

Maintaining Local Wisdom in the Middle of a Multicultural Urban Community in Medan City: Approaches and Obstacles

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Abstract. The aim of this essay is to present the findings of a comprehensive investigation of the local knowledge of multicultural urban areas, particularly in Medan. This article primarily focuses on describing and analyzing the factors that contributed to the development of local knowledge in Medan City's urban communities. Additionally, it analyzes the social and cultural dynamics of the diverse and varied city of Medan in relation to the production of local wisdom, along with the difficulties and barriers that the community faces. It is generally hoped that the larger community will find this article to be a helpful source of knowledge. More importantly, though, it is anticipated that this article can offer valuable insights into the local knowledge of multicultural urban areas.

Keywords: local wisdom, multicultural, urban communities.

1 Introduction

The people of Medan City are a real example of a complex multicultural society. Various ethnicities, religions, and traditions continue to develop and blend in Medan City. Like a vast ocean of culture, this city also has a rich historical background, including the historical background of international trade and Dutch colonialism, which influenced the socio-cultural life of its people [1]. Historically, in 1918 it was recorded that Medan was inhabited by 43,826 people, consisting of 409 people of European descent, 35,009 people of Indonesian descent, 8,269 people of Chinese descent, and 139 people from other Eastern races [2]. In addition to diversity based on ethnicity, the people of Medan City have also been diverse in the aspect of religion and belief since the beginning. In 2016, 64.35% of the population were Muslim, 20.99% were Protestant, 8.27% were Buddhist, 5.11% were Catholic, 1.04% were Hindu, and 0.06% were Confucian [2].

The population of Medan City has now grown greatly and enriched its socio-cultural life. The ethnic groups that live side by side bring unique contributions from their respective local wisdoms. Although the original inhabitants of Medan are ethnic Malays, the city actually began

as a village founded by Guru Patimpus Sembiring Pelawi from the Karo ethnic group [3]. This shows how heterogeneous the population composition is here. We know that the concept of local wisdom reflects the noble values inherent in each community group. This can be in the form of customs, beliefs, or ways of interacting with the surrounding environment. Medan has a lot of local wisdom that is worth developing and studying [4].

So far, studies on multicultural education tend to see it partially from the perspective of education and social as an offer that must absolutely be implemented. Two tendencies from existing studies can confirm the lack of attention to the dimension of local wisdom, or what can be called local genius, owned by communities that are accustomed to living in diversity. First, many studies pay attention to the educational aspect, which tends to describe that the internalization of the dimension of freedom of religion and belief in the standard of competence of student independence is by making religious moderation an aspect of the development of the foundation of life in religion [5], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10], [11]. Second, studies that pay attention to the religious aspect tend to describe that freedom of religion and belief can be realized by prioritizing religious moderation [12], [13], [14].

Based on the existing study tendencies, it appears that local wisdom or local genius or local wisdom possessed by multicultural communities, especially urban multicultural communities such as the Medan City community, has not been the focus of attention. Therefore, this study will complement the shortcomings of previous studies. So this study focuses on the problem of how local wisdom or local genius in multicultural life in urban communities in Medan City is able to overcome various existing problems.

Currently, the people of Medan City are not only facing challenges but also opportunities from the phenomenon of globalization. Changes in technology, communication, and human mobility, which are part of globalization, affect the multicultural lives of its people. However, so far the people of Medan City have shown their resilience and adaptability in facing these changes [15]. The people of Medan City have many cultures that are worthy of being developed as shared local wisdom in urban life, which indirectly affects adaptability. This concept includes noble values inherent in certain community groups (ethnicities), which are used and beneficial for these groups (ethnicities) in the heterogeneity of urban life. In fact, in the end, the concept was also adopted by other community groups (ethnicities) so that it became part of their socio-cultural life. This shows that in a multicultural context, local wisdom for certain community groups (ethnicities) can be a bridge to understanding and respecting differences, as well as strengthening harmony and unity [15].

Specifically, this study describes how religious freedom and local wisdom in a multicultural society, and how the pattern of religious freedom and local wisdom in a multicultural society in urban areas, especially in Medan City, are practiced in a harmonious socio-cultural life. A deep understanding of religious freedom and local wisdom in multicultural life can provide a model for anticipating and overcoming conflicts that arise from various differences that exist. The study based on the results of this research puts forward an argument that local wisdom in a multicultural society as a source of religious freedom and belief will be able to anticipate and overcome conflicts that may occur. Conflicts that may occur in a multicultural society will be able to hinder a harmonious life and freedom of religion and belief. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the model of local wisdom that exists in the life of a multicultural society.

2 Methods

This study will use a qualitative research method with a participatory action research (PAR) approach. This approach is a research model that seeks something to connect the research process to the process of social change, which emphasizes research activities carried out in a participatory manner in society. The community in question is the citizens in a community or wider social scope to encourage transformative actions (changes in living conditions for the better).

3 Result and Discussion

Multicultural societies, such as Medan City, are meeting places for various ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds. The variety of traditions, beliefs, and practices unique to these communities are combined into local wisdom, which emerges from a combination of historical, social, and environmental factors. Historical interactions between various ethnic groups, the blending of traditions, and adaptation to the local environment all contribute to the formation of this local wisdom.

The phenomenon of openness to diversity and respect for various cultural norms in Medan City has played an important role in the emergence of local wisdom. The ability of various communities to live side by side and learn from each other has encouraged the development of shared values and practices that embody the collective wisdom of a multicultural society. In addition, economic activities and trade routes have historically brought together people from various backgrounds, leading to the exchange of knowledge, customs, and beliefs. This has enriched Medan's local wisdom by combining elements from various cultures and traditions.

The richness of local wisdom in Medan City is inseparable from the phenomenon of population mobility which causes the distribution of ethnic concentration based on the geography of multicultural community settlements in Medan City. This is also an interesting and complex topic of study. Medan City, as one of the largest cities in Indonesia, has a long history of inter-ethnic interaction that shapes its social and geographical landscape. Based on the results of research in this study, demographic data on the distribution of ethnicities in Medan City which is processed with a geographic information system which is then applied to the geographical map of Medan City. The distribution of geographical concentration of ethnicities in Medan City can be seen in Figure 1 below.

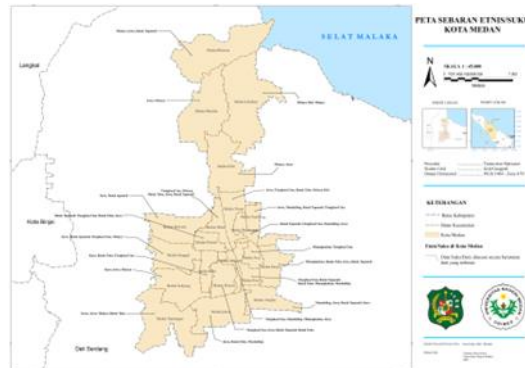


Fig 1. Map of the Distribution of Geographical Concentration of Ethnicities in Medan City

As previously explained, Medan City consists of various tribes and races consisting of Javanese, Batak (Toba, Karo, Simalungun, Tapanuli, and Mandailing), Minangkabau, Malay, Chinese/Chinese. Based on the processing of Village Potential data 2021, qualitative data was obtained in the form of the distribution of dominant tribes in each sub-district, but based on this data, the dominant tribe at the City level cannot be generalized, for more details, see **Table 1**.

Table 1. Distribution of Ethnic Groups by District (Podes Processing, 2021).

No.	District	Scattered Ethnicities
1	Medan Tuntungan	Karo, Jawa, Melayu, Batak Toba
2	Medan Johor	Jawa, Batak Toba, Mandailing
3	Medan Amplas	Mandailing, Jawa, Batak Tapanuli, Karo
4	Medan Denai	Minangkabau, Batak Toba, Jawa, Batak Tapanuli
5	Medan Area	Minangkabau, Tionghoa/Cina
6	Medan Kota	Tionghoa/Cina, Batak Tapanuli, Batak Toba, Minangkabau, Mandailing
7	Medan Maimun	Tionghoa/Cina, Mandailing, Minangkabau, Jawa
8	Medan Polonia	Tionghoa/Cina, Jawa, Batak Tapanuli, Batak Toba
9	Medan Baru	Karo, Batak Toba, Tionghoa/Cina
10	Medan Selayang	Karo, Jawa, Melayu
11	Medan Sunggal	Jawa, Batak tapanuli, Tionghoa/Cina, Melayu
12	Medan Helvetia	Jawa, Batak Tapanuli
13	Medan Petisah	Batak Tapanuli, Tionghoa/Cina, Batak Toba, Jawa
14	Medan Barat	Tionghoa/Cina, Melayu, Batak Toba, Jawa, Batak Tapanuli
15	Medan Timur	Jawa, Tionghoa/Cina, Batak Toba, Melayu Deli
16	Medan Perjuangan	Batak Tapanuli, Tionghoa/Cina, Mandailing, Jawa
17	Medan Tembung	Jawa, Mandailing, Batak Tapanuli, Tionghoa/Cina
18	Medan Deli	Melayu, Jawa
19	Medan Labuhan	Melayu Deli, Melayu
20	Medan Marelan	Jawa, Melayu
21	Medan Belawan	Melayu, Jawa, Batak Tapanuli

The data in table 1 above shows the concentration of dominant ethnic groups spread at the sub-district level. If seen in detail, as follows: (1) The Karo ethnic group is the dominant ethnic group found in the sub-districts of Medan Tuntungan, Medan Baru, and Medan Selayang; (2) The Javanese ethnic group is the dominant ethnic group found in the sub-districts of Medan Johor, Medan Sunggal, Medan Helvetia, Medan Timur, Medan Tembung, and Medan Marelan; (3) The Mandailing ethnic group is spread predominantly in the sub-district of Medan Amplas; (4) The Minangkabau ethnic group is an immigrant ethnic group spread predominantly in the sub-districts of Medan Denai, and Medan Area; (5) The Chinese/Chinese ethnic group is concentrated predominantly in the sub-districts of Medan Kota, Medan Maimun, Medan Polonia, and West Medan; and (6) The Tapanuli Batak and Toba Batak ethnic groups are the dominant ethnic groups concentrated in the Medan Petisah and Medan Perjuangan sub-districts, (7) The Malay ethnic group, which was originally the native ethnic group in Medan City, is currently concentrated in the Medan Deli, Medan Labuhan and Medan Belawan sub-districts. Population movement in Medan City has significant relevance to ethnic distribution which is ultimately geographically concentrated in urban areas. Based on data, the population of Medan City in 2023 reached 2,474,166 people. When compared to the population in 2020, there was a population increase of 1.45 percent. Then, with an area reaching 281.99 km², the population density reached 9,333 people/km². The actual conditions show the distribution of the population in each sub-district, which is known that the sub-district with the largest population is in the sub-district of 191,743 people, while the smallest population is in the Medan Baru sub-district of 36,191 people [16]. This is inseparable from the increasingly dynamic population mobility. The urbanization process slowly has an impact on population density, this also makes Medan a multi-ethnic Medan City [17]. The increase in population density which has resulted in this ethnic and religious diversity has historically been going on for a long time. In terms of its phenomenon, Medan City has long been a demographic place for various ethnicities and religions, diversity in aspects of life can be seen from culinary, traditional clothing, religious ceremonies, to cultural celebrations [18].

According to Mukmin et.al (2018), the characteristics of the accumulation of settlements from various ethnic groups in Medan City are related to economic patterns, some of which can be explained as follows, trade centers tend to be dominated by two ethnic groups, namely the Chinese and Minangkabau ethnic groups, office centers and government centers are mostly inhabited by the Batak Tapanuli ethnic group, the outskirts of Medan city and on former plantation land are dominated by the Javanese ethnic group with informal sector employment patterns [19]. In addition, according to Pelly (2007), the outskirts of Medan city are also a residential preference for the Malay and Mandailing ethnic groups. Based on this description, it can be seen that economic factors determine where certain ethnic groups live [20].

The characteristics of the settlement agglomeration in Medan City have close relevance to the formation of local wisdom together with the community. This can be seen from how different settlement patterns based on ethnicity will affect social interaction, culture, and community development. There are several aspects of relevance that need to be considered, including (1) Influence of Culture and Tradition, (2) Social Interaction and Collaboration, (3) Community Development and City Management, and (4) Preservation and Promotion of Local Wisdom.

Regarding Cultural and Tradition Influence, it can be concluded that ethnic diversity will certainly be identical to the richness of local wisdom. Each ethnic group brings unique traditions, customs, and local wisdom into their community. For example, the Chinese ethnic

group may bring a strong business tradition and hard work values, while the Minangkabau ethnic group is known for its unique customs. On the other hand, the Javanese ethnic group brings agrarian wisdom and customs related to agriculture. The interaction between these groups in the residential environment can enrich the local wisdom in Medan. In addition, the characteristics of settlements that focus on certain ethnicities help shape diverse local identities. For example, an area dominated by the Chinese ethnic group may have a unique festival or market, while the Batak ethnic area may have a certain cultural center or customs. The integration of these various cultural elements can strengthen the local identity of the city of Medan as a whole.

In terms of Social Interaction and Collaboration, ethnic distribution will encourage collaboration between ethnic groups. The coexistence of different ethnic groups in various residential areas often encourages collaboration and cultural exchange. For example, a market dominated by ethnic Chinese may also provide products from other ethnic groups, which can create opportunities for mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures. This aligns with the formation of local wisdom that can be influenced by how ethnic groups collaborate in community activities. For example, joint projects such as cultural festivals or local markets can combine elements from various traditions, creating a rich and diverse experience for the entire community.

Furthermore, in the aspect of City Development and Management, in the context of settlements, each ethnic group may have a specific way of managing resources and adapting to the local environment. For example, Javanese ethnic groups living on former plantation land may have specific farming or land management methods. This knowledge can be integrated into city planning to maximize the use of land and resources. The formation of local wisdom together with the community requires a deep understanding of the needs and contributions of each ethnic group. By taking into account the characteristics of settlements and economic patterns of various ethnicities, city planning can be more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all groups. This includes ensuring that various ethnic groups have access to public services, economic opportunities, and platforms to contribute to community development.

Finally, in the aspect of Preservation and Promotion of Local Wisdom, the characteristics of settlement agglomeration provide an opportunity to preserve local wisdom related to each ethnic group. For example, areas dominated by a particular ethnic group can become centers of cultural activities that help preserve their traditions and languages. Through an understanding of the characteristics of settlements and the local wisdom of various ethnic groups, the city government and community organizations can organize educational and promotional programs that raise awareness of cultural diversity. This helps create a more tolerant and educated society about the cultural heritage that exists in Medan.

Although the emergence of local wisdom in multicultural societies is an interesting phenomenon, it is important to consider its potential drawbacks. Emphasis on local wisdom can lead to the strengthening of cultural boundaries and the perpetuation of stereotypes, which hinders the development of a more cohesive and united society, and creates barriers to integration and assimilation. Therefore, studies on local wisdom are important and will help us understand how society values differences and strengthens harmony amidst diversity.

In its essence, the characteristics of settlement agglomeration based on ethnicity in Medan City have great relevance in the formation of local wisdom together with the community. Interaction

and collaboration between different ethnic groups not only enrich local culture but also contribute to the development of a more harmonious and inclusive community. By considering and integrating various elements of local wisdom in city planning and management, Medan can create an environment that is more culturally rich and more adaptive to the needs of its citizens.

Understanding the factors that contribute to the emergence of local wisdom in Medan provides deeper insight into the dynamics of a multicultural society and how diverse communities can come together to create a shared legacy of wisdom and understanding. However, it is important to consider the potential downsides of this phenomenon. Emphasizing local wisdom can lead to the reinforcement of cultural boundaries and the perpetuation of stereotypes. In some cases, the celebration of local wisdom can inadvertently create barriers to integration and assimilation, hindering the development of a more cohesive and unified society.

In addition, the concept of indigenous knowledge can mask the underlying power dynamics and inequalities in multicultural societies. It can enforce the status quo and suppress the voices and perspectives of marginalized communities, leading to the exclusion of their contributions to the overall cultural landscape. This can perpetuate social hierarchies and limit opportunities for true inclusivity and representation in society.

Critics argue that overemphasizing local wisdom can hinder the adoption of progressive ideologies and modern progress, potentially hampering a society's ability to adapt to global change and innovation. This inflexibility can limit the potential for growth and development, and inhibit the exploration of new ideas and ways of life that could benefit society as a whole. It is also important to critically examine the potential limitations and unintended consequences of emphasizing local wisdom in a multicultural society such as Medan City. We must consider how to navigate these challenges to ensure a more inclusive and equitable environment for all members of society.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, understanding the factors that contribute to the emergence of local wisdom in a multicultural society such as Medan City provides deeper insight into the dynamics of such a society. However, it is equally important to critically examine the potential limitations and unintended consequences of emphasizing local wisdom. This examination will help us navigate the challenges to ensure a more inclusive and equitable environment for all members of society. In its phenomenon, local wisdom also shows the resilience of society in the face of changing times. How they maintain traditional values while integrating new elements into their daily lives.

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