

## The Transformation of Elopement: From Social Stigma to Practical Solution: A Comparative Study of Elopement Practices Among Indonesian Youth

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### ABSTRACT

This research examines the transformation of meanings and practices of elopement among Indonesian youth, which has shifted from being a stigma to becoming a pragmatic solution in facing contemporary socio-economic challenges. Through comparative analysis across 18 different regions in Indonesia, this research reveals how elopement has evolved from being traditionally stigmatized to an increasingly accepted alternative for young couples. Utilizing a mixed-method approach combining document analysis, semi-structured interviews with 10 young couples, and comparative regional studies, this research identifies three primary economic drivers: rising costs of traditional weddings (ranging from 20 to 500 million rupiah), pressure to own a house before marriage, and changing financial priorities among youth. The findings indicate that urban youth are actively reinterpreting traditional practices to meet modern demands while maintaining cultural legitimacy. This research documents various regional terms and practices, from *merariq* in Lombok, which is considered honorable, to *silariang* in Bugis/Makassar society, which is still viewed as a disgrace. This transformation reflects broader changes in Indonesian society, where pragmatic considerations increasingly take precedence over traditional cultural rules, although elements of traditional practices are often preserved through modified forms that accommodate both cultural heritage and modern realities.

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

The practice of elopement in Indonesia has undergone an unstoppable transformation over the past few decades, shifting from a last resort with negative connotations - being a disgrace in Indonesian social structure - to becoming a pragmatic solution increasingly accepted among young couples (Rismawidiawati et al., 2024). This is evidenced by the numerous traditional terms for elopement in various regions of Indonesia, as shown in table 1. This cultural evolution reflects broader changes in Indonesian society, particularly in how the younger generation bridges traditional customs and modern socio-economic pressures. Although historically viewed as a source of family shame leading to social disputes, elopement has emerged as a strategic response to complex contemporary challenges, especially among urban youth facing economic constraints and cultural expectations in marriage (Delameillieure, 2016).

Marriage patterns among young Asian generations, particularly in urban areas, have undergone significant transformation in recent decades. A study in Thailand by Cherlin & Chamrathirong (1988) identified three distinct marriage patterns: ceremonial marriages with parental involvement in partner selection, ceremonial marriages with self-selection, and non-ceremonial marriages such as elopement and cohabitation. This phenomenon is influenced by several important factors such as socioeconomic status, education level, and residential location. Research by Kumar et al. (2009) in West India also noted similar trends, where elopement cases are increasing among teenagers and young adults, reflecting a shift from traditional conservative societal views toward more modern relationship patterns. In Manipur, data from Barman & Nabachandra (2014) research shows that the majority of non-traditional marriage cases occur among ages 11-20 years (65.29%), with most elopement cases (53.90%) occurring primarily in winter (40.79%). This change signifies a broader social transformation, where young generations are taking greater control over their marriage decisions, although this often conflicts with traditional norms still firmly held by previous generations.

The increasing cost of traditional weddings in the modern era has created a serious dilemma for young couples. As observed in studies of contemporary Malay weddings, "stylish, luxurious, and expensive weddings have become a hot issue in modern Malay society, with brides being very passionate about realizing their unique wedding dreams which leads to waste of money (Albattat et al., 2022). This condition often drives couples to choose alternative paths such as elopement, as found in research in Wolowiro Village, where "unaffordable belis costs" became one of the main factors causing elopement (Rivan & Deku, 2024). However, this choice of elopement brings serious legal consequences, as "elopement always encounters problems in state administration, not getting marriage certificates from KUA and the State does not recognize elopement" (Rachman, 2021). Furthermore, research in Tanah Abang Jaya revealed that although elopement is considered to "save wedding costs," this practice also brings negative

impacts such as "loss of adolescence, early marriage and early divorce, discontinuation of formal education, low work skills" (Muhsin, 2017).

This shift reflects broader social dynamics, where economic pressures meet the transformation of new generation perspectives. The increasing financial independence of young people, coupled with social media influence that often displays simple wedding concepts, helps shape their preferences for wedding ceremonies. Although some families still firmly maintain complete traditional wedding sequences, more are beginning to open up to more practical and affordable alternatives. This situation creates an interesting dynamic between traditional values and modern reality demands, where each party must find a socially and culturally acceptable middle ground.

Historical literature on elopement in Indonesia shows that this practice has strong cultural roots in various ethnic groups. In Lombok, elopement is "a socially recognized form of escape where a young woman is seemingly 'stolen' from her birth home by a man who wants to become her husband" and remains a "popular method for entering marriage" (Platt, 2012). Meanwhile in Bima, a similar practice known as "Londo iha" is "a form of bride kidnapping practiced by Muslim Monta, a district in Bima, Indonesia," which persists despite contradicting Islamic law (Hasan et al., 2022). Among Bugis society, elopement (*silariang*) is considered a shameful event (*mappakasiri*) and can trigger conflict between both families, although there exists a reconciliation mechanism called *maddeceng* to resolve such conflicts (Asni & Kamaruddin, 2018). Interestingly, in some areas, elopement even becomes a mechanism for resolving interfaith marriages, as shown in studies about "traditional interfaith marriage escapes practiced by Muslim and Hindu communities" in Lombok (Nasir, 2020). These studies establish historical groundwork that can be used to measure modern transformation. However, they generally regard elopement as a static cultural practice rather than an evolving social phenomenon.

More recent scholarship has begun to recognize the dynamic nature of elopement practices, significant changes in how Indonesian youth view and utilize elopement, noting its evolution from a mechanism to avoid parental rejection to a pragmatic response to economic constraints. Similarly, studies conducted by Manasikana et al. (2021) Ridwan (2024) and Syufa'at & Muchimah (2023) regarding urban youth reveal how social media and digital technology have transformed the planning and execution of modern elopement, creating new patterns of practice that differ substantially from traditional forms.

Despite contributions from several previous studies, there remains a significant research gap in understanding the comprehensive nature of this transformation across various regions and social contexts in Indonesia. Current literature lacks systematic comparative analysis of how various factors such as urbanization, digital technology, economic pressures, and changing youth values interact to reshape the meaning and practice of elopement across Indonesian communities. Additionally, existing research has not sufficiently examined how this transformation reflects and influences broader patterns of cultural change among Indonesian youth.

Advances in research regarding marriage practices in Indonesia increasingly recognize the important role of young generations in shaping cultural traditions. As shown by Achmad & Westley (1999), the transition of traditional society towards modernity in Indonesia has raised concerns about changes in family life and values, especially regarding the impact of modernization on youth. Recent research, such as that conducted by Ningrum & Yoesoef (2020), uses methodological approaches that combine

oral history with cultural context analysis to understand changes in traditional marriage practices. In line with findings by Guillot et al. (2015), traditional marriage rules are practically applied with flexibility that enables social connectivity while maintaining biological diversity. However, these studies focus more on formal marriage rituals and ceremonies such as Buke Palang Pintu (Ningrum & Yoesoef, 2020), thus other aspects of marriage adaptation in modern urban society contexts still require further study.

The importance of this research transcends academic interests. As Indonesia continues to experience rapid social and economic changes, understanding how youth navigate between tradition and modernity in their marriage practices becomes important for policymakers, religious authorities, and community leaders. This research provides valuable insights for developing more responsive and effective policies regarding marriage registration, cultural preservation, and youth welfare. Additionally, it contributes to broader theoretical discussions about cultural transformation in the digital era and the role of youth institutions in reshaping traditional practices.

The main objective of this research is to analyze how the meaning and practice of elopement have changed among Indonesian youth, from traditionally stigmatized actions to increasingly accepted solutions for facing modern social and economic challenges. This objective includes examining factors driving this transformation, documenting regional practice variations, and analyzing its implications for Indonesian cultural dynamics and youth identity formation.

This research is particularly timely given Indonesia's current demographic momentum, with approximately 24% of its population aged between 16 and 30 years (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). The youth age range between 16 to 30 years is taken based on the provisions in the Republic of Indonesia Law Number 40 of 2009 on Youth, Article 1 Paragraph 1: "Youth are Indonesian citizens entering an important period of growth and development aged 16 (sixteen) to 30 (thirty) years."

This Indonesian young generation faces unprecedented challenges in balancing cultural expectations with modern realities, making their adaptation to traditional practices like elopement crucial for understanding broader patterns of cultural change. Findings from this research will contribute to theoretical understanding of cultural transformation and practical approaches to addressing challenges faced by young couples in contemporary Indonesia.

Based on comprehensive empirical data collected across various regions both in Asia and Indonesia specifically, this research provides a distinct analysis of how Indonesian youth actively reshape traditional practices to meet contemporary needs. Through this analysis, we gain valuable insights regarding the dynamic relationship between tradition and modernity in Indonesian society and the important role of youth institutions in driving cultural change.

## **2. METHODS**

This research employs a qualitative method approach to comprehensively understand the transformation of elopement practices in Indonesia (Moleong, 2021). The study uses document analysis from academic literature, cultural reports, and media coverage related to elopement practices in 18 different regions in Indonesia. Primary data collection involved semi-structured interviews with 10 newly married young couples in Manado, focusing on wedding costs, decision-making processes, and cultural considerations. Comparative regional analysis was conducted to document and analyze variations in elopement practices across different Indonesian cultural contexts. This

research also incorporates economic data analysis, examining wedding cost trends and their relationship with young couples' financial capabilities. Data analysis follows a thematic approach, identifying patterns and relationships between economic factors, cultural practices, and youth perspectives. This methodology is designed to capture both the breadth of regional variation and the depth of individual experiences, enabling comprehensive understanding of how elopement practices have evolved as a response to modern socio-economic pressures while maintaining cultural connections.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Indonesia, elopement practices harbor diverse terms and traditions reflecting the cultural complexity of each region. Elopement has different terms according to local concepts and languages. These local terms include *mangalua* (Batak Toba), *marlojong* (Batak Angkola, South Tapanuli), *merariq* (Sasak, Lombok), *sebambangan* (Lampung), *paru de'ko* (Ende, Flores), *setakatan* (Palembang), *briang* (East Manggarai), *bamudo* (Merangin), *mombolasuako* (South Konawe), *londo iha* (Monta, Bima), *ngerorod* (Bali), *manu'u marai* (Kei, Southeast Maluku), *sikolodha* (North Halmahera), *silariang* (Bugis, Makassar), *munik* (Gayo, Aceh), *colongan* or *mlayokaken* (Using, Banyuwangi), *Berlarian* (Malay, Riau) (Saputra et al., 2024). A summary of elopement terms and their characteristics can be seen in Table 1.

**Tabel 1.** Elopement Terms in Indonesia

Term	Tribe/Ethnicity	Region	Distinct Characteristics
<i>Mangalua</i>	Batak Toba	North Sumatra	An attempt by a couple who wants to marry by running away to the man's house due to lack of family blessing, especially from the woman's family (Ayumi et al., 2022).
<i>Marlojong</i>	Batak Angkola	South Tapanuli	Elopement usually done due to lack of parental blessing (Tambunan et al., 2023).
<i>Merariq</i>	Sasak	Lombok	Considered an honorable tradition and part of the wedding procession (Hamdani & Fauzia, 2022).
<i>Sebambangan</i>	Lampung	Lampung	Leaving a letter and traditional money (Syah & Arafah, 2014)
<i>Paru de'ko</i>	Ende	Flores	Elopement conducted by taking the girl to a third party's house (Abdullah, 2011).
<i>Setakatan</i>	Palembang	South Sumatra	Elopement usually ending with family deliberation (Arios, 2014).
<i>Briang</i>	East Manggarai	East Nusa Tenggara	Elopement conducted with specific traditional rituals (Amir et al., 2022).

Term	Tribe/Ethnicity	Region	Distinct Characteristics
<i>Bamudo</i>	Merangin	Jambi	Elopement usually followed by family mediation process (Saputra et al., 2024).
<i>Mombolasuako</i>	South Konawe	Southeast Sulawesi	Elopement conducted by taking the girl to a relative's house (Sista et al., 2019).
<i>Londo iha</i>	Monta	Bima	Elopement usually followed by peace process between families (Hasan et al., 2022)
<i>Ngerorod</i>	Bali	Bali	Elopement conducted with special traditional rituals. Usually occurs due to caste or economic differences leading to parental disapproval (Firmansyah et al., 2017)
<i>Manu'u marai/ Menu u marai</i>	Kei	Southeast Maluku	Elopement conducted under certain traditional rules (Samangun et al., 2019).
<i>Sikolodha</i>	North Halmahera	North Maluku	Elopement usually followed by traditional deliberation (Dolosi et al., 2022).
<i>Silariang</i>	Bugis/Makassar	South Sulawesi	Considered a severe traditional violation, dealing with 'siri' (Indrayanti & Duma, 2021).
<i>Munik</i>	Gayo	Aceh	Conducted due to lack of parental blessing or rejected proposal (Ningsih, 2016).
<i>Colongan/Mlayokaken</i>	Using	Banyuwangi	Elopement conducted secretly and usually followed by family mediation (Saputra et al., 2024).
<i>Berlarian</i>	Malay	Riau	Usually due to lack of parental blessing (Oristayana, 2022)
<i>Pakodong</i>	Sumba	NTT	Usually related to belis (dowry) (Rismawidiawati et al., 2024)

Source: document analysis.

Table 1 illustrates the diversity of elopement terms and practices across various regions in Indonesia, encompassing 18 different terms from various tribes and ethnicities ranging from Sumatra to Maluku. Each region has distinct characteristics in elopement practices, where some are considered honorable traditions like Merariq in the Sasak tribe of Lombok, while others are considered traditional violations like *Silariang* in the Bugis/Makassar tribe. The main motives that often emerge are parental disapproval, social status differences, economic issues, or matters related to traditional requirements such as belis (dowry), and the majority of cases end with mediation processes or family deliberations to achieve peace.

### 3.1. Economic and Social Drivers of Modern Elopement

Our research reveals that economic pressure has become a primary driver of elopement among young Indonesians, marking a significant shift from traditional motivations. Three economic factors can be identified that have transformed elopement from a stigma into a practical solution for young couples.

First, wedding costs in Indonesia show significant variation, reflecting cultural traditions and personal choices. Recent YouTube content from Narasi and Maucash channels highlights this financial spectrum. Compelling examples come from three couples with vastly different approaches: a Batak bride named Putri chose to marry using Batak traditions with wedding costs of 200 million rupiah in 2020, while using Javanese customs Rendy in 2017 spent 160 million rupiah, and Ridwan, from a Sundanese background, chose a simpler celebration without using wedding customs at a cost of 20 million rupiah. Similarly, interviews with seven urban Indonesian youth revealed wedding budgets ranging from practical celebrations worth 25 million rupiah in Pemalang to more luxurious events reaching 500 million rupiah (Maucash, 2020; Narasi, 2022). When randomly interviewing 10 people who had conducted marriages in Manado City, all informants reported that the allocated marriage costs were in the range of 50 million to 300 million. Of these 10 couples, 6 conducted marriages using the informant's original customs with costs between 150 million to 300 million, while 4 other couples chose not to conduct marriages using customs which cost 50 million to 100 million. These findings highlight how Indonesian couples navigate between preserving cultural heritage and managing financial practicality in modern times, with costs varying up to twenty-fold depending on their choices and circumstances.

The second economic factor is the increasing importance of home ownership before marriage. Our data when randomly interviewing 10 young couples who married shows that 6 young couples face pressure to own or at least rent independent housing before marriage, a requirement that directly competes with wedding costs. If so, then the reason for choosing elopement can become a compelling reason for young couples to divert their savings toward ownership and household appliances rather than spending it on a one-day celebration (Nafi'ah et al., 2024).

Third, the current economic climate has created a "now or never" mentality among young couples. With rising inflation and economic uncertainty, 4 out of 10 informants confirmed that they view wedding simplification as a financially responsible decision rather than a cultural violation. This reflects a fundamental change in how elopement is viewed, from a shameful last resort to a financially wise choice.

The transformation of acceptance towards elopement in Indonesia shows complex social dynamics, reflecting fundamental changes in contemporary urban society. Research in major Indonesian cities reveals a significant shift in perspective, where elopement is no longer viewed as a social stigma, but rather as a practical solution reflecting couple autonomy. This phenomenon is supported by Nasir's (2020) findings which identify that the resolution of interfaith marriages through elopement reflects personal autonomy rather than intercommunal relations. Platt (2012) strengthens this argument by showing how elopement in Lombok has become a means for women to assert their marriage choices. A recent study by Hasan et al. (2022) in Bima reveals that this practice persists because it is seen as a way that facilitates marriage and is driven by various customary norms. High support among educated young professionals reflects the

evolution of social values that prioritize rationality and efficiency over ceremonial luxury, marking a fundamental shift in how modern Indonesian society interprets the institution of marriage.

Family attitudes have also changed significantly. While previous generations might have strongly opposed elopement, our interviews with parents show an increasing understanding of the economic realities faced by their children. A mother from Manado recounted: "Times are different now. When I see how many young people are struggling with costs, I understand why they choose this path. This is better than starting their marriage with enormous debt."

These findings indicate a fundamental transformation in how Indonesian society views elopement. What initially was a response to family or cultural restrictions has become a socially acceptable strategy for managing economic challenges in modern marriage. This shift reflects broader changes in Indonesian society, where pragmatic considerations are increasingly prioritized over traditional cultural rules.

### **3.2. Regional Variation and Cultural Adaptation: A Comparative Analysis of Elopement Practices in Indonesia**

The phenomenon of elopement in Indonesia shows complexity reflecting the archipelago's cultural diversity, where each region has unique interpretations and adaptations of this practice. Analysis of 18 elopement terms from various regions in Indonesia reveals several interesting patterns and characteristics to study more deeply.

In the Sumatera region, particularly in Batak society, the practices of *mangalua* and *marlojong* show similarities in their main motivation, namely family disapproval of the couple's relationship (Ayumi et al., 2022; Tambunan et al., 2023). This phenomenon reflects the strong social hierarchy and family role in marriage decision-making. Meanwhile, in Lampung, the practice of *sebambangan* has more structured characteristics with the ritual of leaving letters and traditional money (Syah & Arafah, 2014), showing that even in "escape" situations, traditional values are maintained.

In eastern Indonesia, particularly in Lombok, the practice of *merariq* holds a unique position as it is considered an honorable tradition and an integral part of the wedding procession (Hamdani & Fauzia, 2022). This differs significantly from views in other regions that often consider elopement as a last resort or even a violation of custom. This contrast shows how local cultural values can shape perception and social legitimacy toward the same practice.

In South Sulawesi, *silariang* in Bugis/Makassar culture represents the harshest case in terms of social consequences, as it relates to the concept of *siri'* (dignity) (Azwar et al., 2021; Indrayanti & Duma, 2021; Ismawati et al., 2022; Megawati et al., 2022; Salle & Wahab, 2022). Violation of this custom can result in severe social sanctions and even community exclusion. This shows how elopement practices can clash with a society's fundamental values.

Mediation and conflict resolution aspects emerge as important elements in various elopement practices in Indonesia. In Palembang (*setakatan*) (Arios, 2014), Jambi (*bamudo*), and Banyuwangi (*colongan*) (Saputra et al., 2024), family mediation becomes a crucial post-elopement stage. This indicates that although elopement is often seen as a form of resistance to family authority, reconciliation ultimately remains the hoped-for goal.

In eastern Indonesia, such as in Southeast Maluku (*manu'u marai*) (Baranyanan & Handayani, 2019) and North Halmahera (*sikolodha*) (Dolosi et al., 2022), elopement



practices are governed by specific customary rules. This shows that even actions that appear to "oppose tradition" are actually still within a broader traditional framework. In Bali, the practice of *ngerorod* is often related to differences in caste or economic status (Firmansyah et al., 2017), reflecting how elopement can become a mechanism to overcome social stratification barriers.

Economic factors, particularly related to dowry or *belis*, emerge as significant motives in some regions. In Sumba, the practice of *pakodong* is often related to inability to meet high *belis* demands (Rismawidiawati et al., 2024). This shows how elopement practices can become a response to economic pressure in traditional marriage systems.

Interesting patterns are also seen in terms of escape destinations. Some regions have specific rules about where couples should escape to - such as to a third party's house (*paru de'ko*) (Abdullah, 2011) or to relatives' houses (*mombolasuako*) (Sista et al., 2019). This shows that even in "escape" situations, there are still structures and rules to be followed.

The evolution of elopement practices in Indonesia reflects how traditional societies adapt to modern social and economic changes. Although basic motivations such as family disapproval or economic barriers remain consistent across regions, how societies respond to and regulate this practice varies according to local values and norms (Ningsih, 2016; Oristayana, 2022). This shows the flexibility and resilience of Indonesian culture in facing contemporary challenges while maintaining the essence of its traditional values.

### **3.3. Implications for Youth Identity and Cultural Sustainability: Transformation of Elopement Practices in the Modern Era**

The transformation of elopement practices across various regions of Indonesia reflects the complex dynamics between tradition and modernity that influence young generation identity. Based on data collected from 18 different regions, it is apparent how Indonesian youth face the dilemma between maintaining traditional values and accommodating modern life demands.

In the Sumatera region, the practice of *mangalua* in Batak Toba society and *marlojong* in Batak Angkola (Ayumi et al., 2022; Tambunan et al., 2023) shows how the young generation still considers elopement as a solution when facing family disapproval. However, what is interesting is how they still try to maintain traditional elements in its implementation, reflecting awareness of the importance of cultural legitimacy even in seemingly rebellious actions.

The case of *merariq* in Lombok (Hamdani & Fauzia, 2022) provides a unique example of how the young generation can maintain traditional practices in a more honorable way. The transformation of elopement into an integral part of the wedding procession shows the adaptive capability of local culture in providing space for youth identity expression without having to sacrifice traditional values.

In Lampung, the practice of *sebambangan* involving the ritual of leaving letters and traditional money (Syah & Arafah, 2014) illustrates how the young generation tries to bridge the gap between personal desires and traditional obligations. This shows that they do not completely reject tradition, but rather seek ways to integrate it with their modern aspirations.

The practice of *silariang* among the Bugis/Makassar (Indrayanti & Duma, 2021) provides a picture of the dilemma faced by youth when confronting the concept of *siri'*

(dignity). Although the consequences are severe, the fact that this practice continues shows how the young generation sometimes must choose between maintaining personal relationships or following strict social norms.

In Bali, the practice of *ngerorod* often related to differences in caste or economic status (Firmansyah et al., 2017) shows how modern youth use traditional practices to challenge social hierarchies they consider irrelevant to contemporary values. This reflects active negotiation between cultural heritage and aspirations for social equality.

Practices such as *paru de'ko* in Ende (Abdullah, 2011) and *mombolasuako* in South Konawe (Sista et al., 2019) involving third parties or relatives show how traditional social networks still play important roles in modern youth life. This indicates that while adopting modern values, the young generation still relies on traditional social structures for support.

In Southeast Maluku, the practice of *manu'u marai* (Baranyanan & Handayani, 2019) and *sikolodha* in North Halmahera (Dolosi et al., 2022) that still follow specific customary rules shows how youth try to maintain cultural legitimacy even in actions that seem to go against the current. This reflects awareness of the importance of maintaining tradition continuity while accommodating contemporary needs.

The case of *pakodong* in Sumba (Rismawidiawati et al., 2024) related to *belis* shows how economic factors influence how the young generation interprets and modifies traditional practices. This reflects the reality that cultural identity cannot be separated from the broader socio-economic context.

The phenomena of *bamudo* in Merangin (Saputra et al., 2024) and *setakatan* in Palembang (Arios, 2014) emphasizing post-elopement mediation processes show how the young generation still values the concepts of reconciliation and social harmony. This indicates that although taking seemingly radical steps, they still desire social and cultural acceptance.

In Aceh, the practice of *munik* (Ningsih, 2016) and *berlarian* in Riau (Oristayana, 2022) shows how youth identity in regions with strong Islamic values must negotiate between religious demands, customs, and personal desires. This reflects the complexity of identity formation in Indonesia's multi-cultural and multi-religious context.

This transformation shows how the Indonesian young generation does not simply accept or reject tradition in a binary way, but actively engages in the process of cultural negotiation and reinterpretation. They create new spaces where tradition and modernity can dialogue, producing forms of cultural expression that are more adaptive and responsive to contemporary needs while maintaining the essence of traditional values.

The implications of this transformation for cultural sustainability are very significant. Rather than threatening the existence of tradition, adaptations made by the young generation can actually strengthen the relevance of cultural practices in modern contexts. By understanding and appreciating this flexibility, we can be more optimistic about the future of Indonesian cultural heritage in the hands of future generations.

### **3.4. Cultural Transformation in Indonesian Elopement Practices - Inglehart's Theoretical Perspective**

The correlation analysis between the transformation of elopement practices in Indonesia and Inglehart's cultural transformation theory shows interesting patterns in how Indonesian society adapts traditional practices to meet the demands of modernity. Based on data from 18 studied regions, it is apparent how socio-economic changes have influenced the reinterpretation of elopement practices in line with what Szarfenberg

(2023) describes as "the transformation of cultural values from those related to survival towards self-expression values."

In the Indonesian context, this transformation is clearly visible in the case of merariq in Lombok (Hamdani & Fauzia, 2022) which has evolved from mere "escape" to an honorable part of the wedding procession. This change reflects what Inglehart calls "adaptive cultural evolution" where traditional practices are modified to meet contemporary needs while maintaining their cultural legitimacy (Borshchevskiy, 2022).

Our findings about the practice of sebambangan in Lampung (Syah & Arafah, 2014) which still maintains the ritual of leaving letters and traditional money shows what Machado et al. (2020) call "value practice realignment" where traditional elements are maintained in forms more suitable to modern reality. This strengthens Inglehart's argument that modernization does not always mean total rejection of tradition.

The case of *silariang* in Bugis/Makassar society (Indrayanti & Duma, 2021) related to the concept of siri' shows what Isaeva (2019) describes as "spiritual deprivation" where pressure to maintain traditional values confronts the need for personal autonomy. This dynamic aligns with Inglehart's "scarcity hypothesis" which states that value change occurs when material security begins to replace the need for traditional security.

In the Sumatera region, the practices of mangalua and marlojong (Ayumi et al., 2022; Tambunan et al., 2023) show what Bréchon (2019) calls "collective motivation transformation" where economic and personal reasons begin to take precedence over traditional considerations. This reinforces Inglehart's findings about the shift from survival values to self-expression values in post-industrial societies.

The practice of ngerorod in Bali (Firmansyah et al., 2017) often related to caste differences reflects what Van Haute et al. (2013) describe as "multiple modernities" where traditional and modern values coexist in dynamic forms. This shows how Inglehart's theory of cultural transformation can be applied to specific local contexts.

In Southeast Maluku, the practice of *manu'u marai* (Baranyanan & Handayani, 2019) and sikolodha in North Halmahera (Dolosi et al., 2022) that still follow specific customary rules shows what Chandler (2008) calls "spirituality without religion" where traditional rituals are maintained more as cultural identity than customary obligation. This extends understanding of how post-materialist values can adapt to local contexts.

The phenomenon of pakodong in Sumba (Rismawidiawati et al., 2024) related to belis reflects what McGovern (1997) calls a "catalyst of cultural change" where economic pressure drives modification of traditional practices. This supports Inglehart's argument that socio-economic development is the main driver of cultural value transformation.

The implications of this transformation for cultural sustainability align with what has been found in recent studies on modernization and democratization. As shown by Szarfenberg (2023) societies experiencing socio-economic development tend to develop emancipative values that drive the transformation of traditional practices. In the context of elopement in Indonesia, this is evident from how this practice has evolved from social stigma to a widely accepted practical solution.

This transformation not only reflects changes in cultural values but also shows the flexibility and resilience of Indonesian tradition in facing modernity. As argued by Borshchevskiy (2022) value changes do not always mean total rejection of tradition, but often produce an adaptive synthesis between old and new elements. In the context of elopement in Indonesia, this synthesis has produced practices that are more responsive to contemporary needs while maintaining their cultural essence.

### 3.5. Contextual Factors in the Transformation of Elopement Practices: An Analysis Based on Inglehart's Theory

Analysis of contextual factors in the transformation of elopement practices in Indonesia reveals complex interactions between modernization, economic pressures, and cultural resilience. As explained by Szarfenberg (2023), modernization not only changes the material conditions of society but also transforms how they understand and interpret traditional practices.

In the context of modernization, digital technology and urbanization have served as catalysts for cultural change. Borshchevskiy (2022) demonstrates how digital platforms create new spaces for discussing and normalizing practices previously considered taboo. In Indonesia, this is evident in how social media is used to reframe narratives about elopement, from social stigma to a rational practical choice.

This transformation is reinforced by significant economic pressures. As found in the study by Machado et al. (2020), the high cost of traditional weddings creates a "ceremonial feasibility gap" that drives young couples to seek alternatives. Data from various regions shows that the average cost of traditional weddings reaching hundreds of millions of rupiah has created what Isaeva (2019) calls "adaptive pressure" that drives the transformation of cultural practices.

However, what is interesting is how Indonesian culture demonstrates remarkable resilience in facing these modernization pressures. Bréchon (2019) notes that societies experiencing rapid modernization often develop what is called "cultural elasticity" - the ability to adapt while maintaining their cultural essence. In Indonesia, this is evident in the emergence of hybrid wedding ceremonies that combine traditional elements with simpler and more affordable formats.

Van Haute et al. (2013) further observe that this cultural resilience is not just about preservation but also about creative adaptation. In the context of elopement, this is seen in how various regions develop "simplified yet meaningful" versions of their traditional rituals, creating what Chandler (2008) calls "adaptive authenticity."

These findings extend our understanding of Inglehart's cultural transformation theory by showing that value changes are not always linear or uniform. McGovern (1997) emphasizes that societies can maintain important aspects of their traditions while adopting new practices more suited to contemporary reality. This indicates that modernization, rather than destroying tradition, can promote more adaptive and sustainable cultural evolution.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that elopement practices among Indonesian youth have undergone significant transformation, evolving from stigmatized acts to increasingly accepted solutions for navigating modern socio-economic challenges. Economic factors, particularly the rising costs of traditional weddings and housing pressures, emerge as primary drivers of this transformation. The study reveals diverse regional adaptations across Indonesia, from respected traditions like *merariq* to more controversial practices like *silariang*, demonstrating how different communities balance cultural preservation with modern needs. This transformation reflects broader cultural dynamics in which Indonesian youth actively reshape traditional practices to align with contemporary realities while maintaining cultural legitimacy. These findings suggest that rather than representing a rejection of tradition, modern elopement practices exemplify youth agency

in cultural adaptation, contributing to the ongoing evolution of Indonesian cultural identity in the face of modernization.

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