that policymakers, election management bodies, local governments, and customary institutions should collaborate to integrate local wisdom into civic education and electoral governance. Election campaigns, voter education programs, and community outreach activities can incorporate principles of *musyawarah*, *gotong royong*, mutual respect, and collective responsibility to strengthen citizens' democratic engagement. Such culturally grounded approaches may improve public trust in elections while preserving the cultural identity of local communities.

Overall, this study demonstrates that Malay Jambi local wisdom provides an important cultural foundation for strengthening political participation in Tebo Regency. Democratic institutions become more effective when supported by community values that promote dialogue, cooperation, trust, and social harmony. Although modernization and political pragmatism present significant challenges, local wisdom continues to offer valuable resources for developing a more inclusive, participatory, and culturally responsive model of electoral democracy in Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Malay Jambi local wisdom plays a significant role in strengthening political participation within the practice of electoral democracy in Tebo Regency. The findings reveal that cultural values such as *musyawarah* (deliberation), *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), respect for customary leadership, social harmony, and collective responsibility continue to influence citizens' political behavior and encourage active engagement in electoral processes. These values contribute to increasing political awareness, fostering public trust, promoting peaceful elections, and reinforcing democratic legitimacy at the local level. The study further

²⁴ Muhammad Budiana, "POLITICAL CULTURE AND SOCIETY'S POLITICAL ORIENTATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0)," *Jurnal Multidisiplin Sahombu* 3, no. 01 (2023): 108-15, <https://ejournal.seaninstitute.or.id/index.php/JMS>.

²⁵ Amalia Sulanjari, "The Role of Political Culture in Forming Civic Engagement," *International Journal Of Humanities Education and Social Sciences (IJHESS)* 5, no. 2 (2025): 776-84, <https://doi.org/10.55227/ijhess.v5i2.1846>.

²⁶ Banupriya Rathakrishnan, Kartini Khalid, and Sity Daud, "A Systematic Literature Review on the International Trends of Indigenous Peoples' Political Participation," *Frontiers in Political Science* 7 (August 1, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2025.1601300>.

indicates that local wisdom functions as an important form of social capital that complements formal democratic institutions. Rather than replacing modern electoral mechanisms, indigenous cultural values strengthen democracy by encouraging inclusive dialogue, civic responsibility, and collaborative community participation. At the same time, the research identifies several challenges, including the persistence of transactional politics, the declining influence of customary institutions among younger generations, and the rapid expansion of digital political communication. These challenges suggest that preserving the democratic relevance of local wisdom requires continuous adaptation to contemporary social and political developments.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the literature on political culture, social capital, and participatory democracy by demonstrating that local wisdom remains a meaningful explanatory factor in understanding political participation within decentralized democratic systems. Unlike studies that primarily emphasize institutional or socioeconomic determinants, this research highlights the importance of integrating cultural values into analyses of electoral democracy, thereby enriching discussions on culturally grounded democratic governance. Practically, the findings suggest that local governments, election management bodies, customary institutions, educational institutions, and civil society organizations should collaborate to incorporate Malay Jambi cultural values into civic education, voter education, and community engagement programs. Such initiatives may strengthen democratic participation while preserving local cultural identity and promoting peaceful electoral competition. Despite these contributions, this study is limited to a qualitative case study conducted in Tebo Regency, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different socio-cultural contexts. Future research could employ comparative studies across multiple regions, mixed-methods approaches, or quantitative analyses to examine the broader relationship between local wisdom and electoral participation. Further studies may also explore how digital civic engagement and emerging forms of political communication interact with indigenous cultural values in shaping democratic participation.

Overall, the study concludes that Malay Jambi local wisdom remains a valuable cultural resource for strengthening electoral democracy. Integrating indigenous values with modern democratic institutions offers a promising pathway toward fostering more inclusive, participatory, and sustainable democratic governance in Indonesia.

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