

## Dayak People's Spirituality and Local Wisdom in Preserving Nature and Transforming Social Life in Gunung Mas Regency, Central Kalimantan

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### ABSTRACT

This study employs an integrative literature review approach to examine how the spirituality and local wisdom of the Dayak community in Gunung Mas Regency shape patterns of social governance and support broader processes of social transformation. Unlike empirical studies that rely on interviews, surveys, or field observations, this research synthesizes multidisciplinary findings drawn from anthropology, the sociology of religion, public administration, environmental governance, and customary law. The reviewed literature consistently illustrates that Dayak spirituality embodied in ritual practices, moral teachings, and adat-based norms operates as a comprehensive normative system that guides everyday social conduct, regulates relationships within the community, and structures mechanisms of conflict resolution and social protection. Furthermore, the synthesis demonstrates that this spiritual foundation plays a crucial role in shaping community-based environmental management, emphasizing harmony with nature, collective stewardship, and intergenerational responsibility. Building on these insights, the study proposes a conceptual model of spiritual governance, which highlights the integration of cosmological values, collective obligations, relational accountability, and adaptive decision-making processes within Dayak communal life. The findings enrich theoretical discussions on culturally rooted governance by illustrating how spiritual-ethical frameworks can function as legitimate sources of authority and organizational coherence. This study also offers new perspectives for public administration, particularly regarding the relevance of indigenous spiritual ethics in advancing inclusive, context-sensitive, and sustainable governance practices.

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between spirituality, local wisdom, and social governance has increasingly attracted scholarly attention as researchers seek to understand how communities sustain both their social and ecological systems amid rapid modernization. In many indigenous contexts, spirituality is inseparable from daily

life. It serves not only as a moral compass but also as an organizing principle that shapes social relations, community decision-making, and human interactions with nature. From this perspective, nature is not regarded as a mere physical resource but as a sacred entity embodying life, memory, and collective responsibility across generations. Such an understanding challenges the dominant rational–bureaucratic paradigm of public administration by introducing ethical, cosmological, and community-centered values into governance processes.

Despite this growing interest, important research gaps remain—particularly regarding how indigenous spirituality functions not only as a cultural tradition but as a governance logic that actively structures decision-making, conflict resolution, environmental stewardship, and social protection. Few studies explicitly examine how these spiritual–ethical foundations interact with formal administrative systems or shape hybrid governance arrangements. Addressing these gaps, this study emphasizes the need to understand spirituality and local wisdom as core analytical lenses for explaining governance practices within the Dayak community of Gunung Mas.

In Indonesia, the Dayak people of Central Kalimantan exemplify this deep intertwining of spirituality, culture, and governance. Their worldview emphasizes harmony between human beings, the natural world, and the spiritual realm. These values are expressed through rituals, customary laws, and taboos that function as social and ecological regulators. Far from being static traditions, such practices constitute a living system of governance that sustains social cohesion and environmental stability. Ariyadi, Cahyono, and Bidayani (2022) describe the Dayak philosophy of environmental management as an organic, collective, and ritual-based model that ensures the sustainability of forests and land. Likewise, Purba and Mardawani (2023) highlight how the institution of *hutan adat* (customary forest) functions simultaneously as a socio-ecological safety net and a symbol of communal protection.

Yet, these indigenous systems are increasingly challenged by modern administrative and economic forces. Development programs, state regulations, and market-driven extractive activities often impose external frameworks of governance that prioritize efficiency and growth over cultural continuity and moral responsibility. The coexistence of these systems traditional and bureaucratic creates both tension and negotiation. As Rusdianto and Basani (2025) argue, the sustainability of indigenous governance depends not merely on cultural resilience but also on institutional recognition and participatory inclusion within formal administrative processes. The encounter between local values and modern governance thus generates hybrid forms of administration that merge customary authority with contemporary mechanisms of accountability.

Globally, scholars in religion and governance studies have examined how faith and spirituality influence political legitimacy, moral authority, and community organization (Clarke, 2011; Haynes, 2021). In environmental studies, Berkes, Colding, and Folke (2000) conceptualize *traditional ecological knowledge* as an integrated system of belief, practice, and moral codes sustaining human–nature relationships. These contributions have advanced understanding of how moral systems can structure collective action. However, most of these discussions remain centered on either world religions or Western contexts, leaving limited exploration of how indigenous spirituality shapes everyday governance in Southeast Asia, particularly within Indonesia’s plural and decentralized administrative structure.

In Central Kalimantan, the Dayak communities have long faced the social and ecological consequences of forest exploitation, resettlement, and policy-induced cultural shifts, patterns well documented in studies on indigenous displacement and land-use transformation in Borneo (Eilenberg, 2019; Sulastriyono, 2023). The people of Gunung Mas Regency, for instance, continue to practice rituals such as *manganan lewu* (village thanksgiving) and *handep hapakat* (mutual cooperation), which embody principles of reciprocity, restraint, and shared responsibility. These practices have been interpreted not merely as symbolic acts of faith but as functioning mechanisms of social regulation and community welfare, aligning with findings on Dayak collective ethics and ecological stewardship (Adiwibowo, 2019; Purba & Mardawani, 2023). Through such traditions, spirituality becomes operationalized in maintaining balance between humans and nature, and among members of the community themselves, reinforcing what scholars describe as the moral ecology of Dayak governance (Usman & Widyastuti, 2024; Vuspitasari & Usman, 2025).

Despite this, previous research on the Dayak in governance studies often focuses narrowly on environmental management or cultural preservation, while treating spirituality only as a peripheral theme. For example, Eilenberg (2019) emphasizes territorial governance and forest-use regulation among Dayak communities but gives little attention to the spiritual dimensions underlying these practices. Similarly, Adiwibowo (2019) highlights local environmental management strategies while mentioning spiritual values only in passing. Studies on cultural preservation such as Sillitoe (2007) and Mulyoutami et al. (2009) also prioritize documentation of traditional knowledge systems without examining how spiritual beliefs function as a governance logic. These works collectively show that although environmental and cultural aspects of Dayak life are well documented, spirituality itself is rarely analyzed as a core component of social governance. Moreover, there is a lack of analytical attention to how these local governance systems engage with, complement, or challenge formal public administration mechanisms. This study

aims to fill these conceptual and empirical gaps by situating spirituality and local wisdom within the broader discourse of governance and social transformation.

The objective of this research is to analyze how the spirituality and local wisdom of the Dayak community in Gunung Mas Regency inform practices of social governance and environmental stewardship. The study seeks to identify the forms, meanings, and institutional expressions of these practices, and to examine their interaction with formal administrative systems. By doing so, it explores the potential of *spiritual governance* a mode of governance that integrates moral, cultural, and institutional dimensions as a framework for sustainable and inclusive community management.

## **METHOD**

This study uses an integrative qualitative literature review to analyze how spirituality and local wisdom shape social governance among the Dayak community. The analysis draws from interdisciplinary literature in public administration, anthropology, sociology of religion, and environmental governance. Key sources include studies on Dayak spirituality and customary institutions in Kalimantan (Adiwibowo, 2019; Purba & Mardawani, 2023; Usman & Widyastuti, 2024), research on indigenous environmental governance (Berkes et al., 2000; Sillitoe, 2007; Mulyoutami et al., 2009), and works discussing hybrid or participatory governance in Indonesian local contexts (McCarthy, 2019; Rusdianto & Basani, 2025). Additional theoretical grounding is taken from literature on moral-ethical dimensions of governance and spiritual-based values in administrative practice (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015; Clarke, 2011; Haynes, 2021). These sources collectively provide the empirical and conceptual foundation for synthesizing how spiritual beliefs, customary norms, and formal administrative arrangements interact in shaping governance within the Dayak community.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The study employs an integrative literature review design, which combines conceptual and empirical sources from interdisciplinary fields including public administration, anthropology, sociology of religion, and environmental governance. This design is appropriate for the present study because it enables the integration of diverse perspectives to construct a coherent analytical framework explaining how spirituality and local wisdom can shape local governance and community-based social transformation. The review focuses particularly on studies concerning indigenous governance in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, while also drawing from broader theoretical works on spirituality and governance.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The review process followed a structured approach. Relevant publications were identified from reputable academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and DOAJ. Additional materials were retrieved from institutional repositories and journal databases that publish studies on Indonesian indigenous communities. Keywords used in the search included: “*spirituality and governance*,” “*local wisdom and public administration*,” “*Dayak culture and social transformation*,” “*indigenous governance*,” and “*religion and environmental stewardship*.” The initial search yielded over 120 sources. After screening titles and abstracts, only publications directly related to the themes of spirituality, local governance, and indigenous knowledge were retained for full review. Both international and Indonesian-language studies were included to ensure contextual balance and cultural specificity.

The analysis in this article is supported by key literature across four thematic clusters: Dayak Spirituality and Local Wisdom; Indigenous Knowledge and Traditional Ecological Systems; Hybrid, Customary, and Participatory Governance in Indonesia; Theoretical Foundations on Governance, Ethics, and Spirituality.

### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

Studies were included if they (1) addressed the relationship between spirituality, local wisdom, and social or environmental governance; (2) were published between 2000 and 2025 to ensure contemporary relevance; and (3) provided conceptual or empirical data applicable to indigenous contexts, especially within Kalimantan or similar Southeast Asian settings. Exclusion criteria involved (1) studies that focused purely on theology without social or governance dimensions, (2) policy papers lacking analytical depth, and (3) sources with limited academic credibility or unclear methodological grounding.

### **Data Extraction and Analysis**

All selected sources were organized and coded thematically using an analytical framework adapted from Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). The analysis proceeded through **four stages**, including the aspect of data collection as requested by the reviewer:

1. Data collection, involving the systematic identification, selection, and retrieval of relevant literature from academic databases and institutional repositories based on predefined inclusion criteria.
2. Data condensation, in which key concepts, theoretical propositions, and empirical findings were extracted and reduced from each selected source.

3. Data display, involving the organization of condensed information into thematic categories such as “spiritual foundations of governance,” “indigenous mechanisms of social protection,” and “hybrid forms of local administration.”
4. Conclusion drawing and synthesis, where patterns across the literature were interpreted to identify consistencies, contradictions, and emerging perspectives.

To enhance interpretive rigor, the analysis emphasized both *convergence* (areas of agreement across studies) and *divergence* (areas of conceptual tension or empirical variation). The synthesis integrates insights from public administration such as community-based governance, administrative ethics, and participatory policy with anthropological concepts of spirituality, moral economy, and customary authority.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Although literature-based, the study employed several strategies to ensure reliability and academic validity. First, triangulation of sources was achieved by including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference papers from multiple disciplines. Second, transparency of process was maintained by documenting search terms, selection criteria, and analytical steps. Third, reflexive interpretation was applied to minimize researcher bias by continually revisiting assumptions and ensuring interpretations remained grounded in the reviewed evidence. These measures enhance the trustworthiness of the review and provide a robust foundation for theoretical synthesis.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Because this study relies entirely on secondary data, it does not involve human subjects and therefore poses no ethical risks. However, all referenced materials are properly cited to acknowledge intellectual ownership and maintain academic integrity. In sum, the literature review method allows this study to map and synthesize how spirituality and local wisdom are conceptualized within indigenous governance systems, particularly among the Dayak of Gunung Mas Regency. Through this synthesis, the research aims to generate a conceptual understanding of *spiritual governance* a culturally grounded mode of administration that integrates moral, ecological, and social dimensions of community life.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Spirituality as the Moral Foundation of Social Governance

The review reveals that spirituality serves as the core moral framework that organizes social relations and public behavior within the Dayak community of Gunung Mas Regency, a finding supported by previous studies showing that Dayak moral systems are rooted in cosmological beliefs and ethical norms transmitted through rituals, oral narratives, and customary prohibitions (Adiwibowo, 2019; Usman & Widyastuti, 2024). In contrast to modern administrative systems that rely on codified laws and bureaucratic rules, the Dayak moral universe functions through deeply internalized values embedded in everyday practices, aligning with the broader understanding of indigenous governance described by Berkes, Colding, and Folke (2000). These norms including ritual obligations, community taboos (*pali/pamali*), and collective moral commitments ensure that every social and ecological interaction is governed by respect, reciprocity, and restraint, as also emphasized in studies on Dayak ecological ethics and local wisdom (Vuspitasari & Usman, 2025; Purba & Mardawani, 2023). In contrast to modern administrative systems that rely on codified laws and bureaucratic rules, the Dayak moral universe functions through deeply internalized ethical norms derived from cosmological beliefs. These norms are transmitted through ritual practices, oral narratives, and customary prohibitions (*pali* or *pamali*), which collectively ensure that every social and ecological interaction is governed by respect, reciprocity, and restraint.

Dayak spirituality is fundamentally relational. It acknowledges the interconnectedness of human beings, nature, and spiritual entities such as ancestral spirits and guardian deities (*penunggu lewu*). Within this worldview, governance is not an abstract administrative process but a living practice embedded in moral consciousness. When a community leader mediates a dispute or allocates land, the decision is evaluated not only in terms of fairness but also in terms of harmony with spiritual principles and ecological balance. The legitimacy of authority, therefore, is moral before it is institutional.

This perspective aligns with Berkes, Colding, and Folke (2000), who describe *traditional ecological knowledge* as a system of environmental stewardship grounded in belief and moral order. Likewise, in administrative theory, Denhardt and Denhardt (2015) propose the concept of *The New Public Service*, which emphasizes serving citizens through shared values and ethical accountability rather than control or coercion. The convergence between these ideas indicates that spirituality can complement public administration by grounding it in moral responsibility rather than purely instrumental rationality.

In the Dayak context, spirituality acts as both a preventive and restorative force. Rituals of gratitude (*manganan lewu*) serve as annual affirmations of communal responsibility toward the land, while cleansing rituals (*panyang hatungkuh*) are performed to restore harmony after conflict or transgression. These practices demonstrate that moral and spiritual obligations precede formal sanction. The outcome is a governance system that relies on trust, honor, and shared cosmology values that modern bureaucracies often overlook in pursuit of procedural efficiency.

### **Local Wisdom as an Informal System of Regulation and Social Protection**

The second major finding concerns the role of *adat* (customary law) as an informal but highly effective system of regulation, a conclusion supported by studies showing that Dayak customary norms govern land use, forest management, and acceptable social behavior through ritualized and value-based mechanisms rather than formal sanctions (Adiwibowo, 2019; Sulastriyono, 2023; Eilenberg, 2019). While spirituality provides the ethical compass, local wisdom operationalizes that moral framework into everyday governance arrangements. Among the Dayak of Gunung Mas, customary rules determine who may cultivate certain lands, how forests are used, and what forms of behavior are socially acceptable patterns consistent with findings on the regulatory role of *hukum adat* in maintaining ecological justice and communal order across Kalimantan (Purba & Mardawani, 2023). Violations are corrected not through imprisonment or fines but through public rituals of reconciliation, symbolizing both accountability and social healing.

This regulatory system functions as a form of *informal social protection*. When a household suffers a crop failure or illness, community members provide labor or food assistance under the principle of *handep hapakat* (mutual cooperation). These arrangements ensure that no individual is left behind, reflecting a moral economy that prioritizes collective well-being over private accumulation. As Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) explain, such community-based social protection mechanisms are vital where formal safety nets are limited or culturally misaligned.

Local wisdom also embodies procedural justice. Decision-making processes are inclusive, emphasizing deliberation (*musyawarah adat*) rather than hierarchical authority. Conflicts are often resolved through consensus and symbolic restitution, reinforcing trust and social cohesion. This participatory nature of customary governance mirrors contemporary ideals of *collaborative governance* (Ansell & Gash, 2008), which stress negotiation, shared goals, and interdependence among stakeholders. However, unlike modern collaboration driven by contractual rationality, Dayak collaboration is rooted in kinship, spirituality, and long-standing moral commitment.

From an administrative standpoint, local wisdom functions as an indigenous form of governance with high social legitimacy. It creates compliance not through coercion but through moral suasion citizens follow rules because they believe in their righteousness. This voluntary adherence reduces transaction costs of governance, offering lessons for public administration on how moral values can complement formal regulation. It also suggests that public institutions could learn from the organic, trust-based structures of indigenous systems to enhance social policy implementation in rural areas.

### **The Interface between Customary Institutions and Administrative Systems**

The interaction between customary and formal administrative systems in Gunung Mas reveals a complex process of negotiation and adaptation. Since Indonesia's decentralization reforms in the early 2000s, local governments have gained autonomy to integrate customary institutions into regional governance. In Gunung Mas, this has taken the form of formal recognition of *lembaga adat* (customary councils) as advisory bodies in village planning and conflict resolution. Local bylaws (*Peraturan Daerah*) in several subdistricts even reference *hukum adat* as complementary to state law in maintaining public order.

This convergence of systems demonstrates what scholars describe as *hybrid governance* the coexistence of traditional and bureaucratic institutions that together manage public affairs (McCarthy, 2019). Hybrid governance emerges from pragmatic needs: the state relies on local legitimacy, while communities depend on administrative support for resources and infrastructure. However, hybridity also introduces tensions. Government officials sometimes view customary rules as obstacles to uniform policy implementation, while community leaders perceive bureaucratic procedures as insensitive to local moral values.

Despite these challenges, empirical studies show positive outcomes when mutual respect is maintained. Rusdianto and Basani (2025) report that participatory programs integrating customary leaders in social forestry initiatives have improved compliance and reduced conflicts. Similarly, Vuspitasari and Usman (2025) demonstrate that women-led customary practices, such as eco-rituals and seed-sharing ceremonies, have strengthened environmental awareness among younger generations. These examples indicate that integrating spirituality and local wisdom within administrative structures can generate more culturally responsive governance.

Nevertheless, the success of hybrid governance depends on two factors: institutional recognition and moral alignment. Institutional recognition ensures that customary leaders have formal standing within local decision-making processes. Moral alignment ensures that administrative actors understand and respect the

values underlying customary practices. Without these, hybridity risks degenerating into tokenism where indigenous institutions are symbolically acknowledged but substantively marginalized.

The lesson from Gunung Mas is clear: effective governance in culturally plural societies requires not only policy coordination but also moral dialogue. Administrators must learn to engage with spiritual and ethical logics that sustain community legitimacy. This approach resonates with *transformative governance* (Chaffin et al., 2016), which calls for adaptive, inclusive, and values-based policymaking to navigate socio-ecological complexity.

### **Constructing a Framework of Spiritual Governance**

Synthesizing the reviewed literature, this study proposes a conceptual framework of spiritual governance to explain how Dayak spirituality and local wisdom can be integrated into contemporary administrative thought. The notion that indigenous governance systems are culturally grounded and legitimized by moral and cosmological values rather than formal legal authority aligns with insights from Berkes, Colding, and Folke (2000) on traditional ecological knowledge, as well as studies on Dayak moral leadership and spiritual ethics (Adiwibowo, 2019; Usman & Widyastuti, 2024). The emphasis on ethical stewardship and relational accountability also resonates with value-based governance principles described by Denhardt and Denhardt (2015) and Clarke (2011), who argue that moral responsibility and shared values are central to effective public service.

Three dimensions characterize this model:

1. Moral Authority, derived from spiritual beliefs that define ethical conduct. Leadership as stewardship (*penyangga lewu*) reflects findings in Dayak eco-spiritual governance literature that highlight leaders' moral responsibility to protect community and nature (Usman & Widyastuti, 2024; Vuspitasari & Usman, 2025).
2. Collective Responsibility, expressed through communal rituals, shared labor, and redistribution of resources to maintain social balance patterns widely documented in studies on Dayak mutual cooperation (*handep hapakat*) and customary welfare practices (Purba & Mardawani, 2023; Adiwibowo, 2019).
3. Relational Accountability, encompassing reciprocal obligations between humans, ancestors, and the natural world, consistent with indigenous governance frameworks emphasizing cosmological balance and ecological ethics (Sulastriyono, 2023; Mulyoutami et al., 2009).

This triadic model contrasts with conventional public administration paradigms centered on hierarchy, control, and performance metrics. It aligns more closely with *New Public Service* principles emphasizing participation, citizenship, and shared values (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). Yet spiritual governance extends beyond civic rationality it embeds morality and cosmology into administrative ethics, redefining governance as an act of care rather than management.

Applying this model to modern governance requires reinterpreting spirituality not as ritual religiosity but as a form of public ethic. It implies that policies, leadership, and institutional culture should reflect values of compassion, humility, and balance. As Clarke (2011) and Haynes (2021) observe, spiritual values can promote ethical leadership and social justice when integrated into policy frameworks. Thus, spiritual governance offers not only a cultural model but also a normative theory for ethical reform in public administration.

In the case of Gunung Mas, this framework is observable in everyday governance practices: community leaders mediate disputes through ritual dialogue; resource use is guided by moral taboos; and public meetings begin with symbolic acts of respect to ancestors and the land. These actions, though seemingly traditional, embody an advanced moral philosophy of accountability and stewardship concepts central to good governance in any context.

### **Implications for Sustainable Social Transformation and Future Research**

The synthesis of findings carries several implications for both theory and practice. First, for administrative theory, the Dayak experience challenges the notion that effective governance must be secular or technocratic. It demonstrates that moral and spiritual values can coexist with administrative rationality, producing governance systems that are both efficient and humane. Recognizing spirituality as part of governance enriches the theoretical foundations of public administration by reintroducing ethics, meaning, and relationality into institutional analysis.

Second, for policy and practice, integrating local wisdom into formal governance enhances legitimacy and trust. Programs that acknowledge spiritual and cultural dimensions such as participatory environmental planning or community-based welfare tend to gain stronger public support because they resonate with collective identity. Local officials who respect customary authority often find greater cooperation and compliance, reducing bureaucratic friction and conflict. Thus, policy frameworks should explicitly accommodate indigenous moral systems as legitimate sources of governance.

Third, for social transformation, the Dayak case illustrates how spirituality can function as a catalyst for sustainability. Spiritual beliefs cultivate ecological

consciousness by framing environmental care as a sacred duty rather than an economic transaction. This aligns with global movements for *religious environmentalism* and *eco-spiritual governance*, where faith-based ethics are mobilized to address environmental degradation (Taylor, 2020). In this light, Dayak spirituality offers a localized but globally relevant model of moral ecology.

Fourth, for future research, further investigation is needed to explore how younger generations reinterpret spiritual governance in the context of digitalization and social change. As migration and education expose them to external values, the challenge lies in preserving ethical continuity while enabling innovation. Comparative studies across other indigenous groups in Kalimantan, Sulawesi, or Papua could enrich understanding of how diverse cosmologies shape governance practices across Indonesia’s plural landscape. Additionally, empirical work linking spiritual governance with measurable outcomes such as social cohesion or policy effectiveness would strengthen its contribution to public administration scholarship.

Finally, the normative significance of this study lies in reframing governance as a moral project. In a time when global governance faces crises of trust, corruption, and ecological collapse, indigenous models such as those practiced in Gunung Mas remind us that the essence of administration is not control but care, not power but responsibility. Spiritual governance thus offers both a critique and an alternative approach that unites ethical integrity, community solidarity, and ecological stewardship under one holistic vision of human flourishing.

Table 1. Conceptual Comparison between Bureaucratic and Spiritual Governance

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Bureaucratic Governance</b>	<b>Spiritual Governance</b>
Legitimacy Source	Legal authority and policy mandate	Moral authority and cosmological values
Decision Process	Rule-based, hierarchical	Consensus-based, deliberative, ritualized
Accountability	Procedural compliance	Relational and ethical responsibility
Motivation	Efficiency and control	Stewardship and moral duty
Orientation	Short-term outcomes	Long-term harmony and sustainability

*Source: synthesized from Denhardt & Denhardt (2015), Berkes et al. (2000), and field-related literature on Dayak governance.*

The conceptual model of Spiritual Governance illustrates the interconnected moral, social, and ecological dimensions that underpin governance within the Dayak community. Depicted as a concentric system, the model consists of three layers: Moral Authority, Collective Responsibility, and Relational Accountability, all situated within a broader environment of Social Harmony and Ecological Balance. At the core, Moral Authority represents the ethical and spiritual legitimacy that guides community leadership. Authority is derived not from bureaucratic position but from virtue and adherence to ancestral wisdom, aligning with the notion of stewardship in public administration ethics (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). The Middle layer, Collective Responsibility, translates these moral values into communal practices such as *handep hapakat* (mutual cooperation), where social welfare and decision-making are shared obligations. This layer transforms moral principles into tangible systems of solidarity and social protection. The outer layer, Relational Accountability, extends governance beyond human interaction to include ancestors, deities, and nature. In this worldview, accountability encompasses ecological and spiritual dimensions, ensuring that every action maintains cosmic balance. Surrounding the model, Social Harmony and Ecological Balance represent both the outcome and condition of effective governance, emphasizing that administrative success lies in sustaining equilibrium between humans, society, and the natural world. Overall, the model captures the essence of Dayak governance as an ethical ecology where spirituality, cooperation, and responsibility interact dynamically to produce sustainable and legitimate systems of collective life.

In summary, the literature on Dayak spirituality and local wisdom provides compelling evidence that indigenous moral systems can effectively sustain governance, social welfare, and environmental management. The concept of spiritual governance emerging from this synthesis represents a distinctive contribution to the field of public administration and social transformation. It bridges the normative gap between moral values and administrative structures, illustrating that governance rooted in spiritual consciousness can produce outcomes of legitimacy, cohesion, and sustainability that modern bureaucratic systems often fail to achieve.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the governance system practiced by the Dayak community in Gunung Mas embodies a form of *spiritual governance*, a moral framework that integrates spirituality, social solidarity, and ecological ethics. Governance, in this context, is understood not as bureaucratic control but as a collective moral endeavor to maintain balance between human life, society, and the natural environment. Three interrelated elements sustain this system. *Moral authority* arises from the

ethical integrity and spiritual legitimacy of leaders who embody honesty, humility, and responsibility. *Collective responsibility* manifests in social cooperation, ritual participation, and mutual aid, reflecting a shared obligation to protect communal welfare. *Relational accountability* extends moral obligations beyond human relations to include nature and ancestral spirits, ensuring harmony across social and ecological dimensions. Together, these principles form an ethical ecology that offers lessons for more contextually grounded models of governance.

Moreover, the findings of this study highlight the importance of recognizing indigenous moral systems as legitimate foundations for governance in culturally diverse regions. The Dayak model demonstrates that effective governance emerges not only from formal regulatory structures but also from the integration of cultural meaning, spiritual consciousness, and community-based values. Such insights contribute to broader efforts to envision governance paradigms that cultivate legitimacy, trust, and sustainability.

Building on these conclusions, several directions for further research are recommended. Future empirical studies should examine how younger generations reinterpret Dayak spirituality amid digitalization and changing socio-economic conditions. Comparative research across different Dayak subgroups or other indigenous communities may reveal variations in spiritual-administrative practices and factors influencing their resilience. Additionally, studies exploring how spiritual governance principles can be incorporated into formal public policy particularly in environmental management, social protection, and village governance would strengthen the practical relevance of this framework. Finally, empirical assessments of outcomes such as social cohesion, ecological stewardship, and governance effectiveness would deepen understanding of the tangible impacts of spiritual values on community well-being.

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