

Islamic Education Model Based on Local Wisdom in Preserving Local Islamic Culture: A Comparative Study of Higher Education Institutions in Gorontalo

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Abstract

The preservation of local Islamic culture requires the active involvement of higher education institutions, yet comparative studies across institutional typologies remain limited. This study compares the contributions of state-run Islamic religious universities (PTKIN) and general state universities (PTN) to the preservation of local Islamic culture in Gorontalo. It maps out the pathways of these contributions as well as the structural barriers involved. The qualitative comparative case study took place over six months (March–August 2022) at IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo and Gorontalo State University (UNG), covering a full academic cycle. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and a review of institutional documents, with validity ensured through triangulation of methods, sources, and time. This study employs two analytical distinctions as analytical lenses: *symbolic-normative* integration (vision, philosophy, written curriculum) versus *operational-transmissive* integration (concrete, sustainable, and measurable mechanisms of transmission). The results show that both institutions position culture within an institutional framework, albeit with different scopes: IAIN frames it within the context of Islam and the Qur'an, while UNG encompasses Gorontalo culture more broadly. Both pursue four pathways: curricular, co-curricular, research, and community service, with varying intensities, and each excels in the pathway aligned with its orientation. The obstacles are structural in nature and were found at both institutions: limited human resources, weak coordination between units, and budgetary constraints. In the case of IAIN, the data also indicate internal ideological resistance to the relevance of

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cultural studies; given the limited pool of informants, this finding is presented as a proposition that still needs to be tested and is formulated as *a paradox of institutional orientation*. In this pair of cases, differences in mandate appear to be associated with distinct contribution profiles and with claims that are propositional in nature and require cross-site testing. These two analytical distinctions offer an initial empirical foundation for more integrated cultural preservation policies that are sensitive to the distinct characteristics of each institution.

Keywords: cultural preservation; local Islamic culture; institutional typology; institutional logic.

Introduction

According to records from the Central Statistics Agency, Indonesia has more than 1,331 ethnic groups. This diversity shapes collective identity and demands preservation across generations. Recent bibliometric studies indicate that “*cultural security*” has evolved into a distinct field of research amid growing concerns about the homogenization of values and the erosion of local identities due to global exchange.¹ This vulnerability is evident among Indonesia’s younger generation: their engagement with formal cultural heritage continues to decline, a trend also documented across nations through the declining participation of young people in cultural heritage institutions.²

One of Indonesia’s defining characteristics is the close interconnection between Islam and local culture. Various studies conceptualize this relationship as a dynamic process of acculturation, rather than a conflict between two entities.³ This process has been documented in various regions: among the Minangkabau people through the acculturation of Islam and law,⁴ among the people of Lombok through the dialectic between Islam and local culture,⁵ and as a model of integration that supports broader religious moderation in Indonesia.⁶ Islamic identity in the Indonesian archipelago is shaped through negotiations between religious norms and local traditions.⁷

Gorontalo is one of the most concrete examples of this integration. Known as the “Veranda of Medina,” its people adhere to the philosophy of “custom rooted in Sharia, Sharia rooted in the Qur’an” (*hulahulaa to syara’*, *syara’ hulahulaa to Qur’ani*), which

¹H Meng et al., “Cultural Security in the Context of Globalization: A Bibliometric Analysis and Trend Exploration,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 108 (2025): 102234, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2025.102234>.

²L M Crispin and M I Beck, “Disparities in Museum Attendance among Youth over Two Decades: An Empirical Analysis of Who Attends and How Often,” *Arts Education Policy Review* 126, no. 1 (2025): 25–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2023.2187499>.

³N M Arif and A Panakkal, *Southeast Asian Islam: Integration and Indigenisation* (Routledge, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032702902>.

⁴E Aziz, M Dzofir, and A Widodo, “The Acculturation of Islam and Customary Law: An Experience of Minangkabau, Indonesia,” *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, no. 1 (2020): 131–60, <https://doi.org/10.21043/QIJS.V8I1.7197>.

⁵Mutawali, “Moderate Islam in Lombok: The Dialectic between Islam and Local Culture,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 10, no. 2 (2016): 309–34, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2016.10.2.309-334>.

⁶Moh Ashif Fuadi et al., “Religious Moderation in the Context of Integration Between Religion and Local Culture in Indonesia,” *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 19, no. 1 (2024): 47–59.

⁷B Ridwan et al., “Islam Nusantara, Ulemas, and Social Media: Understanding the Pros and Cons of Islam Nusantara among Ulemas of West Sumatera,” *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 9, no. 2 (2019): 163–88, <https://doi.org/10.18326/IJIMS.V9I2.163-188>.

places religious law and the Qur'an as the foundation for customary practices.⁸ This philosophy is not merely a cultural slogan; it functions as *a grundnorm* that structures social, economic, and legal systems at the local level.⁹ Its manifestation is evident in traditions that blend religious and cultural dimensions: *Mauludu, Me'raji, Tumbilotohe, Mopolihu lo Limu, Mongubingo, Moluna, Beati, and Wunungo*, the latter of which has been designated as a cultural heritage. A recent study identifies Gorontalo as a model of integrative Islamic moderation, where Islam is harmoniously internalized within the framework of customary governance.¹⁰ Thus, Gorontalo's local Islamic culture is a vital asset to its identity, yet it remains vulnerable without systematic mechanisms for its transmission.

Higher education institutions play a central role in this mechanism of cultural transmission. As environments for shaping the character of the younger generation, these institutions possess the human resources and academic networks necessary to produce, document, and transmit cultural knowledge. Studies by Nasir, Rijal, and Muliadi et al.¹¹ indicate that Islamic higher education serves as the primary arena for mainstreaming religious moderation rooted in local wisdom in Indonesia, while simultaneously strengthening moderation through institutions grounded in local culture.¹² At the curricular level, integrating local wisdom into learning reinforces sustainable digital literacy,¹³ strengthens students' religious character, and fosters learners' cultural

⁸A Latif and A Mardiana, "'Huyula' of Gorontalo: A Model of Local Entrepreneur Business in Indonesia," *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research* 8, no. 11 (2019): 2014–20.

⁹R M Moonti et al., "Living Constitution in Islamic Constitutional Law: A Comparative Study of Gorontalo Customary Constitutional Law in Majority and Minority Enclave Contexts," *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Syir'ah* 23, no. 2 (2025): 339–71, <https://doi.org/10.30984/jis.v23i2.3566>.

¹⁰Z Z Suleman et al., "Negotiating Islamic Moderation: The Interplay of Sharia and Local Culture in Gorontalo, Minangkabau, and Banten," *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Syir'ah* 23, no. 1 (2025): 50–69, <https://doi.org/10.30984/jis.v23i1.3527>.

¹¹M Muliadi, S Syamsidar, and N Islam, "Religious Moderation by Design: A Comparative Sociological Da'wah Study in Indonesian Higher Education," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 13, no. 2 (2025): 1549–80, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v13i2.1778>.

¹²Muhammad Alqadri Burga and Muljono Damopolii, "Reinforcing Religious Moderation through Local Culture-Based Pesantren," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (2022): 145–62.

¹³Asmayawati, Yufiarti, and E Yetti, "Pedagogical Innovation and Curricular Adaptation in Enhancing Digital Literacy: A Local Wisdom Approach for Sustainable Development in Indonesia Context," *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity* 10, no. 1 (2024): 100233, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joitmc.2024.100233>.

identity.¹⁴ Studies by Cheng and Guo,¹⁵ Pastera,¹⁶ and Tibaijuka and Myumbo¹⁷ show that several universities incorporate intangible cultural heritage into their curricula; furthermore, Aziz et al. state that cultural values also influence students' choice of educational institutions.¹⁸

Three gaps remain in the available literature. *First*, studies of the acculturation of Islam and local cultures in Indonesia are still centered on Aceh, Minangkabau, Java, and Lombok; Gorontalo is rarely studied despite its status as the “Veranda of Medina,” and existing studies tend to focus on legal, political, or economic dimensions rather than on the role of educational institutions. *Second*, studies on the role of education in cultural transmission have mostly highlighted the school system, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), or the curriculum in general, and have not yet examined the institutional contribution of higher education institutions to the preservation of Gorontalo's local Islamic culture. *Third*, there has been no comparative study examining the contributions of Islamic and secular universities within the same cultural landscape, even though differences in their institutional mandates could yield distinct preservation models.

Preliminary field observations reinforce this urgency. Student involvement in cultural preservation activities is relatively limited compared to that of older age groups; a database of competent human resources in this field is not yet available; and some instructors of relevant courses have non-local backgrounds, thereby limiting the depth of understanding of the learning context. These indications suggest that the contribution of higher education institutions to the preservation of Gorontalo's local Islamic culture needs to be systematically examined, both in terms of achievements and obstacles.

This study employs institutional typology as an analytical lens. Theoretically, the differences in mandates between PTKIN and PTN are understood through the framework

¹⁴Y Wijayanti et al., “Enhancing Students' Cultural Identity through History Education Based on Local Wisdom of Kagaluhan Values,” *Educational Process: International Journal* 14 (2025): e2025075, <https://doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2025.14.75>.

¹⁵Y Cheng and N Guo, “An Ethnography of Construction and Characteristics of Curriculum for Inheritance of Intangible Cultural Heritage Martial Arts in Universities,” *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living* 6 (2024): 1395128, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2024.1395128>.

¹⁶R J P Pastera, “Unveiling the Veil: Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Filipino College Students,” *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (2024): 25–41, <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/1818>.

¹⁷A Tibaijuka and L Myumbo, “Digitalised Indigenous Cultural Heritage in Higher Education Institutions: The Need for Non-Academic Perspectives,” in *Digital Indigenous Cultural Heritage* (Springer, 2025), 301–15, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-76941-2_16.

¹⁸M B Aziz et al., “Cultural Heritage as a Driver of Educational Choices: Evaluating the Role of Bugis Values in the Selection of Islamic Private Schools in Indonesia,” *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 3 (2024): 726–41, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i3.110>.

of institutional logics, that is, a set of assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules that shape how actors interpret reality and carry out their activities. PTKIN and PTN operate under different institutional logics, which are expected to result in different approaches to interpreting and implementing cultural preservation: an Islamic religious mandate versus a general mandate is assumed to shape the scope, focus, and structure of obstacles.

Based on this perspective, this study establishes two *a priori* analytical distinctions that serve as its framework: *symbolic-normative* integration, manifested in vision, philosophy, and written curriculum,¹⁹ and *operational-transmissive* integration, manifested in concrete, sustainable, and measurable mechanisms of transmission.²⁰ The gap between the two is the primary focus of analysis; this study examines and tests the sharpness of this distinction using empirical data, rather than proposing it as an entirely new concept. Furthermore, the study explores one theoretical possibility: an Islamic orientation can operate in two directions, providing direction and legitimacy for preservation, while simultaneously generating doctrinal justifications that hinder cultural studies when their relevance to sacred texts is debated. This possibility is termed *the “paradox of institutional orientation”* and is explored in the case of IAIN. This framework complements the literature on Islamic–local cultural acculturation by Arif & Panakkal,²¹ as well as the literature *on place-based education*, which highlights the involvement of traditional knowledge holders in higher education institutions.²²

This study is guided by three questions: (1) How do IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo and Gorontalo State University contribute to the preservation of Gorontalo’s local Islamic culture, and what are the differences between the two? (2) Which institutional pathways do the respective institutions follow: curricular, co-curricular, research, or community service? (3) What obstacles do both institutions face, and do these obstacles vary according to institutional typology?

In line with these three questions, this study aims to: (1) describe and compare the contributions of both institutions to the preservation of Gorontalo’s local Islamic culture;

¹⁹Roger Friedland, “Bringing Society Back in: Symbols, Practices, and Institutional Contradictions,” *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, 1991, 232–63.

²⁰Patricia H. Thornton, William Ocasio, and Michael Lounsbury, *The Institutional Logics Perspective* (Oxford University Press, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199601936.001.0001>.

²¹Arif and Panakkal, *Southeast Asian Islam: Integration and Indigenisation*.

²²Tibajjuka and Myumbo, “Digitalised Indigenous Cultural Heritage in Higher Education Institutions: The Need for Non-Academic Perspectives.”

(2) map the institutional pathways taken by each institution; and (3) identify and compare the obstacles faced by both institutions.

IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo and UNG were selected as comparative cases. IAIN champions a vision of excellence in Islamic studies, science, and culture; UNG envisions itself as a leading university in cultural development, grounded in regional potential. Both institutions incorporate culture into their institutional orientation, but with different mandates: IAIN as an Islamic religious university, and UNG as a general university. It is precisely this difference in mandate within the same cultural context, a “most-similar-systems” logic that controls the context and isolates the effects of the mandate, that makes the two appropriate comparative cases.

Research Methodology

This study employs a descriptive-comparative qualitative design. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study aims to gain a deep understanding of the social phenomenon of higher education institutions’ contributions to the preservation of Gorontalo’s local Islamic culture within its context, rather than to test hypotheses or measure statistical relationships. Data collection was therefore conducted in a naturalistic and interpretive manner.

The descriptive dimension maps the conditions, programs, and mechanisms of preservation at each institution during the research period. The comparative dimension positions the two cases, IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo as a PTKIN and UNG as a PTN, within a systematic comparative framework. Both institutions operate within the same local cultural context but have different institutional mandates. These differences in mandate allow the study to examine whether institutional type shapes the models and the capacity to preserve Gorontalo’s local Islamic culture.

This design directly addresses three research questions: comparing institutional contributions (RQ1), mapping the institutional pathways taken (RQ2), and identifying barriers based on institutional type (RQ3). Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman’s interactive model, involving data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of techniques, sources, and time.

The research was conducted at two higher education institutions in Gorontalo Province: IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo and UNG. The selection of these two institutions

was based on *purposive sampling* grounded in theoretical considerations: both institutions share the same cultural context but differ in their institutional mandates. IAIN is committed to excellence in Islamic studies, science, and culture, while UNG positions itself as a leading regional university in cultural development in Southeast Asia by 2035. It is this difference that makes the two institutions epistemologically suitable for comparative analysis.

Field research took place over six months, from March to August 2022, covering one full regular academic cycle during the even semester of the 2021/2022 academic year, encompassing teaching, research, and community service activities. Selecting a full academic cycle as the timeframe was intentional to observe the four institutional pathways within a single, complete operational cycle. It is important to emphasize that the analytical focus of this study is on the structural patterns of institutional orientation, pathway asymmetries, and barrier structures that are relatively stable over time. Claims that are highly time-bound (e.g., the current status of an MoU or the activity level of a specific unit) are treated as snapshots of the research period and are marked as such in the discussion and limitations sections.

Participants were selected purposefully based on their capacity and position to provide information relevant to the research focus. They were grouped into three categories: institutional leaders, academics and researchers, and community representatives. The list of participants is presented in Table 1; some entries represent more than one individual. It should be noted that the UNG Rector's statement was obtained indirectly (quoted through another informant), while the number of IAIN informants was greater than that of UNG. The implications of this asymmetry for interpretation are discussed in the Limitations section.

Table 1
List of Research Participants

Code	Position/Role	Institution	Category
LP-01	Rector	IAIN Sultan Amai	Leadership
LP-02	First Vice Rector	UNG	Leadership
AK-01	Lecturer, Fac. of Ushuluddin & Da'wah	IAIN Sultan Amai	Academic
AK-02	Vice Dean, Fac. of Islamic Economics & Business	IAIN Sultan Amai	Academic
AK-03	Head, Center for Innovation and Culture	UNG	Academic
KM-01	Community Elder, Batudaa	General Public	Community
MH-01	Undergraduate Student	IAIN / UNG	Student

The data sources are of two types. Primary sources were obtained through in-depth interviews with the informants listed in Table 1, as well as direct observation of academic

activities and cultural programs at both campuses. Secondary sources included cultural manuscripts, documentary photographs, Lesson Plans (RPP), faculty research papers, official institutional profiles, and institutional policy documents. Four complementary techniques were used, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Data Collection Techniques, Instruments, and Objectives

Technique	Instrument / Source	Data Objectives
Observation	Observation guidelines, field notes	Age composition of cultural actors; status of the human resources database; background of instructors; student responses to institutional issues; existence of cultural studies units; arts performance activities; regional composition of students; practices of cultural integration in learning
Interviews	Semi-structured interview guide; in-person and via WhatsApp	Perspectives of administrators, faculty, and students on cultural preservation programs, institutional barriers, and policy directions
Documentation	Review of official institutional documents	Cultural manuscripts; photos of activities; scholarly works related to local culture; lesson plans; institutional profiles and visions; partnership MoUs; research <i>roadmaps</i>
Literature Review	Books, academic journals, and official institutional websites	Theoretical foundations of Islam–local culture acculturation; studies on higher education policy; literature on Gorontalo Islamic culture

Observations were conducted directly on the IAIN and UNG campuses. Eight focal points were identified based on the research variables: (1) the age composition of actors in the cultural program at IAIN; (2) the status of human resources database management; (3) the backgrounds of faculty members teaching courses on Islam and Local Culture; (4) UNG students' responses to the discourse on changing the institution's name; (5) the existence of a social and cultural studies unit at UNG; (6) the implementation of the UNG–RRI collaborative arts performance; (7) the regional origins of UNG students; and (8) the practice of integrating local culture into learning at the UNG Faculty of Literature and Culture. Each event was recorded in a structured field note format, separating factual descriptions from the researcher's interpretations.

In-depth interviews used a semi-structured guide based on the three research questions and were conducted in person or via WhatsApp. All recordings were transcribed and validated through follow-up confirmation with the relevant informants. Verbatim quotes were retained to preserve the authenticity of the data. Document analysis included both internal and external sources: lists of courses aligned with local culture, lesson plans,

LP2M activity reports, organizational structures, and partnership MoUs (internal), as well as faculty research papers, Gorontalo cultural manuscripts, and publicly accessible institutional profiles (external). Photographic data was collected as visual evidence of the observed activities.

Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of three components that occur simultaneously and cyclically: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification.²³ Coding was deductive (*template/directed coding*): the coding framework was established in advance based on four institutional pathways: curricular, co-curricular, research, and community service, as well as a separate analytical category, namely institutional barriers at each institution. These four pathways are derived from the Tridharma of Higher Education and the research framework; thus, they constitute predefined analytical categories rather than themes that emerge purely inductively. Subthemes within each category were identified inductively from the transcripts.

The reduced data are presented in three forms: comparative descriptive narratives, comparative tables across several dimensions of analysis, and verbatim quotes as supporting evidence. This structure allows for direct comparison between IAIN and UNG across each dimension. Field notes that did not include specific dates and times were reconfirmed with the field researchers before the final presentation. Conclusions were drawn incrementally during data collection and verified through triangulation by cross-checking findings from observations, interviews, and documentation, and then comparing them across institutions within a comparative framework.

Data validity is ensured through triangulation at three levels. Methodological triangulation involves collecting data on a single phenomenon through observation, interviews, and documentation, then comparing these sources to verify their consistency. Source triangulation verifies statements made by school administrators against those of faculty members, students, and community leaders, ensuring that no claim relies solely on a single informant. Temporal triangulation compares initial data (March 2022) with final data (August 2022) to detect changes in on-the-ground conditions. Credibility is strengthened through *member checking*: verbatim quotes are reconfirmed with informants

²³Johnny Saldana Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis A Methods Sourcebook*, 1994.

before the final report is compiled. Transferability is ensured through detailed contextual descriptions of the institutional profile, informant characteristics, and field conditions, enabling readers to assess the relevance of the findings to similar contexts.

The research team is affiliated with IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo, one of the institutions studied. This affiliation has the potential to introduce confirmation bias, particularly in interpreting data related to IAIN, and may affect the depth of access in the two cases. As a mitigation measure, data on IAIN were collected by team members who hold no administrative positions at that institution, and all interpretations were verified against external sources, public documents, and non-IAIN informants before conclusions were drawn. This mitigation reduces, but does not eliminate, the possibility that the interpretive framework is richer for IAIN; this consequence is explicitly considered when interpreting IAIN-specific findings.

Research Findings

The findings were compiled from three triangulated data sources: in-depth interviews with key informants (Table 1), eight field notes from direct observations, and a review of institutional documents. Data were collected over six months (March–August 2022), covering one full academic cycle during the even semester of the 2021/2022 academic year at IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo and UNG. The presentation follows the sequence of the three research questions: institutional contributions and their differences (RQ1), the institutional pathways taken (RQ2), and the obstacles and their variations according to institutional typology (RQ3).

Institutional Contributions to the Preservation of Local Islamic Culture in Gorontalo (RQ1)

Both institutions incorporate culture into their institutional orientations, but to different degrees. IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo frames cultural studies from an Islamic and Qur’anic perspective, in accordance with its mandate as a PTKIN. UNG, as a PTN, addresses a broader spectrum of Gorontalo culture, including non-religious elements. This difference in scope is the most fundamental distinction between the two models of contribution.

Differences in orientation are also evident in how the two institutions formulate their visions. IAIN positions itself as the “pilot project for the East Indonesian Cultural Center,” while UNG aims to become a leading university in cultural development in

Southeast Asia by 2035. Both institutions have ambitious goals. However, field data reveal a gap between these visions and actual capacity (see [Table 6](#)). In terms of institutional capital, both possess adequate resources, as summarized in Table 3.

Table 3
Comparative Institutional Profiles and Capital

Aspect	IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo	Gorontalo State University
Typology	State Islamic Higher Education Institution (PTKIN)	Public general university (PTN)
Cultural orientation	Exclusively within the framework of Islam and the Qur'an	The broad cultural spectrum of Gorontalo, including non-religious elements
Academic capacity	25 degree programs; more than 8,587 bachelor's degree graduates	Accredited A by BAN-PT (2018)
Articulation of a cultural vision	"Pilot project for the East Indonesian Cultural Center"	A leading university in Southeast Asian cultural development (target 2035)

The commitment of both institutions is evident in two contexts: their stated vision and the availability of resources. What is still lacking is an integrated direction toward a single preservation system. The identified contributions remain partial and have not yet evolved into sustainable and measurable programs.

Institutional Pathways Taken (RQ2)

This study identifies four institutional pathways pursued by both institutions: curricular, co-curricular, research, and community service and partnerships. The intensity and forms of their implementation vary between institutions, first, the curricular pathway. IAIN has required the course "Islam and Local Culture" in all faculties since 2010 as an entry point for instilling cultural values in students. UNG has chosen a different path: local wisdom is integrated across disciplines, without a single mandatory course applicable across the board.

Second, the co-curricular and contextual learning approach. The most well-documented practice of contextual learning occurred in the Faculty of Literature and Culture at UNG (Field Note 8). Faculty members invited local lohidu poets to interact with students regarding the lohidu tradition. On another occasion, students were asked to wear traditional attire from their respective regions, and elements of Gorontalo culture were showcased to international guests. At IAIN, a similar practice was observed at the curricular level, with Gorontalo artists and poets visiting classrooms.

Third, research initiatives. Both institutions are actively conducting research on local Islamic culture in Gorontalo. Through LP2M, IAIN has supported the publication of six books by Supyan Kau as well as collaborative research between faculty and students. UNG has a region-based research *roadmap* and is involved in rewriting the Me’raji manuscript, as well as in research on *dikili*, *mopolihu lo limu*, and *lohidu*. However, these research efforts have not yet been consolidated into a knowledge ecosystem that is widely accessible to students and the public.

Fourth, the community service and external partnership track. In this track, UNG is more active at the institutional level: UNG organized a focus group discussion (FGD) on the revitalization of the *Me’raji* manuscript and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the public broadcaster RRI. IAIN did not have any formal, documented MoUs with indigenous institutions during the research period. A comparative summary of the four tracks is presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Comparative Institutional Pathways for Cultural Preservation

Path	IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo	Gorontalo State University
Curricular	Required course “Islam and Local Culture” in all faculties (since 2010)	Cross-disciplinary integration of local wisdom
Co-curricular / contextual learning	Inviting Gorontalo artists and poets to the classroom	Pantun (<i>lohidu</i>) poets in the classroom; students wearing traditional attire; cultural presentations for foreign guests (Field Note 8)
Research	LP2M: 6 book titles (Sopyan Kau); collaborative faculty–student research	Region-based research <i>roadmap</i> ; <i>Me’raji</i> manuscript; research on <i>dikili</i> , <i>mopolihu lo limu</i> , and <i>lohidu</i>
Community Service / Partnerships	No formal MoU with indigenous institutions has been documented (research period)	MOU with RRI; FGD on the revitalization of the <i>Me’raji</i> manuscript

Barriers to Preservation and Their Variations According to Typology (RQ3)

The obstacles faced by both institutions are cumulative and structural. Three layers are experienced jointly: human resources, institutional forums, and budgeting, while one layer is ideological and, in this dataset, specific to IAIN. *First*, the human resources obstacle: the limited cultural competence of course instructors and low student engagement. Some of the instructors teaching the “Islam and Local Culture” course at IAIN come from outside Gorontalo and have limited understanding of local terms, practices, and language when the material touches on local traditions (Field Note 3).

Furthermore, a database of competent human resources is not yet available; a document search did not uncover any official list of faculty members or students competent in preserving local culture (Field Note 2). The LP-0 confirmed this situation:

“IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo is currently still in the process of inventorying and verifying existing resources, both faculty members and students, to build synergy with policymakers in managing the allocated facilities, so that IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo can become a pilot project for the East Indonesian Cultural Center.”

This statement places IAIN in the inventory phase rather than the implementation phase. Observations also revealed low student involvement as active participants and contributors in cultural preservation activities within the IAIN community. These activities are dominated by older adults, traditional leaders, and senior faculty members, while student participation remains relatively low. One faculty member emphasized the importance of student involvement:

“Cultural preservation must involve students as the young generation who serve as the vanguard. Because when we talk about culture, it is inevitably associated with the older generation.” (AK-01).

Meanwhile, observations indicate that UNG faces a different set of challenges. The diversity of students’ regional origins, ranging from Gorontalo and Eastern Indonesia to Java and Sumatra, also influences the strength of their attachment to Gorontalo’s local Islamic culture (Field Note 7).

Second, institutional forum/unit barriers. Neither institution has an effective cultural preservation coordination unit, though for different reasons. IAIN does not yet have an official forum or unit. At UNG, the “Center for Social and Cultural Studies” no longer operates in its original form; its activities have been decentralized to the faculty level, specifically the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Literature and Culture, resulting in fragmented coordination (Field Note 5).

Third, budgetary constraints. Both institutions face budget limitations. The IAIN rector openly described the budget situation as “just enough.” At UNG, the arts and culture events that are usually held regularly in collaboration with RRI did not take place during the research period due to funding constraints (Field Note 6). This demonstrates how vulnerable partnership-based preservation programs are to budgetary availability.

Fourth, ideological barriers (in this data, specific to IAIN). Unlike UNG, IAIN faced an additional ideological barrier. Some members of the academic community

showed internal resistance and questioned the relevance of cultural studies at an Islamic educational institution. A faculty official (Vice Dean) stated:

“We are part of an Islamic educational institution that is supposed to study Islamic matters. If something is not in accordance with the Qur’an and the hadith, why go to the trouble of doing it or simply wasting the budget?” (AK-02).

It should be emphasized that this statement comes from a single informant. Therefore, it is treated as an initial indication of ideological resistance, not as a measure of the prevalence of this attitude among the entire academic community. Thus, the obstacles at IAIN are not merely technical (human resources and budget) but also include debates over the position of local culture within the framework of Islam. A summary of the various obstacles according to typology is presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Comparative Cultural Preservation Obstacles by Typology

Aspect of Obstacle	IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo (PTKIN)	Gorontalo State University (PTN)
Human Resources: Instructors’ Competencies	Some instructors come from outside Gorontalo; limitations regarding the local language and culture.	Not documented as a major issue
Human Resources: Student Engagement	Predominantly older faculty, low student participation, and no human resources database yet	Heterogeneity of regional origins affects attachment to local culture.
Institutional forums/units	No official forums/units yet	Cultural studies units are distributed across faculties, leading to fragmented coordination.
Budget	“Tight” budget constraints	Joint arts and culture performances with RRI have been suspended due to budget constraints.
Ideological	Indications of internal resistance to the relevance of cultural studies (based on one informant)	Not found in the data

Empirical Evidence: The Extinction of Traditions as a Context for Urgency

In line with RQ3, the urgency of preservation is reinforced by evidence of an ongoing decline in traditions, which helps explain why the structural barriers mentioned above have a tangible impact. A community elder described the fading of the qunut night tradition (ritual cleansing):

“The ritual bath for the forgiveness of sins, held at the Darussalam Grand Mosque on the 16th night of Ramadan, is beginning to disappear. The only ones remaining

today are the peanut and banana vendors, because the elders have passed away and there are no successors.” (KM-01).

This testimony comes from a single community leader and therefore describes a tradition that is reportedly being abandoned, not a fully verified claim of extinction; it remains significant as an indicator of the vulnerability of intergenerational transmission. In line with this, the First Vice Rector of UNG acknowledged the limitations of his institution’s capacity:

“The efforts undertaken by Gorontalo State University to preserve Gorontalo’s local Islamic culture are merely attempts to stem and slow the extinction of Gorontalo’s local Islamic culture.” (LP-02).

This acknowledgment is significant: even relatively more active institutions view their role as merely holding back the pace of decline, not restoring it.

The Clash Between Institutional Hopes and On-the-Ground Reality

To test the validity of the findings, the claims and expectations in institutional documents were compared with the realities observed in the field during the research period. The results are presented across eight dimensions in Table 6.

Table 6
Confronting Institutional Expectations and On-the-Ground Reality (Research Period, 2022)

Dimension	Institutional Expectations/Claims	Reality in the Field
Cultural curriculum	Required course “Islam and Local Culture” (since 2010) as a pathway for the internalization of values	Some instructors have non-local backgrounds with language/cultural limitations; the transfer of values is uneven.
Student Engagement	Students are expected to be the “spearhead” of preservation	Dominance of older adults; students are almost nowhere to be seen in cultural forums; there are no verified active student cultural organizations at IAIN
Institutional forums	Establishment of a forum bringing together faculty and students	IAIN does not yet have an official forum; UNG’s research centers are distributed across the faculties
External partnerships	Collaboration with the government, media, and traditional institutions	UNG has an MoU with RRI, but events have been suspended due to budget constraints; IAIN does not yet have a documented MoU with traditional institutions
Research and Publications	Research outputs enrich the documentation of Gorontalo’s Islamic culture	Research is available and has been published (6 books, journals), but there is no structured mechanism for dissemination to students or the public

Vision for the pilot project	IAIN is the “pilot project for the East Indonesian Cultural Center”	The IAIN Rector acknowledges that the project is still in the human resources inventory phase; there are no concrete implementation steps yet
Tangible Impact	Preventing the erosion of Gorontalo’s Islamic culture	The tradition of the qunut prayer at night is reportedly beginning to be abandoned (according to KM-01); UNG’s efforts are acknowledged as merely “slowing down its extinction”
Internal Coherence	Harmonious integration of culture with Islamic values (IAIN)	Signs of internal resistance: an IAIN official considers the study of local culture “a waste of time”

Discussion

This study examines the contributions of two higher education institutions with different institutional mandates, IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo (PTKIN) and Gorontalo State University (PTN), to the preservation of local Islamic culture in Gorontalo. The discussion is structured around three research questions, followed by the theoretical and practical implications and the study’s limitations.

Institutional Orientation and the Gap Between Symbolic Commitment and Transmission Capacity (RQ1)

Institutional orientation determines the scope of contributions to preservation, going beyond mere differences in intensity. IAIN frames culture within the framework of Islam and the Qur’an, while UNG addresses a broader spectrum of Gorontalo culture. This difference in scope is consistent with the institutional logic framework: each institution interprets “cultural preservation” through the logic that underpins its identity. Behind these differences lies a more fundamental similarity: the tangible commitment of both institutions to vision and resource capital. However, this has not yet been realized in an integrated, sustainable, and measurable preservation system. In terms of the analytical distinctions used in this study, both institutions are strong in symbolic-normative integration (the “cultural center” vision, the “Southeast Asia 2035” ambition) but weak in *operational-transmissive* integration. This gap constitutes the main finding of RQ1.

This finding expands the literature on the integration of Islam and local culture in Gorontalo. Suleman et al.²⁴ identify Gorontalo as a model of integrative Islamic moderation, where sharia and adat are harmonized through political and cultural

²⁴Suleman et al., “Negotiating Islamic Moderation: The Interplay of Sharia and Local Culture in Gorontalo, Minangkabau, and Banten.”

diplomacy. Moonti et al.²⁵ demonstrate that the philosophy “*hulahulaa to syara’, syara’ hulahulaa to Qur’ani*” (*custom is rooted in Sharia, and Sharia is rooted in the Quran*) functions as a constitution governing social and legal order. At the same time, Latif and Mardiana²⁶ show that these values are still practiced in the *Huyula* economy. The integration of Islam and culture at the community level and within Gorontalo’s customary governance system has proven to be robust. However, the strength of this integration in the sociocultural sphere does not guarantee effective transmission in the institutional and educational spheres. The mechanisms governing traditional life are far more mature than those for transmitting these values through higher education. In the legal, political, and economic spheres, this integration has been documented in previous studies; in the realm of higher education, however, it remains largely normative.

Nasir and Rijal found a relatively well-established pattern of institutionalizing moderation at Islamic universities such as UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim and Universitas Darussalam Gontor.²⁷ In the comparative study most closely aligned with this research's design, Muliadi et al.²⁸ concluded that Islamic religious universities deliberately promote the internalization of moderate religious values. This study does not fully confirm that optimism. According to the rector of IAIN Sultan Amai, the institution is still in the resource inventory phase and has not yet entered the implementation phase. The Islamic orientation, which Muliadi et al. assessed as a design strength, can actually have the opposite effect in this context: it limits maneuverability when some members of the academic community question the relevance of local cultural studies within Islamic institutions. Thus, an Islamic orientation does not automatically serve as a resource for preservation; under certain conditions, it can become an obstacle.

Institutional Path Asymmetry: From Curricular Internalization to Partnership Isolation (RQ2)

This study identifies four pathways: curricular, co-curricular, research, and community service/partnership that both institutions have pursued with varying intensity

²⁵Moonti et al., “Living Constitution in Islamic Constitutional Law: A Comparative Study of Gorontalo Customary Constitutional Law in Majority and Minority Enclave Contexts.”

²⁶Latif and Mardiana, “‘Huyula’ of Gorontalo: A Model of Local Entrepreneur Business in Indonesia.”

²⁷Nasir and Rijal, “Keeping the Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation through Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia.”

²⁸Muliadi, Syamsidar, and Islam, “Religious Moderation by Design: A Comparative Sociological Da’wah Study in Indonesian Higher Education.”

and forms. IAIN stands out in the curricular pathway through the required course “Islam and Local Culture” since 2010, while UNG stands out in the external partnership pathway through an MoU with RRI and a focus group discussion (FGD) on the revitalization of the *Me’raji* manuscript. This pattern reveals a systematic asymmetry: each institution is strong in the pathway aligned with its institutional orientation and weak in the pathway that requires steps beyond that orientation. This asymmetry, once again, is consistent with the institutional logic in each case.

In terms of the curricular approach, these findings are supported by literature indicating that integrating local wisdom into learning is an effective pathway for the internalization of values. Asmayawati et al. demonstrated a sustainable enhancement in digital literacy through a local-wisdom approach. At the same time, Hanapi et al. showed that instilling Sasak cultural values in school life supports students’ identity. One requirement remains unmet at IAIN: the sustainability of curricular integration, which depends on instructors’ cultural competence. Hanapi et al. emphasize that the main challenge lies in the sustainability of integration, not in its existence. Required courses are available at IAIN, but some instructors have non-local backgrounds and limited knowledge of language and culture, resulting in uneven transmission of values. The existence of a curriculum does not guarantee the continuity of this transmission.

In co-curricular activities and research, the contributions of both institutions are tangible but fragmented. The practice of bringing *Lohidu* poets and artists into the classroom, as well as cultural research through LP2M and UNG’s research *roadmap*, reflects models that have been successfully implemented elsewhere. Kislova and Sizova²⁹ demonstrate that folklore expeditions in university music education can effectively preserve traditions, while Bakula highlights the role of faculty in studying and passing on local folklore. These models have been successful because they were systematically designed and implemented over time.³⁰ In Gorontalo, contextual research and activities have yet to produce a consolidated knowledge base accessible to students or the public. Research and cultural documentation, including six books, manuscripts, and several

²⁹O N Kislova and O A Sizova, “Folklore Expeditions in University Music Education as an Effective Form of Preserving the Cultural Traditions of the Nizhny Novgorod Region,” *Musical Art and Education* 10, no. 2 (2022): 164–77, <https://doi.org/10.31862/2309-1428-2022-10-2-164-177>.

³⁰V B Bakula, “The Role of Murmansk University Teachers in the Study of Sami Folklore as Part of the Historical and Cultural Heritage of the North,” *Bulletin of Ugric Studies* 15, no. 4 (2025): 779–88, <https://doi.org/10.30624/2220-4156-2025-15-4-779-788>.

publications, have not yet had the optimal impact on preservation efforts due to a lack of structured dissemination mechanisms.

A gap is evident in the area of partnerships. IAIN does not yet have a formal, documented MoU with indigenous institutions. At the same time, UNG's partnership is also considered fragile because its joint program with RRI has been suspended due to budget issues. In the theory of *place-based education*, Tibaijuka and Myumbo argue that the involvement of traditional knowledge holders in higher education has long been delayed, and that the dominance of academic epistemology has sidelined non-academic voices.³¹ IAIN's isolation from indigenous institutions illustrates the very problem they warned about. Burton adds that the success of campus–community partnerships is measured by reciprocity and mutual trust, not merely by the existence of formal documents.³² This finding suggests that the two institutions can complement each other: IAIN needs to build partnerships that have been neglected so far, while UNG needs to stabilize existing partnerships to minimize dependence on a single budget source.

The Paradox of Institutional Orientation: Between Islamic Legitimacy and Cultural Studies (RQ3)

Both institutions face complex obstacles encompassing three shared aspects: human resources, institutional forums, and budgets. However, one obstacle with the greatest potential impact is indicated only at IAIN: an ideological barrier. Internal resistance that views local cultural studies as “superfluous” unless they directly align with the Qur'an and hadith suggests that the most significant obstacle at PTKINs is not technical but ideological, concerning the position of local culture within the institutions' Islamic orientation. It must be emphasized that this indication is derived from a single informant. Therefore, it is presented not as an established finding but as a proposition within the concept of the institutional orientation paradox, which requires further testing with a broader base of informants.

This proposition remains valid because it engages in a productive dialogue with the literature. Burga and Damopolii show that education based on local culture in Soppeng actually reinforces religious moderation. At the same time, Aziz et al. found that private

³¹Tibaijuka and Myumbo, “Digitalised Indigenous Cultural Heritage in Higher Education Institutions: The Need for Non-Academic Perspectives.”

³²C Burton, “Faculty and Student Immersion in Community: A Review of Building Bridges: Community and University Partnerships in East St. Louis,” *International Journal for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement* 7, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.37333/001c.11488>.

Islamic schools are more responsive to Bugis cultural values than public schools.³³ Both studies depict Islamic educational institutions that integrate Islam with local culture without causing internal conflict. This contrast raises the question: why do signs of resistance emerge at IAIN Sultan Amai but not at the Soppeng pesantren or at Islamic schools in Bone? The proposed explanation lies in the framework of legitimacy. Pesantren and private Islamic schools integrate culture through community-based foundations and local wisdom that have been organically accepted; at IAIN, as a formal academic institution, cultural studies appear to require academic justification before being institutionally recognized as valid. An Islamic orientation, as argued by Muliadi et al., should serve as a driving force for change rather than a burdensome condition for legitimacy. This is the crux of *the institutional orientation paradox*:³⁴ An orientation intended to strengthen the preservation of local Islamic culture can, under certain conditions, actually foster suspicion toward cultural studies themselves.

In terms of human resources, the literature confirms the dominance of older participants and the low level of student involvement. Syam et al.,³⁵ document the decline of Dayak Kanayatn oral literature due to the younger generation's shifting interests from tradition to modern entertainment; a similar pattern is reflected in accounts of the fading tradition of the qunut night in Gorontalo, as elders pass away without successors. Pastera, in fact, identified misconceptions and knowledge gaps regarding intangible cultural heritage among students, meaning that student engagement cannot be assumed to occur automatically.³⁶ The admission by UNG's First Vice Rector that the institution's efforts merely "slow down extinction" is better understood as an accurate description of the observed conditions, rather than as rhetorical humility. Without the involvement of supportive communities, traditions are threatened by globalization and commodification.³⁷ This threat extends beyond a mere shift in the younger generation's

³³Aziz et al., "Cultural Heritage as a Driver of Educational Choices: Evaluating the Role of Bugis Values in the Selection of Islamic Private Schools in Indonesia."

³⁴Muliadi, Syamsidar, and Islam, "Religious Moderation by Design: A Comparative Sociological Da'wah Study in Indonesian Higher Education."

³⁵C Syam et al., "Oral Literature and Social Identity of the Dayak Kanayatn: The Extinction of Oral Literature in the Midst of Contemporary Cultural Trends," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 11, no. 1 (2024): 2376785, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2376785>.

³⁶Pastera, "Unveiling the Veil: Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Filipino College Students."

³⁷A M Irianto and A Laksono, "The Marginalization of Traditional Arts from the Demands of Tourism Industries: Cultural Commodification Strategy in the Global Era," *Advanced Science Letters* 23, no. 10 (2017): 9978–80, <https://doi.org/10.1166/asl.2017.10359>.

interests, thereby reinforcing the urgency of these findings within the framework of cultural security.³⁸

Research Implications

This study yields three theoretical contributions. *First*, the study of Islam–local culture acculturation is expanded from the legal, political, and economic spheres, which have long been dominant, to the institutional and educational spheres. Acculturation at the community level does not automatically result in effective transmission at the institutional level. This study demonstrates the value of analytically distinguishing between *symbolic-normative* integration (vision, philosophy, written curriculum) and *operational-transmissive* integration (concrete, sustainable, and measurable mechanisms of transmission); the gap between the two represents a theoretical gap that remains under-explored. Given its context, this distinction serves as an analytical framework operationalized and empirically refined within higher education, rather than as a claim to an entirely new concept.

Second, the thesis that “Islamic universities are agents of moderation and culture by design” is qualified by the *paradoxical* proposition of *institutional orientation*. An Islamic orientation can operate in two directions: providing direction and legitimacy for the preservation of local Islamic culture, while simultaneously creating a gateway for doctrinal justifications that hinder cultural studies when their relevance to sacred texts is questioned. An analysis of institutional capacity must therefore take into account both what is made possible and what is restricted by this orientation. Given the limited empirical basis in this study, this proposition is offered for further testing, not for generalization.

Third, this study presents a direct comparison between PTKIN and PTN within the same cultural landscape, a comparison that has not yet been available in the literature. Unlike Muliadi et al.,³⁹ which quantitatively compared the internalization of the value of moderation across regions, this study demonstrates how, in specific case pairs, institutional mandates appear to be associated with qualitatively distinct contribution profiles regarding cultural scope, emphasis on pathways, and the structure of barriers.

³⁸Meng et al., “Cultural Security in the Context of Globalization: A Bibliometric Analysis and Trend Exploration.”

³⁹Muliadi, Syamsidar, and Islam, “Religious Moderation by Design: A Comparative Sociological Da’wah Study in Indonesian Higher Education.”

The Gorontalo case, which has received less attention than those of Aceh, Minangkabau, Java, and Lombok, thus enters the discourse on the role of higher education in preserving Nusantara Islamic culture.⁴⁰ This typological claim is propositional: with only one case per type, the effects of type cannot yet be fully separated from the idiosyncrasies of each institution, so generalizations require cross-location testing.

Based on these findings, five recommendations are proposed. *First*, both institutions need to establish a permanent unit or forum for coordinating cultural preservation, equipped with a database of qualified personnel. This step will encourage IAIN to transition from the inventory phase to implementation, while simultaneously consolidating UNG's capacity, which has thus far been dispersed at the faculty level.

Second, cultural competence should be established as a requirement for instructors of courses based on local culture. If the number of qualified local faculty members is limited, a *co-teaching* model with traditional knowledge holders can be implemented, as suggested by Tibajjuka and Myumbo⁴¹ and as practiced in the university's folklore expeditions. In this context, the presence of *Lohidu* poets in UNG classrooms, which is still sporadic, needs to be established as a permanent, structured teaching model.

Third, external partnerships need to be formalized and stabilized. IAIN should establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with traditional institutions and local governments. At the same time, UNG needs to diversify its funding sources to ensure that partnerships, such as joint events with RRI, are not disrupted by reliance on a single funding source. The success of a partnership is measured by reciprocity and trust, going beyond the mere signing of documents.

Fourth, low student engagement calls for developing communication channels that strategically target the younger generation. Yidan et al.⁴² demonstrate that mobile apps and digital media are effective in attracting young users to engage in the transmission of intangible cultural heritage. Both campuses can leverage their existing research capacity as a foundation for broader and more measurable dissemination.

⁴⁰Arif and Panakkal, *Southeast Asian Islam: Integration and Indigenisation*.

⁴¹Tibajjuka and Myumbo, "Digitalised Indigenous Cultural Heritage in Higher Education Institutions: The Need for Non-Academic Perspectives."

⁴²H Yidan, J Yip, and V Theavar, "Exploring the Potential of Mobile Phone Applications in the Transmission of Intangible Cultural Heritage among the Younger Generation," *Preservation, Digital Technology & Culture* 54, no. 1 (2025): 65–75, <https://doi.org/10.1515/pdte-2024-0058>.

Fifth, specifically for IAIN, signs of ideological resistance must be addressed through an explicit doctrinal framework, such as arguments grounded in maqashid al-shari'ah that position the preservation of Gorontalo's local Islamic culture as part of the institution's Islamic mandate rather than as a "wasteful" expenditure. This kind of internal dialogue is a prerequisite for the Islamic mandate to function as a driving force rather than an obstacle in cultural preservation.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has several limitations that restrict the scope of its claims. *First*, its scope is limited to one province, two institutions, and two institutional typologies, with one case per typology. Consequently, the "institutional type" effect cannot be fully separated from the idiosyncrasies of specific institutions (leadership, history, budgetary capacity), so typological claims are propositional and cannot be generalized. *Second*, the data were collected during a single academic cycle in 2022 and represent a snapshot at a specific point in time; some institutional conditions may have changed, particularly in dynamic dimensions such as the status of MoUs and the activity levels of units. *Third*, there is data asymmetry across cases: the representation of informants from IAIN is greater than that from UNG, and the UNG Rector's statements were obtained indirectly. This asymmetry, coupled with the research team's affiliation with IAIN, implies that IAIN-specific findings, including indications of ideological resistance, may partly reflect unequal access rather than merely differences in objective conditions. *Fourth*, indications of a *paradox in institutional orientation* are based on a limited informant base and, therefore, remain propositions rather than established findings. *Fifth*, the descriptive-comparative qualitative design allows for in-depth understanding but cannot quantitatively measure students' contributions to cultural achievements at the two institutions studied; student voices, although included, are represented in aggregate and are less in-depth than those of administrators and faculty members.

From these limitations, five research agendas emerge. *First*, a multi-site comparative study that pairs PTKIN–PTN institutions across several different cultural landscapes is needed to test whether *the paradox of institutional orientation* and the asymmetry of pathways identified here are general phenomena or specific to Gorontalo. *Second*, longitudinal research is needed to track the impact of locally-based courses on students' competencies and cultural identity over time. *Third*, a mixed-methods approach

using standardized instruments can measure outcomes in knowledge transmission, attitudes, and student engagement, thereby enabling the empirical testing of the distinction between symbolic and operational integration. *Fourth*, intervention studies testing the effectiveness of digital channels and *co-teaching* models with traditional knowledge holders will bridge these descriptive findings with proven solutions. *Fifth*, student-centered ethnography is needed to understand the causes of low engagement among the younger generation and how ideological resistance is formed and negotiated within the PTKIN environment.

Conclusion

This study compares the roles of PTKIN and PTN in preserving Gorontalo's local Islamic culture through qualitative case studies at IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo and UNG. Three main findings can be drawn. *First*, both institutions position culture as part of their institutional orientation, but their typologies appear to define different scopes: IAIN limits its focus to culture aligned with Islam and the Qur'an. At the same time, UNG addresses Gorontalo culture more broadly. In this pair of cases, this difference stems more from institutional mandates than from mere programmatic variations, a proposition that warrants cross-site testing.

Second, both institutions follow the same four pathways: curricular, co-curricular, research, and community service, but with different emphases. IAIN places greater emphasis on the curricular pathway through required courses, while UNG stands out in external partnerships and contextual learning. Neither institution has succeeded in integrating all four pathways into a comprehensive preservation system.

Third, the obstacles faced include limited human resources, the absence of an effective coordinating unit, and a constrained budget. In the case of IAIN, the data also indicate ideological obstacles that question the relevance of studies on "culture within Islamic educational institutions," an indication that, given the informants' background, is presented as a proposition. These obstacles place the issue of preservation not merely in the technical realm but also within an epistemological debate regarding the position of local culture within Islam.

The theoretical contribution of this research lies in the use of an institutional typology, interpreted through the lens of institutional logic, to explain variations in cultural preservation models at universities and to sharpen the distinction between

symbolic-normative and operational-transmissive integration. Practically, these findings suggest the need for a dedicated coordination unit, a database of competent human resources, the systematic involvement of students, and diversified funding so that programs are not vulnerable to reliance on a single partnership. Specifically for IAINs, internal dialogue is needed to position the study of local culture as a legitimate part of the Islamic mission, rather than a budgetary burden.

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