



Local Wisdom as Legal Dispute Settlement: How Indonesia's Communities Acknowledge Alternative Dispute Resolution?

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Article	Abstract
Keywords: Alternative Dispute Resolution; Customary Law; Legal Settlement; Local Wisdom. Article History Received: Feb 17, 2025; Reviewed: Feb 22, 2025; Accepted: Apr 9, 2025; Published: Apr 15, 2025.	<i>This paper examines the evolution of legal dispute resolution mechanisms within non-litigation channels, focusing on the traditional villages of Blitar and Karangasem in Indonesia from 1984 to 2023. There is a need to understand how local wisdom contributes to effective dispute resolution, particularly in regions where formal legal institutions may be limited. This research analyses how indigenous communities integrate Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) principles with customary (adat) law, fostering a hybrid system that balances cultural values and contemporary legal frameworks. The paper draws on ethnographic fieldwork, in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, and case studies of dispute settlements in the selected villages. Historical records and legal documents regarding customary dispute solutions were also examined. The results indicate that the villagers have modified their traditional approaches over the last four decades to deal with contemporary problems such as land disputes, family conflicts, and governance issues. This study also focuses on consensus, reconciliation, and restorative justice, which are considered key factors for social cohesion and dealing with social conflicts. The findings highlight that integrating ADR with adat-based mechanisms strengthens legal pluralism and provides an alternative resolution of issues; this integration is more appropriate than litigation in rural, culturally diverse societies. Moreover, the study suggests that these non-litigation practices are socially cohesive between community members because they ensure that dispute resolution is aligned with the community's cultural norms and common identity. The study also theorises that justice and social order can be maintained through better understanding and empowerment of customary laws. This research provides insight into the wider world of legal pluralism as it explores how traditional modes of dispute resolution remain important within modern legal systems.</i>



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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of agreed-upon formal legal dispute-resolution processes has become a cornerstone of civil governance. Trading post was established at this time, but none remains there today anymore (Setiawan et al., 2021; Yuniyanti et al., 2024). This article explores the non-litigation dispute resolution practices employed in the Blitar and Karangasem traditional villages in Indonesia over four decades, from 1984 to 2023. These villages, which embrace traditional values and are profoundly rooted in *adat* (customary) law principles, present a compelling case study that illustrates how Indigenous communities have adeptly navigated conflicts through non-judicial channels. Alternative dispute resolution emphasises how communities understand harmony, consensus, and restorative justice through the prism of communities' tradition manifested in a very diverse, rich tapestry of cultural practices that highlight the reconciliatory process and face-to-face dialogue over the logic of Western adversarial legal process (Suryamah et al., 2024). This study, therefore, investigates how these communities preserve their identities and social setup against threats prevalent in contemporary legal frameworks.

More commonly referred to as alternative dispute resolution, the practice has gained global attention for its time and cost efficiency, as well as its distinctive feature of upholding interpersonal relations even when disputes are inevitable (Mattar et al., 2015; Muigai, 2017; Wardhani et al., 2022). In Indonesia, the coexistence of *adat* systems and ADR principles has resulted in a unique hybrid inheritance consistent with local values and the values derived from exposure to more progressive legal systems (Al-Fatih, S. et. al, 2021). For instance, in Riau Province, the role of the *adat* function to mediate dispute mechanisms has improved outcomes for resolving conflicts between disputing parties outside of the formal courts. This dynamic is further elaborated in studies on Malay customary law, highlighting the prevailing role of these traditional forms of dispute resolution in fostering social cohesion and trust among the community (Dhiaulhaq & McCarthy, 2020; Yasri et al., 2024). This integration validates the *adat* role and adds character to the legitimacy of structure and outcomes.

These traditional dispute settlements have reached the consensus that they should be considered desirable. This condition, therefore, serves as one of the reasons for Indonesia to choose Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) over litigation settlements. This value of preserving a relationship and preventing public fights is congruous with the principles of *gotong royong* (cooperation) and *musyawarah* (deliberation to reach a consensus) that form the framework for an ADR system. Where litigation is divisive and tends to worsen disputes, mediation and arbitration

can be more collaborative and less contentious. This cultural preference is reflected in widely available customary informal community-based dispute resolution, including *adat*, emphasising reconciliation rather than punishment (Sunaryo, S. & Al-Fatih, S., 2022). Legal support from the government of Indonesia to encourage alternative modes of dispute resolution through the mechanisms of mediation, promulgated by legal frameworks such as the Law Number 30 of 1999 regarding Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution, embeds this cultural approach to dispute-resolution practices even further (Anggraeni, 2020; Hariadi & Anindito, 2020; Subrata, 2023).

The villages boast this depth of settling disputes, with local leaders taking on an essential role in mediating conflicts. Such customs are used with governance systems that foster the local decision-making of communities where respect exists as a community value. Most dispute-resolution processes start with informal interactions and dialogues between the conflicting parties, mediated by village elders or customary leaders (*tokoh adat*). When an agreement is reached, a formal *adat* council (*lembaga adat*) ruling is made, deliberating on the case based on restorative justice principles such as compensation or ritual/*adat* reconciliation. The processes are deliberative consensus-based by practice, and similar practices are found in other indigenous groups, such as the Baduy and Tengger communities. Collective decision-making processes that cultivate a culture of shared accountability and mutual respect among community members are the foundation of these societies' governance systems (M. Fadli et al., 2024; Sugiharto et al., 2023). Importantly, research on village justice in Indonesia has also illustrated how these practices contribute to maintaining social cohesion and resolving disputes effectively, especially in settings where formal institutional capacity is extremely limited. The continued use of traditional methods reflects the cultural heritage of such communities and highlights their resilience in facing the challenges posed by modernity.

Through this study, we found that the villages of Blitar and Karangasem faced some problems, such as land issues, family problems, and disagreements on governance. For instance, in 1987, Desa Adat Jatinom (Blitar) conducted joint property disputes via traditional courts, while mediation or deliberations through the community assembly were meant to settle adultery cases, usually ending in marriage settlement or paying the settlements. Similarly, in Desa Adat Gamprang, recent inheritance disputes and debt-related conflicts were addressed through mediation employed strictly with consensual solutions. In Karangasem, Desa Adat Saren experienced disputes over the customary land (Hidayah, N. P., & Al-Fatih, S., 2019), one of which was in 2021 over the ownership of the *Pelaba Pura Dadya Pasek Bendesathat*, but the dispute was resolved through mediation and joint deliberation. These case studies show the effectiveness of such authorities in maintaining the social order among such communities. Furthermore, the contexts of these questions require an intelligent adaptation of traditional practices to contemporary circumstances. The

mediation and negotiation ideas employed in the study of ADR techniques in Tanzania may impact similar practices in Indonesia (Teff-Seker et al., 2020). This adaptation tapers the impulses of deep social networks that persist in the wider dispute-resolution process upon which these villages rely, enabling the forces of tradition and modernity to work with each other. Such practices have evolved, reflecting a wider movement whereby indigenous peasants are no longer receivers of imposed legal standards but shapers of justice.

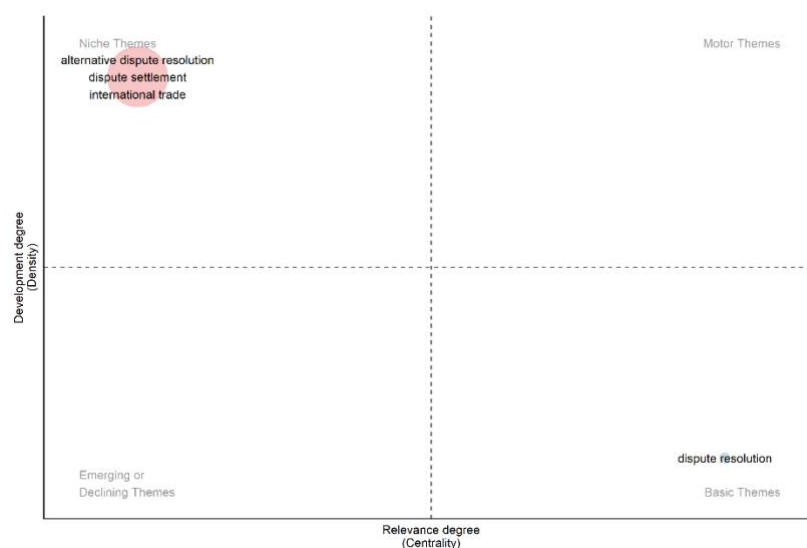


Figure 1. Thematic Map of ADR Topic (Source: Scopus database)

The thematic map context argues that ADR and dispute settlement are niche themes due to their mature but peripheral position. The article "Local Wisdom as Legal Dispute Settlement: How Indonesia Community Acknowledged Alternative Dispute Resolution?" represents a novel contribution by bringing local knowledge and practices into some of the existing ADR mechanisms—an area largely overlooked in other scholarship. Dispute resolution is recognised here as a key theme of high centrality and low development; this study represents an excellent opportunity for interlinkage between formal legal frameworks and dispute resolution practices at the community level. Focusing on the indigenous legal traditions of Indonesia, the study develops a conceptual framework about ADR beyond much of the existing literature by placing local wisdom in the foreground and its relevance for legal pluralism and successful dispute resolution mechanisms. Such perspective resonates with global conversations on legal pluralism, culture, legitimacy and sustainable conflict resolution, emphasising the context specific nature of the approach undertaken to address disputes arising across diverse socio-legal landscapes.

This study examines Indonesia's history, culture, and implementation of non-litigation dispute resolution. By analysing case studies, ethnographic methods, and legal

frameworks, this study highlights how these communities have sought to balance the protection of their traditions with the pressure of contemporary legal realities in their quest for justice. The findings of this inquiry contribute to the broader discourse on the role of ADR in fostering sustainable conflict resolution, particularly in regions characterised by legal pluralism and socio-economic diversity.

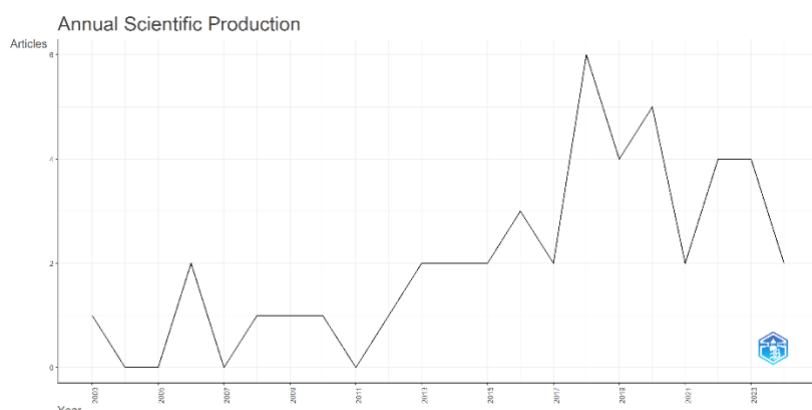


Figure 2. Annual Scientific Production of ADR Topic (Source: Scopus database)

The Annual Scientific Production graph illustrates a fluctuating yet increasing trend in research output, particularly after 2015, indicating a growing academic interest in legal studies and alternative dispute resolution (ADR). The peak in 2019 suggests a surge in scholarly attention toward legal pluralism and ADR mechanisms, followed by a slight decline but relatively stable production in recent years. This pattern implies that future research on local wisdom as a legal dispute settlement strategy in Indonesia will likely gain further traction, especially as legal systems that globally seek more culturally sensitive and community-based approaches. The increasing recognition of customary law and indigenous conflict resolution practices aligns with the broader discourse on legal decentralisation and restorative justice, positioning this study within a relevant and evolving academic field. Given the past trends, it is anticipated that scholarly contributions in this domain will continue to rise, particularly with interdisciplinary approaches integrating legal, sociological, and anthropological perspectives to strengthen the legitimacy and applicability of ADR within Indonesia's diverse communities.

METHOD

The research design is based on empirical legal, which examines how the legal framework intersects with reality to discover facts and pinpoint issues towards potential solutions (Sudiarawan et al., 2020). This study specifically obtains empirical evidence, analyses. From a socio-juridical perspective, it articulates the non-litigation dispute resolution undertaken by communities in the two regions of Blitar, East Java,

and Karangasem, Bali. The juridical approach is concerned with the framework, order, and cohesiveness of legal power in resolving disputes through reconciliation and the like, while the sociological view attends to law in the real-world reflections of legal and quasi-legal dispute resolution. Moreover, the perspective of legal anthropology shows how customs, traditions, and local values shape behaviour towards law in a society, which contributes to the wider understanding of legal culture. Legal culture represents a population's shared beliefs and attitudes, encompassing collective experiences and common responses. Finally, the legal sociology perspective is also important in understanding the functional utility of law in the various institutional architectures of society. It examines the practical function of legal mechanisms and assesses their impact on social cohesion and governance. The institution responds to that complexity by integrating different theoretical strands into a practice-oriented approach to dispute resolution that is sensitive to formal legal realities and practicalities confronted by communities in dealing with disputes.

This research was conducted in East Java and Bali, particularly in the Blitar and Karangasem areas that still adhere to a local custom-based dispute resolution tradition. With legal dogmatics and philosophy, in addition to a normative and empirical method, this study investigates the teachings and basic principles behind these methods. This study presents a fascinating opportunity to gain insight into indigenous communities in Blitar, where Javanese customary law still prevails, and Karangasem, on the island of Bali, where Balinese *adat*-based conflict resolution is firmly entrenched. This study showcases the significance of customary institutions, consensus and cultural norms through mountainous societies, providing a glimpse into how traditional dispute resolution, in general, still impacts today's legal system in Indonesia.

The research data was garnered from primary legal materials, including the 1945 Constitution, laws, and regulations, as well as secondary and tertiary data based on academic studies and inputs from the community. This qualitative research method uses observation, documentation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, and literature study methods. The data was analysed using qualitative, juridical, and interpretative techniques using grammatical and teleological approaches. This analysis stage interprets the provisions of the regulations and applicable laws, merely emphasising the higher laws and lower laws. Furthermore, this stage also aims to discover the application of legal principles that prioritise higher laws over lower ones, specific laws over general ones, and newer laws over older ones to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the legal landscape concerning dispute resolution (Boulanger, 2020; Rottleuthner, 1989).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Non-Litigation Dispute Resolution in Traditional Villages

A traditional village represents a community that preserves indigenous social

structures, cultural values, and customary legal systems, often passed down through generations. These villages, commonly found in Indonesia, function as autonomous socio-legal entities where local wisdom governs various aspects of life, including dispute resolution. Traditional villages uphold *adat* (customary) laws based on communal harmony, consensus-based decision-making, and restorative instead of punitive justice. *Adat* leaders or elders usually govern these villages, exercising authority over conflict resolution based on customary norms, spiritual practices, and historical precedents. Traditional villages resort to collective responsibility and reconciliation as opposed to the typical modern legal frameworks, and village disputes are resolved in ways that maintain social solidarity. Traditional villages, as regulated under Indonesian law, serve as an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) (a mechanism) culturally adaptive to the local identity and values, which confirms legal pluralism in Indonesia (Hamida, 2022; Vel & Bedner, 2015).

Non-litigation-based dispute resolution has been, and is still, a well-established tradition in many societies, especially in traditional villages. The method is rooted in local wisdom, focusing on social harmony, collective responsibility, and social artefacts. The main idea behind these resolutions is that disputes must be resolved, relationships must be restored, and future conflicts must be avoided. In contrast to litigation, which can be insular and legalistic, initiatives outside the courtroom seek to reconcile and compensate victims without tearing communities apart. This paper discusses the practice of non-litigation dispute resolution in the traditional villages of Blitar dan Karangasem regency from 1984–2023, the methods used and their effectiveness, and their significance in preserving social order.

Table 1. Alternative Dispute Resolution in Blitar and Karangasem

Blitar-East Java				
Desa <i>Adat</i> Jatinom				
Code	Year	Dispute	Settlement Method	Resolution
JT01	1984	Television theft	Customary court hearing	Return of stolen goods
JT02	1987	Adultery	Community gathering	Imposition of a fine by the village
JT03	1987	Dispute over joint property	Customary court hearing	Division of joint property
JT04	1988	Adultery	Mediation	Marriage
JT05	1988	Motorcycle theft	Mediation	Return of stolen goods
JT06	1989	Family dispute	Mediation	marriage-settlement
JT07	1989	Adultery	Community	Compensation

			gathering	payment to the victim
JT08	1989	Adultery	Customary court hearing	Declaration not to repeat the act
Desa Adat Gampang				
Code	Years	Dispute	Settlement Method	Resolution
GP01	2018	Domestic violence	Mediation	Declaration not to repeat the act
GP02	2020	Infidelity	Mediation	Declaration not to repeat the act
GP03	2020	Adultery resulting in childbirth	Mediation	Marriage and child custody
GP04	2020	Dispute over inheritance	Community gathering	Division of inheritance
GP05	2022	Infidelity	Mediation	Declaration not to repeat the act
GP06	2022	Dispute over joint property	Mediation	Division of joint property
GP0	2022	Debt dispute	Mediation	Debt repayment
GP09	2023	Accident-causing financial loss	Mediation	Compensation payment
GP10	2023	Debt dispute	Mediation	Debt repayment
GP11	2023	Adultery	Mediation	Declaration not to repeat the act
GP12	2023	Adultery resulting in childbirth	Mediation	Marriage and child custody
Karangasem-Bali				
Desa Adat Saren				
Code	Years	Dispute	Settlement Method	Resolution
SN01	2021	Dispute over customary land	Customary court hearing	Separation of customary land from private land
SN02	2021	Land Dispute of Pelaba Pura Dadya Pasek Bendesa in Banjar Dinas Pesawan, Desa Adat Saren	Mediation	Division of customary territories based on joint deliberation
SN03	2023	Conflict in Pakraman Tabola, Pakraman Village	Mediation	Division of customary territories based on joint

Desa <i>Adat</i> Mijil-Mipah					deliberation	
Code	Years	Dispute	Settlement Method	Resolution		
MM01	2022	Ownership Dispute over Setra Pura Prajapati and Pura Dalem between Desa <i>Adat</i> Mijil and Desa <i>Adat</i> Ipah	Customary court hearing	Division of customary territories based on joint deliberation		
MM02	2022	Boundary Dispute between Jasri Village and Perasi Village	Mediation	Division of customary territories based on joint deliberation		

Source; Author, 2025

State law has relied on reasoning to overcome practices and social norms within traditional village communities in Indonesia, which leaves several hesitancies regarding the resolution of disputes that stem from the community itself. First, the adversarial relationship of the parties to the dispute in litigation means the outcome must be a win-lose solution that often impinges on long-range social amity. Conversely, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms based on local wisdom emphasise consensus building and reconciliation and foster social cohesion. Moreover, many are disbarred from seeking justice through official legal channels because of the high costs that need to cover attorney, court, and other administrative fees. As cases go through multiple appeals, they can add to the cost and make the state judicial system even less accessible to communities.

Further, the fact that most court proceedings can take months or even years adds to the inconvenience and impracticality of litigation in settling disputes. In traditional village communities, social stability depends on expedited resolution of villagers' disputes, thus making ADR an attractive option. Cheap and accessible forms of force are also on the periphery of the socio-economic crisis, fuelling a greater apprehension about judicial corruption—a phenomenon that comes up when reports abound about the missteps of judges, lawyers, prosecutors, police officers, and court officials. This sense of an imperfect legal system erodes the public trust in state law. Finally, the transparency of litigation, in which the specifics of cases are available to the public, can threaten the reputation of parties in dispute, further motivating communities to pursue confidential and culturally relevant ways of resolving disputes.

The customary court hearing is one of the major forms of conflict resolution in these traditional villages. This mechanism is often used in serious disputes that

necessitate collective decision-making by community elders or leaders known for indulging in customary practices. Customary courts offer a way for all community members to clarify their grievances to one another, using the customary laws and customs that have regulated village life for generations. Traditional resolution can be seen in the cases of Jatinom—a television theft in 1984 (JT01) and a dispute over joint property in 1987 (JT03). Those meetings that have become a perfunctory part of the judicial process could educate community members about honesty, fairness, and responsibility.

Another mechanism used in dispute resolution is through community gatherings. These meetings offer a space for discussion and collective decision-making, aligning the resolution with the values and ethics of the community (Jenkins et al., 2021). They provide the opportunity for a participatory type of justice where all voices, including family members and respected elders, are heard. Cases of adultery in Jatinom were mediated via community forums in 1987 (JT02) and 1989 (JT07), imposing fines and compensation. Involving the community in such decision-making provides those involved as much accountability as possible, discouraging such acts from being committed again and increasing a moral obligation amongst villagers to uphold justice. Also, community-based conflict resolution strengthens the community to ensure that interpersonal conflicts do not lead to lingering grudges that could tear apart village life.

Dispute and grievance redressal in these villages mainly involves mediation. This process requires the presence of a voluntary mediator, typically a respected leader in the community, who guides conflicting parties in negotiations towards a solution that meets the needs of all parties (Yudhantaka et al., 2023). Mediation was particularly effective in disputes involving families, prevalent in several cases in Gaprang between 2018 and 2023. A case in 2018 of domestic violence (GP01) or adultery covered in 2020, 2022, and 2023 (GP02, GP05, GP11) followed the same route, resulting in mediation and the statement that the offender would never repeat it. Workplace disputes have varying social and emotional dimensions, making mediation agile enough to tackle. The resolution also offers culturally relevant solutions to satisfy the complex needs of the disputants. Dialogue and mediation avert hostility and seek durable peace over retribution.

Mediations have also been successful in debt disputes. In two other instances from Gaprang in 2022 and 2023 (GP07, GP10), cases were resolved through mediation, reducing the debt and agreeing to repay the debts. This approach allows for fulfilling financial obligations without the hassle and expense of lengthy and costly legal proceedings. Mediation offers a route to resolution outside of the rigid confines of formal legal proceedings, allowing for reparative justice in which both the victim and perpetrator have agreed upon a payment plan that fits within both their financial means and personal situations while minimising monetary penalties and maximising

restorative justice.

Depending on the seriousness of the dispute, customary sanctions can include monetary fines, compensation payments, or public apologies. Sanctions carry two roles: correction, so others will not make the same infraction, and prevention, where the offended will receive justice. In 1989, another adultery case (JT08) in Jatinom was settled by the customary court, requiring the offender to declare openly not to repeat adultery. When the person commits a wrongdoing and any bystanders call out wrongdoing, it reinforces community standards and discourages more violations.

Fines and compensation payments are also prevalent. For instance, in Gaprang, a 2023 accident that resulted in a financial loss (GP09) was mediated, with the responsible party paying compensation to the victim. They focus on restorative justice, ensuring victims can get proper redress without being mired in lengthy legal fights. Therefore, customary sanctions ensure that resolutions are context-sensitive and consider the dispute's seriousness, the socio-economic realities of the disputing parties, and what is needed to restore relationships and community.

The conflicts in the customary law of Karangasem Regency, Bali Province, especially in two localities in the Saren-customary village and Mijil-IPah-customary village, are always associated with the conflict of customary land rights. The *adat* people in Bali usually refer to mediation or customary tribunal to resolve territorial conflict. This settlement method is intended to reach a mutually beneficial solution for both parties. In conflict resolution, the *adat* (customary) law serves as the effective rule of the guideline, where respected elders or *adat* leaders will act as mediators. Driven by social organisation in informal systems of social cohesion, restored relations, and the restoration of mutual trust, this approach provides a preferred model for the eventual resolution beyond formal courts that could benefit from the connection with the community (Ruhullessin, 2021).

The non-litigation dispute resolution mechanism works effectively in traditional villages because it maintains social harmony and can provide quick solutions that are in line with the local culture. Such approaches focus more on reconciliation than punishment, building a sense of justice that fits the community. Moreover, they provide a budget-friendly option compared to the formal judicial system, ensuring that justice is accessible to all community members. Mutually negotiated and agreed outcomes are better than those imposed through litigation channels. Moreover, these methods allow for the maintenance of relationships, ensuring that disputing parties can coexist within the same community without lingering resentment.

In this context, navigating conflict through non-litigation dispute resolution practices in traditional villages like Saren, Jatinom and Gaprang can be seen as an adapted continuance of the local wisdom of conflict management. Indeed, Customary courts embody traditional legal structures founded on unwritten sources of law and community consensus and are critical in addressing disputes of such communities.

Customary courts operate as informal mechanisms of law which prioritise restorative justice, reconciliation and the maintenance of social harmony (Moore, 2000). These courts function through gatherings, mediation, and the application of *adat* (customary) law relevant to Lederach's (1997) conflict transformation theory based on the theory of sustainable peace. Customary courts and the mechanisms that resolve indigenous disputes help build communal trust, engagement and sustainable practice of facilitators of justice for disputes in a way that does not challenge communities' traditional assumptions and beliefs (Lederach, 1997). Although some obstacles like legal pluralism and state recognition remain, people continue to depend on these mechanisms, suggesting they are still pertinent today. Examining these traditional methods provides critical guidance for legal practitioners and policymakers when attempting to incorporate customary rules into contemporary alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to ensure justice is reformatory and stays with the community (Fadli, M., et. al, 2023).

Mechanisms of Dispute Resolution in Traditional Villages

The majority of legal disputes fall within family law, inheritance law, and contract law in the area of civil law, as well as minor violations and offences in the area of criminal law. In addition, the legal dispute settlement in Jatinom Village, Kanigoro Subdistrict, Blitar Regency, is performed through mediation by the village head, the village military officer (*Babinsa*), and the community police officer (*Babinkamtibmas*), collectively known as the "Three Pillars." This mediation process is essentially part of ADR—an alternative dispute settlement method conducted outside the ordinary court system through negotiation, mediation, and arbitration. Non-litigation dispute settlement offers advantages such as faster processes (effective and efficient), emphasising on maintaining moral values and societal harmony. Table 2 classifies the resolution of legal disputes through alternative dispute resolution.

Table 2. Classified Dispute Settlement into ADR

Dispute Category	Type of Dispute	Settlement Method	Resolution
Criminal	Theft (Television, Motorcycle)	Customary court hearing, mediation	Return of stolen goods
Moral & Social	Adultery, Infidelity	Mediation, community gathering, customary court hearing	Marriage, Declaration not to repeat the act, Imposition of a fine

Family & Inheritance	Dispute over joint property, Inheritance dispute	Mediation, community gathering	Division of property/inheritance
Customary Land	Dispute over customary land	Customary court hearing	Separation of customary land from private land
Domestic Violence	Domestic violence	Mediation	Declaration not to repeat the act
Debt Disputes	Debt disputes	Mediation	Debt repayment
Accidents	Accidents causing financial loss	Mediation	Compensation payment

Source; Author, 2025

According to statements from the Village Head and Village Secretary on Jatinom on June 7, 2023, the mechanism for resolving legal disputes such as infidelity, debt disputes, child abduction, adultery, divorce, and others follows the same pattern: (1) The disputing parties report the legal dispute to the village office; (2) The village government summons the disputing parties to the village office; (3) The mediators (village head, *Babinsa*, and *Babinkamtibmas*) conduct mediation through a deliberation process; (4) The mediators act as neutral facilitators or village peace judges, listening to the legal disputes presented by the parties; (5) The mediators propose various potential resolutions without coercion; (6) The mediators and the disputing parties review the alternative resolutions; (7) The mediators draft a settlement resolution concept; (8) The disputing parties accept the resolution willingly; the mediators and the disputing parties sign a settlement agreement.

The approach taken by the Village Head in dispute settlement emphasises persuasion and finding the best solution to prevent further issues, aiming for a decision that benefits everyone (a win-win solution). The mediation process involves inviting the disputing parties to the village hall for a deliberation. The technique involves gathering information from each party and presenting various resolution alternatives for the parties to choose from, ensuring the issue is thoroughly resolved without either side feeling victorious or defeated. The guiding principle in resolving legal disputes is encapsulated in the adage of *rukun agawe sentosa, crab agawe bubrah* (harmony brings strength, discord brings destruction), *menang tanpa ngasorake* (winning without demeaning others), emphasising respect and ensuring that no one's feelings are hurt.

The World Bank has noted several advantages of the Village Head's role in dispute settlement: 1) For most minor and simple cases, informal justice is an appropriate and effective process; 2) village peace judges have local legitimacy and

authority, which state courts do not always possess; 3) the procedures and substance align with public opinion, prioritising harmony; 4) the goal is to avoid conflict, with a restorative approach, and the process is swift and affordable; 5) it is effective and efficient for rural communities that are economically and socially interdependent; and 6) the majority of people express satisfaction with the village peace judges (World Bank, 2019, 2020, 2023).

Local Wisdom in Legal Dispute Settlement of the Blitar-East Java Community

Blitar Regency, based on cultural regions in East Java, falls within the Javanese Mataraman cultural area. This region is heavily influenced by the culture of the ancient Mataram Kingdom in Java, characterised by its agrarian roots, strong village solidarity, and a robust tradition of cooperation (*gotong royong*) (R. V. Fadli, 2022; Wulandari et al., 2018). Most of the Mataraman Javanese people are Muslims, but in practice, the community is divided into two groups: *santri* (religious Muslims) and *abangan* (syncretic Muslims) (Huda et al., 2020). The *abangan* group adheres to Islam but is not fully Islamic as they also practice *kejawen*—a traditional belief system based on animism, dynamism, Hinduism-Buddhism and Islam syncretization.

The practitioners of *kejawen* are often devoutly religious as they are conscious of playing their part in the oneness of existence and depending on the universal laws that govern their lives. It also includes the perspective of the Mataraman Javanese in conflict management and better outcome-making. The long history of Blitar supports this perspective as part of the Mataram Kingdom, whereby there is a similarity in the cultural value system between Blitar and the Mataram Kingdom. Some characteristics of Blitar society as a subculture of Mataraman Java include: (1) In the social life of Mataraman Javanese society, people have a strong solidarity so that cooperation has become a social habit; (2) In life (religion), Mataraman Javanese people prioritise the balance of human relations with the natural environment and God (Astutik & Ramadhoan, 2020; Mashudi, 2016).

For the Javanese, dispute disrupts social harmony. "There are different concepts of social harmony put forward based on cosmology, which divides social balance into two dimensions, namely the *jagad gedhe* (macrocosm) and the *jagad cilik* (microcosm) (Endriastuti et al., 2017; Nurziana & Firdaus, 2025). This cosmological perspective is held by the Javanese ethnic group in general that orients them to balance these two realms so they can live in peace (*tentrem*) and safety (*slamet*) (Faizun et al., 2023; Mamahit, 2021; Pranoto, 2024; Saputra et al., 2019). At its core, dispute settlement seeks to positively promote harmonious values for resolving matters often condemned in society. These values are essential for the community, as they incorporate a noble desire to confirm its existence.

In practical terms, certain values serve as the foundation for community behaviour in resolving conflicts through mediation at the village level led by mediators

such as the Village Head, *Babinsa*, and *Bhabinkamtibmas*. These values include politeness, which encompasses etiquette, respect, and courtesy in communication; *gotong royong* (cooperation); harmony in social and family relationships; *memayu bayuning bawono* (preserving the beauty and harmony of the world); and *mangan ora mangan kumpul* (togetherness regardless of material wealth). The Blitar region has its distinctive local wisdom, such as *tepo sliro* (empathy or respecting others' interests), *menang tanpa ngasorake* (winning without demeaning others), *ana rembug di rembug* (matters are resolved through deliberation), *rukun agawe santoso* (harmony brings strength), *siro yo ingsun-ingsun yo siro* (you are me, and I am you), *ngalah lubur wekasane* (yielding is a noble act), *tega larane ora tega patine* (ability to bear the pain but not the death), and *dudu sanak dudu kadang yen mati melu kelangan* (not family by blood or relation, but the loss can be felt when one passes away). These values serve as fundamental or essential guidelines in the legal dispute resolution process for the Mataraman Javanese community (Astutik & Ramadhoan, 2020; Mamahit, 2021; Nurziana & Firdaus, 2025; Pranoto, 2024).

The interpretation of the role of culture plays a significant part in conflict or legal dispute settlement within the community. Cultural acts serve as a blueprint for behaviour, offering guidelines for permissible and prohibited matters. The following are key cultural roles in dispute settlement: (1) the values of deliberation, politeness in communication, *tepo sliro*, cooperation, harmony in social and family relationships, *memayu bayuning bawono*, *mangan ora mangan kumpul*, *menang tanpa ngasorake*, *ana rembug di rembug*, *rukun agawe santoso* are used as guiding principles for daily behaviour and decision-making; (2) the people of Blitar regard these values as high teachings, and Javanese people believe that these values must be preserved and practiced. Failing to uphold these values would be seen as forgetting one's cultural identity (not *jawani* or "not embodying Javanese values"); and (3) as Javanese, the Blitar community views harmony as a fundamental aspect of life, manifesting in a state of peace and safety—achieving balance and harmony between the macrocosm (the relationship between humans, God, and the universe) and the microcosm (Huda et al., 2020; Nurziana & Firdaus, 2025; Saputra et al., 2019).

Local Wisdom in Resolving Legal Disputes in Balinese Community of Karangasem

The Balinese community, in general, has long held local wisdom as both a norm and a living law that thrives within society, playing a key role in maintaining social order. Local wisdom-based laws have become traditions (*adat*) that are considered sacred. The most common of these is *awig-awig*, which is sanctified to preserve social order in Bali. *Awig-awig*, as part of Balinese cultural values or local wisdom, serves as a blueprint of behaviour, providing guidelines for what is permissible, recommended, and prohibited (Geria et al., 2023; Sukadana et al., 2023).

The community of Karangasem Regency, part of Bali Province, is known for having stronger local wisdom than other Balinese regions. The use of language, the practice of *mawirama* (stories in the form of kakawin), and *megibung* (communal eating) are effective media for instilling traditional and religious values in the people of Karangasem. The Balinese language, as a symbol of daily communication, along with the practices of *mawirama* and *megibung*, reflects stronger traditional customs and civilization in fostering values of unity, equality, and a sense of community (Dasih et al., 2024; Suryawati, 2024).

Other important principles of Balinese local wisdom that emphasise unity and social harmony include *menyama braya* (brotherhood), *sagilik saguluk salunglung sabayantaka*, *paras paras sarpanaya* (unity, mutual respect, love, and mutual help), and *tatwam asi* ("I am you, and you are me"). These principles are essentially the crystallisation of the values of *Tri Hita Karana*. Philosophically, legal dispute settlement through *paruman* (deliberation) is an embodiment of the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy. This Hindu teaching encompasses *parahyangan* (the relationship between humans and God), *pawongan* (the relationship between humans), and *palemahan* (the relationship between humans and nature), all of which must be harmonious and balanced. *Tri Hita Karana* teaches that maintaining harmonious relationships between humans and *Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa* (God Almighty), humans and their surrounding environment, and humans with each other will lead to well-being and happiness (Roth & Sedana, 2015; Sudiana et al., 2024).

The values of Balinese local wisdom are deeply influenced by Hinduism, to the extent that religion and culture in Bali are two aspects of one reality. According to *Triguna*, local wisdom in religious practice is dominated by the paths of *bhakti* (devotion) and *karma* (action), with an emphasis on rituals and symbolism rather than a philosophical understanding of the religion (Dasih et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2024). The fusion of religion and culture in Balinese local wisdom is a key strategy in resolving legal cases in Karangasem Regency. This reality aligns with the motto of Karangasem Regency, *Raksakeng Dharma Prajabitta*, meaning "through the protection of *dharma* (religion), the welfare of the people is achieved."

Thus, the pattern of legal dispute settlement and the values underlying legal practices in resolving disputes reflect the local wisdom of the community, which is characterised by religious-magical elements crystallised in the customary legal products of the local society. In legal anthropology, this is referred to as customary law, folk law, Indigenous law, unwritten law, unofficial law, or, in the Indonesian context, *adat* law (*adatrecht*).

Adat law originates from and grows within the community, making it inseparable from the society it serves. It is constructed and built upon values, norms, and principles that are agreed upon and believed to be true by the Indigenous community. It is closely aligned with the customary law community's character,

values, and dynamics. Indonesian *adat* law is an embodiment of the culture of Indonesian society and is rooted in the Indonesian worldview, which differs from Western legal systems or other legal systems.

Soedarsono mentions that the structure of Indonesian *adat* law differs from other legal systems in Indonesia, such as Roman law brought by the Dutch colonialists, Hindu law from India, Islamic law, and other legal systems. Soepomo, as cited in Mustakim, notes that *adat* law is the manifestation of the people's true legal feelings, built upon the real and ideal cultural materials of the Indonesian nation specifically and the Malay people in general (Hermawan et al., 2022; Simonetti, 2023).

To understand the tradition of dispute settlement in the community, it is important to understand the philosophy of why disputes arise and have implications for adherence to the values of the customary law community. This philosophical insight is important for understanding the choices of customary leaders when mediating disputes. This philosophical consideration is key in that it enables one to evaluate the degree of justice, peace, sacrifice, and well-being that the customary law community will be subject to as a result of the decisions taken.

The tradition of dispute settlement in the customary law communities is based on the philosophical values of solidarity, sacrifice, supernatural belief and justice. Customary law communities in such countries respect the value of solidarity, considering disputes between people as acts that disturb the common good. The collective interest and the precept of sacrifice are considered ethical virtues highly honoured in the community. This is the value of the supernatural because, in this case, it is believed that the resolution of the dispute obtains approval or the control of a higher power so that the disputing parties do not return to conflict after the dispute is resolved through customary practices. Justice in customary law between the community members guarantees that no party should feel disadvantaged by the decision made by the customary leader in resolving the dispute between the parties. *Adat* law dispute settlement aims to attain a peaceful relationship.

In Karangasem, parallel to these local ways of resolving community problems, state law is also made into a tool to facilitate communal dispute resolution, thus creating a unique context of legal pluralism. Even though *adat* law is mainly used to resolve disputes between families or within the same community, it will have limitations in more complex disputes, such as land ownership disputes or criminal acts and law disputes, which will ultimately be handled through state law. The relationship between customary and state legal systems is illustrated in cases where local authorities work with *adat* leaders to ensure that resolutions are consistent with both branches of law. Karangasem, where these two systems co-exist, could help us understand how Indonesia recognises and accommodates alternative dispute resolution as part of its legal framework.

Impact of Local Wisdom on Non-Litigation Dispute Settlement

Local wisdom is essential to solving disputes outside the formal law, especially in traditional villages like Saren, Mijil-IPah, Jatinom, and Gaprang. This cultural connection allows for the dispute-resolution mechanisms of these villages to be relevant, sustainable and cohesive. Many conflicts have been settled without recourse to litigation within customary court hearings, mediation by elders, and community gatherings. This article reviews the socio-environmental conflict resolution cases from 1984 to 2023 and discusses how local wisdom has influenced the resolution and harmony of society.

The utility of non-litigation dispute settlement is proven by the numerous cases brought before ordinary court hearings. Cases like the 1984 television theft and 1987 joint property disputes were addressed through customary court hearings, resulting in the return of stolen goods and equitable division of property as the resolutions. In Saren and Mijil-Mipah (2021-2023), the same method was applied where a dispute over customary land was settled by separating the land from the private owner. These illustrations show that traditional court proceedings provide a legal, culturally-recognised path to resolving disputes, emphasising restorative rather than retributive justice.

Village elders have also mediated the big mechanism of non-litigation dispute resolution. Elders are revered in these societies and constitute an important mechanism for ensuring social order. In Gaprang, cases were mediated for infidelity (2020, 2022) as well as domestic violence (2018), which typically ended in a formal promise not to repeat the violation. This resolution allows reconciliation and moral accountability to happen as well. The proceedings should always have an influential yet kind figure presiding over them, and by that, both ethical principles and trust in the community should always be enforced.

The community gathering stage also embodies the ideals of local wisdom in achieving conflict resolution. This holds everyone accountable and allows everyone to get involved in decision-making. In Jatinom, cases of adultery (1987, 1989) and inheritance disputes (2020) were settled in community gatherings, resulting in resolutions including compensation payments and the division of inheritance. This creates social cohesion while engaging the public in discussions that need to occur to maintain harmony. Whereas formal legal systems tend to distance parties in conflict from each other, community gatherings hinge on responsible action and shared values.

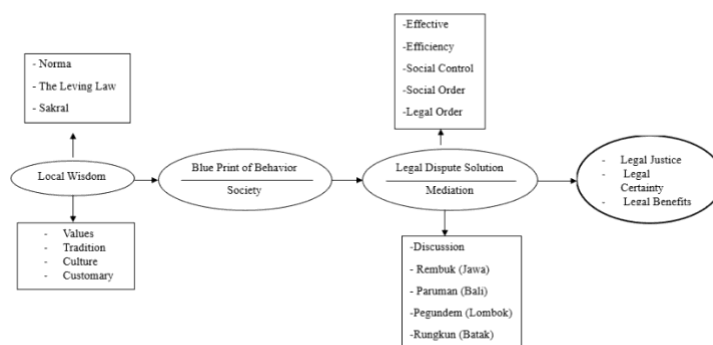


Figure 3. Local Wisdom Influence in Indonesian Traditional Legal Systems
(Source; Author, 2025)

The success of these traditional ways of resolving disputes is rooted in their rarity of conflict, with any of them reconstituting and happening. The tendencies to establish comprehensive marriage settlements, in which adultery leading to childbirth may be regulated, are similar to that of Gaprang (2020, 2023), advocating longer-term prevention rather than short-term penalties. In 2022, the debt dispute resolved through mediation also helped avoid the debt's legal sequel and ensured the debtors repaid their debt, preventing financial instability. It shows how local wisdom can adapt to the changing times and challenges without abandoning traditional values.

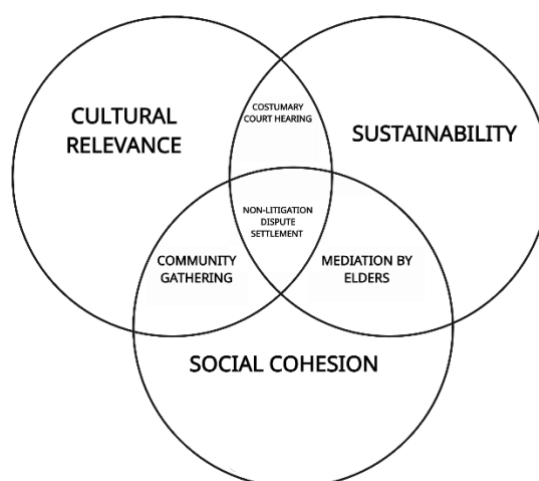


Figure 4. Legal Framework of Traditional ADR in Indonesia (Source; Author, 2025)

In addition, non-litigation dispute resolution approaches align with the principles of restorative justice, which prioritise repairing the harm caused to

individuals and communities rather than punishing offenders. In traditional village societies, repeated payments for damages and reconciliatory actions incentivise accountability while maintaining social bonds. For example, the adultery case in Jatinom (1989) was resolved by compensation paid by the perpetrators to the victim, and it did not enter the criminal jurisdiction. Such a resolution focuses on rehabilitating rather than punishing, creating a justice system that treats everyone humanely and fosters community.

The local wisdom in the non-litigation dispute settlement is important in the case study of Saren, Mijil-IPah, Jatinom, and Gaprang traditional villages. Such case resolution fosters sustainability and social cohesions through customary court hearings and community gatherings mediated by elders. These mechanisms provide alternatives, often preserving social cohesion and justice without the unyielding and abstract institution of legal systems. With the advancement of societies, these traditional dispute resolution mechanisms can be retained and adopted into broader legal systems and in doing so, make justice accessible and enhance sustainable peace among communities.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study demonstrate the relevance of local wisdom in resolving legal disputes among traditional law communities in East Java and Bali, namely in the traditional villages of Jatinom (Blitar) and Karangasem (Bali). For over forty years (1984–2023), these communities have relied on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms, particularly mediation, to resolve disputes, including land disputes, inheritance issues, adultery, debt disputes, and domestic violence cases. Traditional leaders such as the Village Head, Babinsa, Babinkamtibmas in East Java, MDP, and MDA in Bali, play a significant role in preserving social harmony and ensuring that dispute resolutions are in line with communal values. The results show that judging by the principle of *musyawarah* (deliberation to reach a consensus) remains a major aspect of the resolution of disputes, which strengthens (a) the value of solidarity, (b) the value of sacrifice, (c) belief in supernatural powers, and (d) the principle of justice on the community of customary law. Legal disputes are resolved through customary courts, mediation, and community gatherings, and the process prioritises reconciliation and long-term social cohesion over adversarial litigation.

Adat-based dispute resolution methods have also been shown to possess long-term sustainability, as indicated by the study's findings suggesting that incorporating ADR alongside existing *adat* frameworks has facilitated the continued relevance of these processes in the face of modern challenges while maintaining cultural authenticity. More generally, this study emphasises the significance of legal pluralism in Indonesia, where traditional dispute resolution systems operate in parallel with formal legal systems. There are several methods in recognising and reinforcing these

community approaches to realise access to justice, mainly in areas where traditional judicial means are difficult to access or simply absent. The above discussion implies that the success of non-litigation dispute resolution in enhancing social harmony ought to also be taken as a challenge by policymakers and legal practitioners to contemplate incorporation of these locally rooted methods of non-litigation dispute resolution at a local level into a national stratification of ADR. The study affirms that traditional dispute resolution mechanisms steeped in local knowledge are still an appropriate, culture-specific, and sustainable form of justice. It would be a worthy future avenue of research examining how to institutionalise this in the court system so that gaps between custom and formal law can be filled to ensure that dispute resolution is inclusive and effective for all.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research and publication process of this article was fully funded by the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) of Universitas Negeri Malang as part of the university's internal research grant program for the year 2024.

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