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The Macak–Manak–Masak Philosophy: Is It Still Relevant in Determining Succession in Family Businesses in Tulungagung?

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Article Info

Article history:

Received 2026-01-21

Revised 2026-01-30

Accepted 2026-02-20

Keywords:

Family Business

Javanese Culture

Macak Manak Masak

Succession

Women

ABSTRACT

This study aims to discuss the relevance of the Javanese cultural values of macak, manak, and masak in the process of family business succession to female successors. This study departs from the assumption that this philosophy still limits women's roles to the domestic sphere, especially in the context of Javanese society, which is closely tied to patriarchal culture. The objective of this study is to analyze how the values of macak, manak, and masak are interpreted and implemented in the preparation and decision-making processes of family business succession. The study uses a qualitative case study design with five family businesses in Tulungagung Regency that have been operating across generations and involve female successors. Data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews, observations, focus group discussions (FGD), and source triangulation. The results of the study show that macak, manak, and masak are no longer the basis for the family business succession process. Four main themes were found, namely interest, independence, collaboration, and tradition. The interest of female successors is formed through early involvement and family support. Women's independence develops in response to economic demands and to the need for business sustainability. Cross-generational collaboration occurs based on competence, not gender, while tradition is interpreted as the inheritance of moral values and family business identity. This study concludes that there has been a shift in values in family businesses.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have become a crucial component of Indonesia's economy. Based on data from the Ministry of Trade, delivered by the Head of the Trade Policy Agency, Rusmin Amin, in 2025, MSMEs account for 99% of all business actors in Indonesia, with an estimated business potential of US\$130 billion, or approximately IDR 2,194 trillion. Interestingly, of the 99% of businesses categorized as MSMEs, 64.5%

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are managed by women. Several sectors predominantly engaged by female entrepreneurs include the fashion, culinary, beauty, and handicrafts industries.

According to Statistics Indonesia (BPS) data from 2024, approximately 37 million individuals in MSMEs in Indonesia are women, accounting for up to 61% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Therefore, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA) recognizes women as a vital pillar of the national economy. This recognition has encouraged the ministry to provide capital assistance to female entrepreneurs through the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) for the 2025–2029 period.

Globally, data from the World Bank Gender Data Portal indicate that more than 274 million women operate startup businesses, and an additional 139 million serve as owners or managers of established enterprises. This reflects women's substantial contribution to the global economy. Women possess distinctive strengths as business leaders. A study by Arregle et al. [1] revealed that female leadership styles enhance the initiation of change and work-life balance, while also improving mindset and self-efficacy. Women's collaborative, detail-oriented, and adaptive leadership characteristics position them as valuable assets in sustaining family businesses.

Similarly, Sorongan et al. [2] found that female leaders tend to be more capable of improving employee welfare and are more concerned with business regeneration for their children. Women can also balance their roles between public and domestic activities.

Yuliandhari et al. [3] further stated that female leaders are able to enhance team creativity through their predominantly collaborative approach, which fosters a sense of ownership and participation among team members. Women often demonstrate a more democratic and participative leadership style. They actively observe, provide constructive feedback, and engage in two-way communication, making team members feel more valued and heard.

The role of women in business management cannot be underestimated in advancing business. Unfortunately, patriarchal culture, which remains prevalent in Indonesia, often marginalizes women's roles in business management. According to Bressler [4], patriarchy is a social system in which men hold primary power and dominate social structures. Many family businesses tend to adopt patriarchal systems in which sons inherit leadership and ownership. This is reflected in succession decision-making processes that frequently exclude women's participation, based on the stereotype that men are more suitable for business leadership roles, while women are viewed merely as supporters [5].

Hayward et al. [6] explained that in patriarchal cultures, men's privileges are evident across various public spheres, including social positions. This advantage gives men greater control over public domains, resulting in limited mobility for women and difficulties in obtaining their rightful opportunities. This condition also affects succession processes in family businesses, where gender bias often occurs in the selection of successors.

In family businesses, women are frequently positioned only as alternative successors. Yang et al. [7] found that business owners tend to prepare sons as primary successors, while daughters are assigned administrative roles, even though daughters may possess equal managerial capabilities. Although female successor candidates demonstrate comparable competence, they are rarely considered primary successors because of patriarchal norms in

family businesses. Thus, gender bias is not only an issue of justice but also a threat to the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of family businesses.

This patriarchal gender bias phenomenon is particularly prominent within Javanese society, which strongly adheres to patriarchal traditions. A BPS survey in 2023 on “Women in Managerial Positions” found that Java recorded a proportion of 35.89%, Central Java 37.52%, Yogyakarta Special Region 32.01%, and East Java 38.16%. These figures are lower than those in other regions, such as Sulawesi (38.62%), Sumatra (37.5%), Bali and Nusa Tenggara (36.5%), and Maluku and Papua (38.1%). This indicates the persistence of gender bias influenced by patriarchal cultural values in Javanese society [8].

Javanese society maintains social value systems that place men at the center of the public sphere, while women are often directed toward domestic roles despite having equal or superior competence. This is reflected in the Javanese philosophy of *Garwo* or *Sigaraning Nyowo*. Another cultural expression states that a woman’s primary duties are *Macak*, *Manak*, *Masak*, meaning that a woman is expected to dress attractively for her husband, bear children, and cook for her family [9]. In Javanese tradition, women are known as *Kanca Wingking* (companions behind). Tika (2014) explained that *kanca wingking* signifies that women are positioned behind men, primarily in domestic spaces such as the kitchen, as women are culturally associated with cooking, washing, and fulfilling their husbands’ biological needs.

Therefore, this study aims to highlight the strategies involved in the succession preparation process for female successors in family businesses. Tulungagung Regency was selected as the research location because it still strongly upholds patriarchal traditions. This is evidenced by the Gender Empowerment Index (GEI) in 2024, which recorded a relatively low score of 69.99. According to BPS, the GEI is measured by women’s participation in parliament, their roles as professionals, technicians, and managers, and their income contributions relative to men. A GEI below 70 indicates structural inequality, commonly influenced by patriarchal culture, gender discrimination, and limited access opportunities.

Consequently, this study seeks to explore the dynamics of succession preparation processes for female successors in Javanese family businesses through the philosophy of *Macak–Manak–Masak*, particularly in Tulungagung Regency.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Family Business

A family business is one operated by a family. It involves a couple and several family members who interact to carry out work while maintaining family relationships and sharing responsibilities [10]. Family businesses are often characterized as risk-averse, closed, rigid, and burdened by family traditions. However, recent studies indicate that family businesses can be quite innovative, although the expression of innovation is often constrained by respect for tradition [11]. In family businesses, conflicts may arise between business and family interests, among family members themselves, and between the family and company employees [12].

Succession (Direct Succession of Daughters)

Family business succession involves changes in ownership or management, in which successors, whether from within or outside the family, bring new ideas and unique management styles. Succession represents one of the most complex challenges for family firms and serves as a primary mechanism for business continuity across generations [13].

In relation to women, daughter succession refers to how women are positioned as leadership successors in both general organizations and family businesses, as well as the influencing factors and challenges they face. **In the context of family businesses, women's** roles as successors are still often underestimated due to cultural bias and strong patriarchal structures. Purwaningsih and Muin [14] noted that women frequently become *unexpected successors* in family businesses, particularly when companies face crises or leadership vacancies. In cases of sudden or unplanned succession, women are more likely to emerge as successors under unfavorable or high-pressure conditions.

Furthermore, Nadya Salsabila et al. [15] found, through a systematic literature review, that female successors tend to face legitimacy barriers and must exert greater effort to gain recognition as legitimate leaders in family businesses. Structural obstacles, lack of mentoring, and limited social networks remain major challenges for women in leadership succession processes [16].

Javanese Family Business Philosophy: *Macak, Manak, Masak*

According to Sofia Umari and Metta Padmalia [17], the fundamental values of Javanese society are built upon the principles of *rukun* (harmony), *hormat* (respect), and *tepa selira* (empathy and self-restraint). In the family context, *rukun* refers to maintaining harmonious relationships among family members; *hormat* is expressed through obedience to parents and husbands; while *tepa selira* emphasizes mutual understanding and emotional restraint to avoid conflict. These values create a strong hierarchical family structure, where the father is regarded as the head of the family (*pamong*), and the mother as the household manager (*pengemong*) [18]. Women are also referred to as *kanca wingking*, meaning “companions from behind,” symbolizing their important yet less visible domestic roles.

One notable concept in Javanese culture is the role of women expressed through *macak, manak, masak* (the 3M philosophy). *Macak* means that a woman should present herself attractively for her husband; *manak* means that a woman is expected to bear children; and *masak* means that a woman should cook and serve the needs of her husband and children at home [19]. This 3M role often makes women feel restricted and deprived of personal freedom to pursue their own interests.

In fact, along with social change, different perspectives on the 3M philosophy have emerged. The terms *macak, manak, and masak* originate in Javanese cultural constructions that assign domestic and reproductive roles to women as wives and mothers. Its philosophy encompasses identity, aesthetics, family responsibility, and traditional family values [20].

3. METHOD

To understand the ongoing dynamics, this study adopts a qualitative research approach. According to Padandi et al. [21], qualitative research is descriptive in nature and

emphasizes analytical interpretation. It prioritizes the perspectives of research subjects and the processes and meanings underlying social phenomena, while relying on theoretical frameworks to ensure alignment with empirical realities.

This study employs a case study approach, which focuses on in-depth exploration of cases over time through the collection of data from observations, interviews, documentation, and other relevant sources. It reports the findings in the form of detailed descriptions and thematic analyses [22]. The informant criteria include family business actors in Tulungagung Regency who have operated for at least five years, involve two active generations, and have female successors who are currently undergoing or have completed the succession process.

Observation is defined as the systematic recording and monitoring of observable phenomena related to the research object. It involves the use of human senses to collect information, focusing on natural behavior, visible dynamics, and contextual behavioral patterns [23]

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a qualitative data collection method that gathers respondents in a single setting to allow direct interaction. Researchers facilitate discussions among participants to explore research topics and understand their perspectives and knowledge. FGD is particularly useful when researchers seek more objective insights from a specific group [23]

Triangulation refers to a data collection strategy used to verify the credibility of the information obtained. It serves as a method to validate data by comparing multiple perspectives and sources. Data collection was conducted using semi-structured interviews. This method allows researchers to openly explore issues, encouraging informants to express their opinions and ideas freely [24]. The interview guide was designed to explore the processes, dynamics, and meanings surrounding the appointment of female successors, both from the previous generation (parents as owners/leaders) and from the successor generation (daughters as prospective or current business successors).

The informants selected for this study met the research criteria, namely family business actors in Tulungagung Regency who have been operating for approximately 20–60 years, involve two active generations, and include female successors who are currently undergoing or have completed the succession process.

Table 1. Informant Data

No	Code	Initials	Gender	Age	Generation	Business Fields
1	A1	YP	L	54	2	Culinary
2	A2	AS	P	28	3	Culinary
3	B1	MR	L	54	1	Culinary
4	B2	SW	P	31	2	Culinary
5	C1	SM	L	65	2	Retail
6	C2	NS	P	33	3	Retail
7	D1	AG	L	42	1	Retail
8	D2	MF	P	21	2	Retail
9	E1	RS	P	48	1	Retail
10	E2	SZ	P	25	2	Retail

To maintain the confidentiality of informants' identities, researchers used a coding system. Letters (A–E) indicate different family businesses, while numbers indicate

generations. Number 1 indicates the previous generation (parents/owners), and number 2 indicates the next generation (female).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Among the five companies studied, one appointed a daughter as the primary successor, while the other four had both sons and daughters but tended to select female successors. From the interview results, four main themes were identified as follows:

Interest

Interest refers to attention and affective feelings influenced by the surrounding environment, which may persist or over time [25]. Interest in continuing a family business reflects entrepreneurial spirit and an individual's desire to become a leader in sustaining the family enterprise, driven by both personal motivation and external encouragement. Gusenbauer et al. [26] further explain that interest in continuing a family business reflects the successor's intention to take over and sustain the business in the future actively, influenced by attitudes toward succession, family support, education, and business conditions. Brophy et al. [27] found that a supportive family environment and entrepreneurial education positively influence interest in continuing a family business.

These findings are consistent with the interview results:

“For me, it really comes from myself. Since our family is Muslim and this is what we sell, it feels like this is my soul.” (SZ-08)

AS also supports this:

“I once thought after graduating I would work in an office for about 1–5 years, then focus on continuing the family business. Since childhood, I already felt the passion, seeing people cook every day.” (AS-16)

These statements indicate that interest in continuing the family business does not emerge immediately but develops over time through daily experiences. Interest that later grows into a ‘soul’ and ‘passion’ reflects a strong personal attachment to the family business. Besides emotional factors, support from the previous generation also plays a crucial role in strengthening successors' interest, as expressed by eight other informants: YP (22), MR (22), SW (6), SM (12), NS (8), AG (33), MF (8), and RS (47). They stated that opportunities to contribute provided by the older generation allowed them to gain moral support and learning experiences.

This finding aligns with Thohari [28], who stated that early involvement and learning in succession planning strengthen successors' interest in continuing the family business. It is also supported by Permana and Saputri [29], who argue that individuals develop entrepreneurial interest when they identify role models whose characteristics, behaviors, and goals they admire and from whom they can learn relevant skills and competencies.

From the ten informants, interest in continuing the family business was not formed by the Javanese value of *Macak Manak Masak*. Instead, interest was driven by personal attraction, family and environmental support, and early involvement, rather than internalized gender roles. Female informants did not interpret their involvement in the family business as domestic roles implied in *Macak Manak Masak*, but as a natural interest cultivated through

early exposure. Thus, female successors tend toward a modern family business orientation rather than adherence to traditional gender-based Javanese values.

Independence

Independence refers to an individual's ability to act according to personal will. Developing independence is essential for forming behavioral decision-making abilities [30]. Independence is described as bearing responsibility for one's own decisions rather than relying on others. In family businesses, independence refers to the freedom to make choices when joining the business, significantly shaping affective and normative commitment among successors. Schneck [4] defines independence as the freedom to determine strategies and manage business operations autonomously.

In this study, independence also reflects women's existence and active contribution in family businesses, as shown in the interviews:

"As productive women, we must be independent and not depend on our husbands or others." (RS-87)

AG supports this:

"My mother has been selling hijabs since the 1970s until now, for 55 years. Even in old age, she remains persistent." (AG-125)

Eight other informants expressed similar views: YP (43), AS (34), MR (33), SW (20), SM (60), NS (38), MF (16), and SZ (4). They emphasized that women actively contribute to family businesses. These statements show that women's independence emerges from economic demands, business continuity, and family business sustainability.

This aligns with Hogenstijn and Cuypers [10], who define independence as self-reliance in pursuing goals. AG's statement also reflects women's persistence in maintaining family business continuity over decades. Wulandari [11] supports this by describing women as "stewards" of family businesses, bridging household and business logic through active strategic involvement.

Although *Macak Manak Masak* traditionally confines women to domestic roles, this study shows that women's independence extends beyond these boundaries. The value is not entirely abandoned; women continue domestic roles while simultaneously expanding public roles to meet economic and business sustainability demands. None of the informants imposed *Macak Manak Masak* as a restrictive value on female family members; instead, they emphasized women's independence.

Collaboration

According to Wahyudi et al. [16], collaboration is a joint effort to achieve goals through shared learning processes. Lima and Prakoso [31] identify open communication, trust, and clear role distribution as key factors of effective collaboration. Knowledge sharing is essential in family businesses for solving operational problems and transferring skills [32]. [33] state that collaboration in family businesses involves internal communication, shared responsibilities, and joint decision-making.

YP and MR illustrate this:

"Asa coordinates front employees, while my aunt handles the back." (YP-47)

“During Eid, Sella always went to the market from midnight until closing. When I slept, she replaced me.” (MR-25)

These statements show that collaboration occurs through clear task division and complementary roles. Such collaboration builds awareness and responsibility for business continuity. Astuti et al. [34] argue that social cohesion, trust, shared goals, and emotional attachment strengthen collaboration.

Similar views were expressed by AS (50), SW (22), SM (150), NS (46), AG (45), MF (4), RS (27), and SZ (30), who emphasized that collaboration is crucial for sustaining family businesses. This is supported by Islam and Sanderson [35], who found that internal collaboration through task division and communication significantly improves company performance.

In family businesses, collaboration is reflected in clear role distribution, open communication, and direct involvement of successors. This pattern indicates a shift away from the Macak Manak Masak value, in which contribution is assessed based on competence and responsibility rather than gender. Female successors are no longer informal contributors but active participants in sustaining family businesses.

Tradition

Tradition is defined as something that has been practiced since ancient times and has become part of a community's life, passed down from generation to generation, either orally or in writing [36]. Meiwanto et al. [37] also define culture as a manifestation of creations, experiences, and ideas passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, culture needs to be preserved and maintained. Traditions in family businesses reflect how values and practices are passed down from generation to generation, which can serve as a source of resilience and a determinant of innovation strategies and organizational decisions. Aisyah et al. [38] state that in family businesses, traditions reflect inherited value and practices passed down across generations, which contribute to shaping decision-making and organizational identity while also posing challenges for innovation in the context of modern competition. This can be seen in the following interviews with AS and SW:

“I think preserving this legacy is like preserving a memory. A memory from Mrs. Sumirah, to my mother, and then to me. A memory and the continuity of the recipe from three generations.” (AS-100)

“Continuing means maintaining, carrying on with trust, uh, keeping the business running, keeping it as trustworthy as it was before. My mother has never had any problems with honesty, so we have to keep that up. The point is to keep it as good as it is or make it even better.” (SW-102)

This sentiment was also echoed by eight other informants: YP (80), MR (69), SM (152), NS (86), AG (24), MF (36), RS (37), and SZ (52), who stated that in addition to being a legacy of values, traditions serve as guidelines for family businesses, regarding values, sustainability, and maintaining the family's reputation. Traditions also serve as guidelines for family businesses in running the business, making decisions, and assigning roles. Interview results revealed that tradition is not merely a habit but a life value to be maintained across generations. Informant AS's statement, which defined tradition as a “memory” and

the continuity of recipes across three generations, demonstrates that tradition also serves as a bridge between family identity and the running of the family business. Furthermore, informant SW's statement emphasized the importance of upholding the trust and values of previous generations, reflecting the moral foundation of the family business. This aligns with research by Zhang et al. [39], which states that family business traditions, including values, routines, and knowledge, must be formed, maintained, and transferred between generations through social interactions within a community of practice. These inherited traditions shape family identity and support the sustainability of the family business. In addition to maintaining continuity, traditions also serve as a framework for family business values in implementing change or innovation.

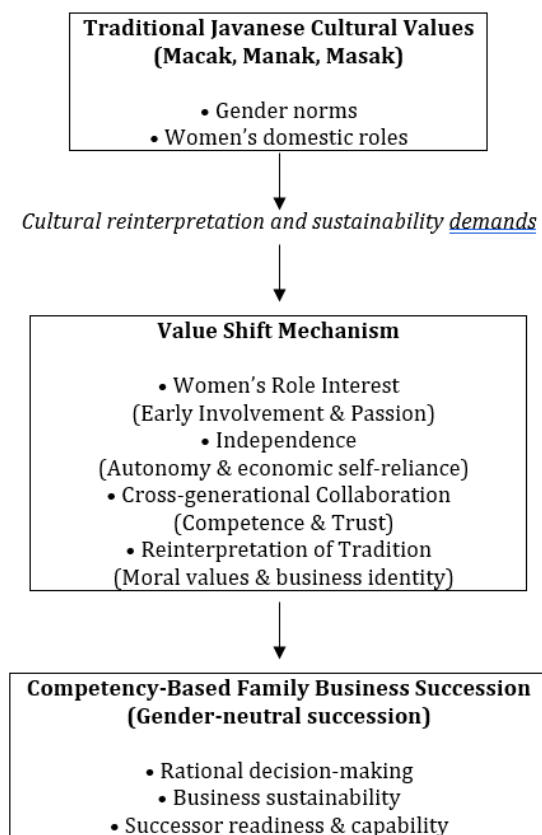


Figure 1. Javanese Family Business Succession Value Shift Model

This model illustrates the shift in values in the succession process of Javanese family businesses. The traditional cultural value of “Macak-Manak-Masak” is not completely abandoned, but is reinterpreted in line with the demands of business sustainability and intergenerational dynamics. This shift is mediated by four main factors: the interest of female successors, independence, cross-generational collaboration, and the reinterpretation of tradition as a moral value and family business identity. The result of this process is the formation of a rational and pragmatic, competency-based succession pattern, without gender distinction, as the primary basis for decision-making in family businesses.

Macak Manak Masak is often considered part of a tradition passed down from generation to generation. However, this research shows that tradition in family businesses is

no longer interpreted by mapping gender with the Javanese value of *Macak Manak Masak*, but rather as the inheritance of values, ethics, and family business sustainability that adapts to the times, shifting from gender-based cultural norms of *Macak Manak Masak* to rational considerations based on competency and business sustainability. Therefore, the family business traditions in this study do not support gender stereotypes, such as the Javanese value of *Macak Manak Masak*. Rather, tradition serves as the moral foundation and identity of the family business, not as a limitation of social roles.

5. CONCLUSION

The Javanese expressions *macak*, *manak*, and *masak* traditionally signify that women's roles are confined to domestic spheres, including beautifying themselves, serving their husbands, bearing children, and cooking. However, the findings of this study indicate that the *macak*, *manak*, *masak* value is no longer practiced as a fundamental life principle within contemporary Javanese society. Javanese communities increasingly perceive men and women as having equal rights and social positions. Consequently, in the management of family businesses, a significant shift in women's roles has occurred—from domestic actors to decision makers and business managers.

The declining dominance of the *macak*, *manak*, *masak* philosophy confirms a transformation in Javanese cultural values, in which succession and family business management are now primarily guided by rationality, competence, and pragmatic considerations rather than traditional gender norms.

Interview results reveal that none of the five companies base their successor selection and succession decisions on the *macak*, *manak*, *masak* philosophy. Instead, succession outcomes are influenced by pragmatic considerations. Parents choose successors based on readiness, willingness, and capability to continue the business, regardless of gender. Javanese cultural values such as *macak*, *manak*, and *masak* no longer serve as the main reference in decision-making processes.

This study identified four themes relevant to female successors: interest, independence, collaboration, and tradition. Interest, independence, and collaboration develop based on competence, experience, and business sustainability needs, while tradition is reinterpreted as the inheritance of ethical values and business identity rather than as a justification for gender-based role division.

The study contributes theoretically by expanding family business research from a gender and local cultural perspective. It demonstrates that the Javanese values of *macak*, *manak*, and *masak* no longer function as the primary normative framework in family business succession but have undergone a shift in meaning in line with managerial rationalization. The four main themes—interest, independence, collaboration, and tradition—indicate that female succession is more strongly influenced by competence, experience, and individual readiness than by traditional gender norms. Therefore, this study enriches the family business succession literature, which has often treated gender descriptively, by offering an interpretative understanding of how gender and cultural constructions transform within Javanese family businesses.

Thus, *macak*, *manak*, and *masak* are no longer relevant as a foundation for succession decisions, having been replaced by rational and pragmatic approaches in Javanese family business management.

Theoretically, this research strengthens family business studies by demonstrating that *macak*, *manak*, *masak* has shifted from a normative cultural framework to a competence-based rational consideration in succession. Practically, it provides guidance for family business actors to design more inclusive succession processes by fostering early interest among female successors, encouraging independence, and building cross-generational collaboration without gender bias, while preserving tradition as a moral value and business identity. From a policy perspective, the findings imply the need for governmental support through capacity-building and leadership programs for female successors in family businesses, as well as culturally sensitive MSME policies to promote gender equality and long-term business sustainability.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all family business owners and successors in Tulungagung who generously shared their time, experiences, and insights, making this study possible. We also extend our appreciation to the academic supervisors and colleagues whose constructive feedback and guidance contributed significantly to the refinement of this research. Special thanks are addressed to all parties who supported the data collection process, including interview and focus group discussion participants. Finally, the authors acknowledge the cultural and social context of Javanese society, which provided invaluable meaning and depth to the interpretation of this study.

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