

Local Knowledge as a Catalyst for Gender Equality in Medan's Multicultural Society

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Abstract: This study aims to explore local wisdom's role in shaping educational prospects within Medan's multicultural society through a gender anthropology perspective. Medan's diverse ethnic groups Batak Toba, Mandailing, Karo, Pakpak, Nias, Melayu, Minang, Aceh, Jawa, Sunda, and Tionghoa, possess rich traditions that influence views on education and gender equality. To align local wisdom with SDGs 4 (Quality Education) and 5 (Gender Equality), culturally responsive materials reflecting these traditions should be integrated into school curricula. For instance, Minang matrilineal practices can foster gender parity, while Malay Islamic teachings underscore the value of universal education. Teacher training should focus on leveraging local wisdom to create inclusive and equitable classroom environments. Additionally, community-driven initiatives like storytelling sessions and digital archives can highlight local wisdom's relevance to education and gender equality. Using a qualitative approach grounded in Participatory Action Research (PAR), this study engages these ethnic groups to examine their cultural practices and educational experiences. The findings reveal that local wisdom significantly enhances access to education for both genders while promoting shared values and unity across Medan's diverse communities.

1 INTRODUCTION

The issue of gender equality in multicultural urban societies, such as Medan City, has become an important focus in various academic discussions and public policies. In multicultural urban societies like Medan City, the issue of gender equality is one of the complex matters that requires in-depth attention. The city of Medan, as a center of ethnic diversity, has become a complex social laboratory, inhabited by various ethnic groups such as Batak Toba, Mandailing, Karo, Malay, Aceh, Minang, Javanese, Sundanese, Chinese, and Nias living side by side.

Ethnic groups living side by side in a complex urban context have various cultural values that shape societal views on gender roles, especially in access to and opportunities for education. Each ethnic group in Medan has local wisdom passed down through generations, which influences how the roles of

women and men are perceived in social, cultural, and educational contexts. In this context, gender equality is essentially influenced not only by global norms but also by local knowledge or local wisdom from each ethnic group. Local wisdom serves as a foundation for shaping values and even norms that prevail in society, including in terms of gender roles and access to education.

Local knowledge is critical for developing the values and conventions that govern societal interactions in multicultural settings such as Medan, particularly in terms of gender roles and educational access. Unfortunately, traditional knowledge systems are frequently ignored in formal schooling. To solve this, government policies must incorporate local knowledge into the educational system in order to develop a culturally responsive curriculum that represents the distinct values of Medan's varied ethnic communities. Integrating matrilineal practices from

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the Minang community, for example, or honoring women's educational contributions within Batak culture, can both challenge and promote gender inclusion. According to research, students engage more fully with instructional content that represents local customs, promoting empowerment and mutual respect.

Furthermore, incorporating local wisdom into educational policy might help to sustain cultural identities in the face of globalization and urbanization, which frequently marginalize traditional traditions. Institutionalizing local knowledge guarantees that future generations acquire not only global competencies but also a profound appreciation for their cultural heritage. By advancing gender equality and high-quality education, this strategy advances the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4 and 5). In scientific education, for example, indigenous knowledge systems can improve academic achievement while also supporting sustainable practices that are consistent with local customs. Kabeer (2016) underlines the importance of culturally based techniques in achieving gender equality and social transformation, particularly in communities with strong cultural links. This integration addresses educational gaps while also fostering a more equitable and united community.

As one of the largest cities in Indonesia, Medan City is a true portrait of the ethnic and cultural diversity that shapes the social and cultural identity of its society. With a population consisting of various ethnic groups such as Batak Toba, Mandailing, Karo, Pak Pak, Nias, Malay, Minang, Aceh, Javanese, Sundanese, and Chinese, intercultural interactions in daily life have become an inevitable phenomenon. The city of Medan serves as a dynamic exchange hub for social and cultural values, where the local wisdom of each ethnic group influences each other and contributes to the formation of shared cultural practices. In this context, the study of local wisdom is not only important in understanding the culture of each ethnic group but also how they adapt to and adopt values relevant to gender relations.

Local wisdom, as knowledge that develops from the collective experiences of the local community, serves as an important foundation in shaping social relationships and strengthening cohesion among groups (Suryadinata, 1997). In the city of Medan, the process of intercultural interaction results in the adoption of local wisdom values that play an important role in shaping gender dynamics. In the multicultural society of Medan City, differences in traditions and local practices result in different access

patterns for men and women, especially in terms of educational opportunities.

For example, in Batak Toba culture, although it is known for its patriarchal societal structure, the role of women in family economic activities is often informally recognized, reflecting the presence of space for gender equality in certain contexts (Harahap, M., 2015). In the patriarchal Batak Toba ethnic group, education is currently viewed as the key to improving the social and economic status of families for both boys and girls. On the other hand, the Mandailing and Karo ethnic groups view education as a fundamental right that must be accessible to all children regardless of gender. Furthermore, the Malay and Minang ethnic groups are known for their matrilineal values, which give an important role to women in family decision-making and inheritance (Abdullah, 2018). The interaction between these values in the multicultural context of Medan creates an opportunity to understand how gender is articulated and negotiated amidst cultural diversity. This shows that local wisdom has a significant influence in determining access to education while also shaping gender mainstreaming in society, especially in multicultural communities (Kabeer, 2016; Smith, 2016).

This article will discuss the role of local knowledge as an agent of change in promoting gender equality in the multicultural society of Medan City. Through an analysis of findings on the relevance of local wisdom to multicultural education, this paper seeks to demonstrate that local knowledge can serve as a strong foundation for achieving social cohesion, gender justice, and the reduction of ethnic conflicts in this city (Cornwall, 2015). Through an exploration of local wisdom and the role of transculturalism, this article also contributes to the discussion on innovation in multicultural education as an effort to strengthen social integration and promote gender equality (Sen & Nussbaum, 2017).

Although research on gender equality in a multicultural context has been extensively conducted, the approach focusing on the role of local wisdom as a catalyst for social change is still relatively underexplored. This research offers a new contribution to gender equality studies by highlighting how local wisdom in the city of Medan can accommodate the mainstreaming of gender roles amidst a continuously evolving society. This research provides novelty in two main aspects. The first and foremost novelty of this research lies in the perspective of transculturalism. This perspective emphasizes the phenomenon where various ethnic groups not only maintain their traditional values but

also interact with each other and adopt best practices from other cultures that can support gender equality, especially in access to education for women. This shows that local wisdom is not static but continues to adapt to the challenges of modernity, such as gender mainstreaming and demands for social justice. This aligns with the view that local wisdom is dynamic and continuously evolving, as described by Sutrisno (2018), who emphasizes that local wisdom should not be seen as a static element but rather as a social resource capable of adapting to the demands of changing times.

Research focusing on the exploration of local wisdom forms relevant to gender issues in the multicultural society of Medan City, highlighting how local knowledge originally from one ethnic group is adopted by another, offers a new understanding of how local wisdom can serve as a tool to promote gender equality and harmony. For example, the cultural exchange between the Minang and Karo ethnic groups in recognizing the role of women in society demonstrates the transfer of gender values that support gender equality more broadly (Abdullah, 2018).

This research also highlights the process of transculturalism in the city of Medan, which allows inclusive and progressive gender values to spread across ethnic boundaries. In highly pluralistic societies, such as in the city of Medan, the process of interaction and cultural exchange contributes to the formation of more inclusive social norms. Specifically, this research found that norms that used to tend to restrict women's access to education are now becoming more relaxed, in line with the increasing awareness of the importance of education for the well-being of families and communities as a whole. For example, in the Batak Toba society, which used to be more patriarchal, there is now a significant change where families are beginning to equalize education for boys and girls. This is in line with Holst's (2017) view, which states that local values can serve as a primary driver of social change in multicultural societies by providing space for dialogue and the adjustment of gender norms.

A detailed case study of the Batak Toba community in Medan reveals how local knowledge can drive meaningful changes in education and gender equality. While Batak Toba society is traditionally patriarchal, with men dominating decision-making and resource allocation, the principles of *Dalihan Na Tolu*, which emphasize mutual respect, accountability, and cooperation have facilitated greater female participation in education. Recent shifts show families increasingly valuing

education for daughters, recognizing its benefits for familial and communal well-being. This cultural ethos has encouraged equitable resource distribution for girls' education, reflecting a broader trend towards shared growth and social transformation (Sibarani, 2019). Similarly, the Minang community, guided by its matrilineal system and the philosophy of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah*, prioritizes women's education. This system emphasizes women's roles in managing family assets and preserving cultural traditions, leading to higher rates of higher education among Minang women compared to other groups in Medan (Abdullah, 2018).

The Chinese community in Medan provides another compelling example, with Confucian values such as *xiao* (filial piety) and *guanxi* (social connections) underpinning its commitment to education for both boys and girls. Chinese-run schools promote equal access to quality education, fostering academic success and socioeconomic advancement for both genders. This dedication has influenced other ethnic groups in Medan, encouraging them to adopt similar norms regarding education and gender equity (Tan, 2020).

The dynamic interaction between these traditions and broader societal trends illustrates how transculturalism has transformed Medan's educational landscape. Communities like the Malay and Acehnese have integrated elements of Minang and Chinese educational practices, demonstrating that local wisdom evolves through interethnic exchanges, enhancing inclusivity and reducing educational inequalities in Medan's multicultural context.

In a broader context, this research also offers a new perspective on multicultural education. In the multicultural society of Medan City, education not only serves as a tool to build social cohesion but also as a means to create more inclusive gender equality. As stated by Banks (2015), successful multicultural education must be able to integrate local wisdom as an important element to foster a deeper understanding of social values, including gender equality.

This research expands the academic discussion on the interaction between gender, education, and local wisdom in multicultural urban communities. The findings of this research affirm that local knowledge remains relevant and even plays a strategic role in advocating for women's rights, especially in the context of education, amidst the growing global issue of gender mainstreaming. The adoption of gender equality values by various ethnic groups in Medan demonstrates how the process of transculturalism can drive inclusive and sustainable social innovation.

The second novelty of this research lies in the in-depth exploration of the role of local wisdom in facilitating equal access to education for both women and men within the context of an urban multicultural society. Unlike previous research that focused more on gender equality from the perspective of national or global policies, this study highlights how intercultural interactions and the adoption of local values in diverse societies like Medan can create significant changes in societal views on gender roles. This is in line with recent findings in gender studies that highlight the importance of local and participatory approaches in driving sustainable social change, especially in regions with high ethnic diversity (Sen Nussbaum, 2017).

Even if local knowledge is essential for promoting gender equality and social cohesiveness, it is critical to address any potential prejudices ingrained in particular cultural customs. Some longstanding behaviors, while firmly ingrained in cultural identity, may unintentionally reinforce gender norms or limit women's possibilities. For example, the Batak Toba community's patriarchal framework may hinder women's access to leadership and education. Similarly, gender biases may remain in matrilineal communities like the Minang, limiting women's duties to domestic or familial realms despite their inheritance rights. These traditions must be critically examined to ensure that they are consistent with contemporary educational aims and do not perpetuate gender disparities. Rahman (2018) emphasizes the need of evaluating traditional behaviors via a gender lens in order to uncover and remove latent prejudices that prevent women's empowerment in society.

To counteract these biases, measures must be developed that maintain the traditional significance of local wisdom while encouraging gender-inclusive behaviors. One strategy is to incorporate gender analysis into the interpretation of local knowledge, allowing for the discovery of activities that may unintentionally maintain gender inequality. Integrating gender-responsive teaching approaches into teacher education programs, for example, can assist educators in recognizing and addressing gender biases in cultural traditions. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Education's Gender Equality and Justice curriculum attempts to raise gender awareness while also respecting cultural variety.

This curriculum empowers teachers to challenge ingrained gender stereotypes while advocating inclusive ideas that are consistent with both local wisdom and global gender equality requirements. Susanto and Sari (2019) claim that by promoting the reinterpretation of indigenous wisdom in ways that

benefit women in education, these initiatives have effectively increased gender equality.

Globally, comparable initiatives have been made to reinterpret traditional behaviors in order to achieve gender equality. In Kenya, the Reinterpreting Cultural Practices initiative works with local communities to reform traditional norms that limit women's rights, such as inheritance and education. This project encourages communication between women's organizations and community leaders in order to modify local customs to conform to modern gender equality norms. As a result, gender-sensitive policies have been introduced in many rural regions, allowing indigenous knowledge to coexist with gender equality ideals. Similarly, in Canada, indigenous cultural revitalization programs guarantee that traditional traditions are modernized to empower women while also protecting cultural history.

Existing literature shows that locally-based approaches are often more effective in creating social change than top-down policies, especially in terms of gender equality and education (Cornwall, 2015). In this context, the findings of this research strengthen the argument that local knowledge can be an adaptive tool for social transformation. The Batak Toba, Karo, and Mandailing communities, for example, have demonstrated how traditional values can be integrated with modern principles to improve access to education for women without abandoning their cultural identity. This phenomenon not only reflects local dynamics but also provides evidence that local wisdom-based approaches can be effective solutions in the context of urban multiculturalism, as found in Kabeer's (2016) study on the implementation of local-based gender policies in various global communities.

Next, the third finding relates to the participatory action research (PAR) approach, involving various ethnic communities to understand how local wisdom from different ethnic groups in Medan City shapes views on access to education and gender equality. Based on this approach, the research findings show that although there are still variations in the practice of local wisdom by each ethnic group in the socio-cultural life of Medan City, the manifestation of gender equality in education is becoming stronger through the intercultural interactions occurring in Medan society. This is in line with the findings of Adhikari (2019), who compared gender equality in Indonesia and Thailand. These findings are also relevant to Reinicke's (2019) perspective, which emphasizes the importance of using a community-based approach to accelerate social change.

In this research, the active involvement of Medan's ethnic communities, who serve as

informants, is crucial for understanding their perspectives on adapting local values to be more inclusive of women's roles in education. The participatory approach adopted enables a deeper exploration of how various ethnic groups understand and practice gender equality within educational contexts. Unlike conventional methods that emphasize structural analysis, this approach actively involves the community, revealing that local wisdom not only shapes views on gender roles but also serves as a dynamic tool for responding to social and cultural changes.

Integrating local wisdom into multicultural education curricula holds significant potential for advancing gender equality and mitigating social conflicts (Suparno, 2019). Recognizing local wisdom as a key component of multicultural education enriches cultural identity and supports collective efforts toward social development goals, including gender equality (Sari, 2021). As Geertz (1973) notes, local knowledge provides essential moral and social guidance, making it highly relevant for mainstreaming gender equality within Medan's multicultural dynamics.

Thus, this research not only contributes to the literature on local wisdom and multiculturalism but also highlights the role of local wisdom in the collective efforts to achieve gender equality in Medan. This study also provides practical recommendations for policymakers to integrate local wisdom into the educational framework as a way to promote social harmony and gender equality in a multicultural society.

2 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research uses a qualitative method with a participatory action research (PAR) approach to explore the role of local wisdom in supporting gender equality, particularly in access to education in the multicultural community of Medan City. The PAR approach was chosen because it has the strength to involve active participation from ethnic communities, not only as research subjects but also as research subjects directly involved in the investigation process. In this context, PAR allows researchers to collaborate with community members from various ethnic groups—such as Batak Toba, Mandailing, Karo, Pakpak, Nias, Melayu, Minang, Aceh, Javanese, Sundanese, and Chinese—to understand how their local wisdom affects access to education for boys and girls (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014). The researchers do not only act as observers but also

collaborate with participants to understand and address the social issues faced by the community (Reason & Bradbury, 2015). This approach also helps create interactive dialogues that enrich research outcomes and open up space for desired social change, particularly in terms of gender mainstreaming. Through direct engagement, this approach allows researchers to explore social dynamics and local values that influence gender equality across various ethnic groups.

The qualitative approach allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and views of the community regarding gender roles and access to education for women. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), and participatory observations. Researchers are trying to explore how each ethnic group, such as Batak Toba, Mandailing, Karo, Pakpak, Nias, Melayu, Minang, Aceh, Jawa, Sunda, and Chinese, interprets and practices local wisdom related to access to education and gender equality (Wallerstein & Duran, 2017). Interviews were conducted with various stakeholders, including community leaders, parents, educators, and students, to obtain a holistic picture of the influence of local traditions and values in promoting gender equality. Next, the results of this data collection are presented to the community for joint reflection. At this stage, participants are given the opportunity to interpret and provide feedback on the initial findings of the research. Finally, the action stage includes recommendations for changes resulting from the collaboration between researchers and the community.

This research includes participants in the decision-making process at every stage of the study, from problem conceptualization to data analysis, which is related to the participatory aspects of PAR. This engaged engagement not only strengthens the validity of the results but also promotes community empowerment to actively participate in long-term social transformation (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014). In order to uncover important patterns that emerge from the data, data analysis is done gradually and thematically. This is especially relevant when it comes to the influence of local knowledge on perspectives on gender equality and educational opportunities among different ethnic groups (Saldaña, 2016).

The advantage of the PAR approach is its ability to create a reciprocal relationship between researchers and the community, where the local knowledge involved can be learned and simultaneously developed to support the agenda of

social change (Heron & Reason, 2016). This is very important in this research, considering the main objective is to promote gender equality and improve access to education for women in the city of Medan, based on local wisdom from various ethnic groups.

The participatory action research (PAR) strategy utilized in this study emphasizes the value of academic and community involvement in solving challenges such as gender equality in education. An important follow-up to the research findings is to organize workshops to facilitate community debates regarding local knowledge and its role in achieving gender equity. These workshops aim to validate findings, acquire varied opinions, and co-develop culturally relevant initiatives for Medan's ethnic populations. The workshops provide inclusivity and thorough representation by bringing in representatives from key groups like as Minang, Batak Toba, Malay and other ethnics. Case studies, such as the Minang matrilineal system's emphasis on women's education, or the Malay community's use of Islamic beliefs to push for gender equality, may be examined in discussions. Breakout sessions should focus on identifying impediments to gender-sensitive teaching and investigating culturally acceptable solutions, such as community-based scholarships or mentoring programs for girls.

The creation of community-driven action plans, such as localized educational modules that incorporate traditions and values to promote gender equity, is a critical outcome of these workshops. These modules could be piloted at schools in Medan's multicultural community to ensure their practical application. Additionally, forming a community advisory board can serve as a structure for ongoing communication and review, assuring long-term growth and effect. Reinicke (2019) emphasizes the relevance of community-based initiatives in promoting social innovation, whereas Adhikari (2019) emphasizes the value of local knowledge in achieving gender equality. Empowering local stakeholders to co-create and adapt solutions ensures that research findings are transformed into meaningful, long-term actions that represent the cultural settings of Medan's various populations.

2.1 The Essence of Local Wisdom in Socio-Cultural Dynamics

Local knowledge, often called local wisdom, is a system of knowledge, values, norms, practices, and traditions passed down from generation to generation and serves as a guide to life for a community. This knowledge reflects collective wisdom that develops

from human interaction with their social and natural environment. According to Mulyana (2015), local wisdom is a way of life that is passed down from generation to generation and serves as a guideline in decision-making, as well as in maintaining a balance between humans and the environment. In the sociocultural aspect, local knowledge plays an important role as a basis for decision-making and problem-solving, including in education, economics, or social relations (Hoppers, 2014).

This knowledge reflects collective wisdom that develops from human interaction with their social and natural environment. Local knowledge includes not only traditions and customs, but also ways of communicating, social norms, and belief systems that influence individual behavior. However, local wisdom is often expressed through rituals, customs, language, myths, and symbols passed down from generation to generation.

The anthropological perspective places local knowledge as a dynamic element, not a static one; this knowledge continues to develop and adapt according to social changes that occur in society. Local knowledge often functions as a bridge in creating social cohesion amidst diversity. This knowledge allows communities to maintain social cohesion despite the challenges of modernization and globalization. This is very relevant in the context of a multicultural society such as in Medan City, where various ethnicities interact and influence each other.

Local wisdom can act as a tool to promote understanding and tolerance between ethnicities, thus supporting equality and social justice (Sutrisno, 2016). In some communities, local wisdom is an important means of teaching values such as cooperation, tolerance, and respect for nature and fellow human beings (Pranoto, 2017). For example, in many ethnic communities, local knowledge related to gender roles, especially regarding access to education, serves as a mechanism to ensure community sustainability while providing opportunities for women to contribute significantly in various fields (Smith, 2016). Local wisdom also plays a role in shaping inclusive policies that address social inequalities, creating a foundation for more equitable community development. This is particularly evident in multicultural urban settings, where diverse local values interact and evolve to promote shared goals of harmony and progress.

2.2 Map of Ethnicity and Multicultural Life in Medan City

Medan City is a city with a high level of ethnic diversity, reflecting the cultural and historical

diversity that shapes the social identity of its people. As a center of urbanization and economy in North Sumatra, Medan City is home to various ethnic groups. As one of the largest cities in Indonesia and known as a melting pot of various ethnicities. Several prominent ethnic groups in Medan City are Malay, Batak Toba, Karo, Mandailing, Javanese, Minang, Acehese, and Chinese, showing how this diversity characterizes the social and cultural life of this city. In its phenomenon, the Batak and Malay ethnic groups are the two dominant ethnic groups that have long shaped the identity of this city. However, Medan City is also home to many other ethnicities, such as Karo, Mandailing, Pakpak, Javanese, Sundanese, Minang, Acehese, and Chinese. Each ethnic group brings cultural characteristics that play a role in creating complex, yet harmonious social interactions. Then, each ethnic group brings a unique cultural identity, including language, customs, and local knowledge that regulates their social life (Koentjaraningrat, 2015).

This diversity phenomenon creates a unique social dynamic, where each ethnic group brings its values, traditions, and cultural practices but lives socio-culturally side by side in an urban environment. According to Aritonang (2018), ethnic diversity in Medan City not only enriches the city's culture but also poses challenges in building unity and mutual understanding between these groups. The ethnic map in Medan reflects the social dynamics formed from the interaction of various ethnic groups, both from North Sumatra itself and from various regions in Indonesia.

This diversity is not only seen in customs, language, and religion, but is also reflected in economic, political, and educational interactions that enrich the lives of urban communities. There is one interesting thing that is often not widely understood about the etymological meaning of Batak in North Sumatra. Although the term Batak is often considered as one ethnic group, in reality, the term Batak includes various sub-ethnic groups, each of which has different cultural characteristics, languages, and traditions, but is still bound by the same cultural heritage in the social and historical context of North Sumatra. The Batak ethnic group consists of several sub-ethnic groups, such as the Toba Batak, Karo, Mandailing, Simalungun, Pakpak, and Angkola, each of which enriches the cultural diversity in this region. This ethnic group is a significant population in Medan. They are not only present in large numbers, but also play an important role in various sectors, such as politics, economy, and culture.

As previously stated, the Batak ethnic group has a strong patriarchal social system, especially in the Toba Batak community, where family hierarchy and customs are highly respected (Sibarani, 2019). On the

other hand, the Mandailing group, which is predominantly Muslim, shows cultural adaptation with other ethnic groups in Medan, including the Malays and Minangs, through religious and trade interactions (Lubis, 2017). The Mandailing ethnic group is a sub-group of the Batak ethnic group but has cultural characteristics that are different from the Toba Batak ethnic group.

The Toba Batak ethnic group is famous for the concept of *Dalihan Na Tolu*, which regulates social relations based on three basic principles: respect for parents, brotherhood with others, and love for the younger generation. The Mandailing ethnic group, like the Toba Batak ethnic group, also has the concept of *dalihan na tolu* as a very important system of politeness in social and cultural life in society. The Mandailing ethnic community in Medan City is quite dominant, in general, this group dominates the fields of trade and education. The fundamental difference between the Mandailing ethnic group and the Toba Batak ethnic group is that this ethnic group has a strong relationship with Islam, which influences their customs and social values. The tradition of cooperation and respect for education for both sexes is an important part of the Mandailing identity in Medan (Harahap, Z., 2015).

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Next, the Karo ethnic group is also part of the Batak tribe. However, this ethnic group has cultural and linguistic characteristics that are very different from other Batak tribes. The Karo ethnic community in Medan City is known for its tradition of *merga si lima* (five main clans in the Karo kinship system). Like the concept of *dalihan na tolu* in the Toba and Mandailing Batak ethnic groups, the tradition of *merga si lima* in the Karo ethnic group also functions as a means to regulate social relations based on clan or clan (Ginting, 2016). Karo culture emphasizes the importance of strong kinship and customs but is balanced with a more egalitarian social system compared to several other ethnic groups in North Sumatra. Although many Karo people in Medan are involved in the modern sector, traditional values are still highly respected, including in traditional ceremonies and daily life (Sinaga, 2018). In addition to the Karo ethnic community, the Pakpak ethnic group is also present in Medan City, although their numbers are smaller compared to the Karo and Mandailing ethnic groups. The Pakpak ethnic group comes from the Dairi Regency area.

Furthermore, the ethnic group that is the original population of Medan City is the Malay ethnic group, especially the Deli Malay. In addition to the Batak ethnic group, the Malay ethnic group is also important in Medan, especially because Medan used to be part of the Deli Sultanate which was ruled by Malay kings. This ethnic group is predominantly Muslim, so Islamic values influence their daily lifestyles, both in the family and in the wider community. Based on the results of the study, ethnic groups often contribute as mediators in inter-ethnic interactions in Medan City. This is understandable because their existence has an important position in the history and culture of the city. In line with this, it was also found that the Malay ethnic community in general tends to develop local wisdom related to the formation and maintenance of social relations and family values.

An interesting thing related to the existence of the Malay ethnic group in Medan City is the Malay language which is assumed to be the basis of Indonesian. This strengthens their role in creating social cohesion (Amir, 2019). According to statements from several informants, the daily language in Medan City, especially that used by young people, initially strongly reflected Malay, although later in its development there was the adoption of terms and even accents (language styles) influenced by the languages (language styles) of other ethnic groups in Medan City (Batak, Karo, Mandailing, Minang, Javanese and Chinese), so that there was a phenomenon of language creolization which created a unique Medan language.

Language creolization is a condition in which a new language is created that emerges due to intensive

contact (communication) between two or more different languages (Holm, 2000). This is inseparable from the influence of population mobility in Medan City which is very dynamic. As in urban areas, especially in Medan City, creolization will emerge in areas that have intense interaction activities from their communities consisting of different ethnicities. Each ethnic group has contributed to the formation of a unique social language, whether in vocabulary, tone speaking style, or even diverse expressions.

The ethnic group that also colors multiculturalism in Medan City is the Javanese ethnic group. This ethnic group is an ethnic group that migrated to Medan during the colonial era. As one of the largest ethnic groups that developed in Medan City, many of them are descendants of transmigrants from Java who settled in Sumatra during the Dutch era. Although it is known that in general the Javanese ethnic group, especially in Medan City, is famous for its tradition of cooperation, informants in this study also stated that even though urban life is increasingly complex, this tradition still runs well in the daily socio-cultural activities of the community. This is in line with what was stated by Supriyono (2016), cooperation has become a tradition that is well integrated into the social life of the community in Medan City in general.

Likewise, with the Sundanese ethnic community in Medan City, although in terms of quantity, it is not as large as other ethnic groups, the results of observations show that they still maintain some Sundanese cultural traditions in their daily lives. Based on the informant's statement, the same as the Javanese ethnic group, the Sundanese ethnic group also has a tradition of cooperation. Then, they still carry out this tradition well even though they live in the complex and multicultural society of Medan City. The informant also emphasized that because they still carry out the tradition of cooperation well, even though the number of Sundanese ethnic groups in Medan City is very small, they can mix well with other ethnic groups in Medan City with a sense of security and comfort.

The results of the study show that in its phenomenon, the Javanese ethnic group is an ethnic group that is able to mix well quickly with people from other ethnic groups that are developing in Medan City. So based on the map of population distribution in Medan City by region, it was found that the Javanese ethnic group is not concentrated dominantly in a certain area but is spread evenly across various urban areas of Medan City. The Javanese and Sundanese ethnic groups in Medan City are generally Muslim.

Next is the Minang or Minangkabau ethnic group, known for its Matrilineal kinship system, namely: a system of maternal lineage. This is a unique phenomenon in Medan City which tends to be

dominated by ethnic groups that have Patrilineal lineage. The results of the study show that the uniqueness of Matrilineal as a characteristic of the Minang ethnic group in everyday socio-cultural life in Medan City, in its development has a significant influence on the formation of a more egalitarian paradigm and attitude in the socio-cultural life of ethnic groups that are very patriarchal, for example the Batak ethnic group (Batak Toba, Mandailing, Karo and Pakpak). Although it is known that the Minang ethnic group, like the Javanese ethnic group, is known as an ethnic group that has good adaptation and adoption abilities, in this study the informant stated that although the Batak ethnic group is very patriarchal, it can understand and even slowly begin to adopt some of the values in the matrilineal system, especially in the context of gender equality.

Furthermore, the Minangkabau ethnic group is known as an ethnic group that is very active in the field of trade in Medan City. As a society that is also famous for its tradition of migrating, the Minang ethnic group is identical to the strategy of building businesses and networks in the diaspora, including in Medan City (Abdullah, 2020). The Minang ethnic group in Medan City is heavily involved in trade and cuisine, especially Padang restaurants which have become a characteristic throughout Indonesia. In addition, they are also known in the world of education and politics, with many influential Minang figures (Nasution, 2019).

In addition to the Minang ethnic group, the Acehese ethnic group originating from the province of Aceh which is located at the northern tip of Sumatra, is currently an ethnic group that has developed significantly in Medan City. In this study, informants stated that the existence of the Acehese ethnic group in Medan City is also inseparable from the historical background of the Deli Malay kingdom. The informant explained that, apart from geographical reasons, that Aceh and North Sumatra are in one archipelago and the adjacent areas, the existence of the Acehese ethnic group in Medan City is inseparable from the existence of kinship ties due to marriages between descendants of the Deli Malay kings and Acehese nobles in the past, and of course also because of trade routes.

Based on information from informants, there was a large-scale mobilization of ethnic Acehese to Medan City after the tsunami disaster (December 26, 2004). This is understandable because it is related to the existence of Medan City as the closest big city, so, logically, Medan City has more complete health, education, and even job facilities needed by the Acehese people affected by the disaster. Several relevant literature also discuss the same thing as conveyed by informants (Clarke, 2010; Rasyid, Fakhri & Faturrahman, 2007). Currently, the presence

of ethnic Acehese in Medan City has a significant influence on the development of multicultural life in urban Medan City. The Acehese ethnic group in Medan City is very thick with social and economic activities. Their reputation is seen as persistent traders, with many Acehese communities in Medan running businesses, especially in the food and property sectors.

The Chinese ethnic community in Medan City are descendants of immigrants from China who came to Indonesia centuries ago. Although they often experienced discrimination in the past, they have managed to maintain their cultural identity while adapting to multicultural life in Medan City. The entrepreneurial spirit that has an impact on the dominance and significant influence in the economic sector, especially trade and industry, has also contributed to the development of Medan City (Tan, 2017; Setiawan, 2019).

Based on the results of research observations, the Chinese ethnic group in Medan City has its uniqueness compared to the Chinese ethnic group in other big cities in Indonesia. The Chinese ethnic group in Medan City appears to be very strict in upholding its culture, the most visible phenomenon is in the use of Hokkien in their daily socio-cultural life. Based on informants' statements, this occurs because Hokkien is used as a means of connection between generations. It should be noted that the longevity of the Chinese ethnic group tends to be high so that in one family clan there will be several layers of descendants.

Furthermore, the informant also explained that in general, ethnic Chinese have good abilities in mastering various languages. The informant emphasized that this happened because of the reciprocal relationship with their entrepreneurial spirit which caused them to dominate the trade sector. The ability to switch languages (code-switching) is easier for them to train because when trading, language skills are very much needed. Likewise, with the ability to switch languages, trade activities are more open. In addition, Chinese traditions such as Chinese New Year and Cap Go Meh are celebrated lively and become part of the city's cultural diversity. Although the Chinese community often faced discrimination in the past, they were still able to maintain their cultural identity and adapt to the multicultural life of Medan.

Based on the map of ethnicity and multicultural life that has been presented, we can understand that local knowledge in the context of Medan City is not only applied within the scope of each ethnic community but is also integrated into the multicultural life in this city. In a multicultural society in urban areas, especially Medan City, interactions between ethnic groups give birth to adaptations of

local values which then become part of urban culture. This process is known as transculturalism, in which local values, including those related to education and gender roles, influence each other and create a more inclusive understanding.

This dynamic connection between local values and urban culture emphasizes the importance of educational techniques that include these cultural insights, ensuring that teacher training in Medan represents varied traditions while fostering gender equality and inclusivity. Designing an optimal teacher training curriculum for Medan's multicultural classrooms necessitates a nuanced approach that incorporates local knowledge to achieve gender equality as well as cultural inclusivity. Given the ethnic diversity of Medan, such a module should give educators the means to reflect and honor the values of different ethnic groups, including the Batak Toba, Minang, Malay, and Tionghoa, while promoting an inclusive, gender-sensitive classroom. This can be accomplished by incorporating local customs into instructional techniques, emphasizing gender equality through indigenous cultural viewpoints, and fostering polite, cooperative behavior across cultural boundaries. Understanding how indigenous wisdom, such as the Minang matrilineal system or Batak Toba's Daliha Na Tolu, may be used to overcome gender prejudices and promote equality in the classroom is a critical component of the training. Teachers, for example, can be educated to use these traditions as a starting point for talks about gender roles, responsibility, and social cooperation, giving pupils culturally relevant and gender-balanced courses.

A successful approach for incorporating local wisdom into teacher education is Australia's Indigenous Education Program, particularly in the Northern Territory, where the curriculum combines Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems. This curriculum trains instructors to understand and respect Indigenous kids' cultural values, languages, and customs, as well as to promote gender equality and inclusiveness. The Indigenous Education Program teaches educators how to employ storytelling, cultural practices, and land-based learning to engage student while also developing cultural identity and academic accomplishment. According to research, when teachers incorporate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into their instruction, students feel more connected to the subject and their cultural heritage, which increases engagement and lowers dropout rates (Buchanan et al., 2017). The program also includes components on gender-sensitive teaching, ensuring that the perspectives and experiences of both Indigenous women and men are acknowledged and respected in educational settings.

In Canada, the University of Saskatchewan's Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP) promotes the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices into teacher education. This initiative aims to empower Indigenous educators and provide them with the skills they need to bring local knowledge into their classrooms. The ATEP curriculum contains courses on recognizing and honoring traditional Indigenous methods of knowing, as well as techniques for promoting gender equality in Indigenous communities. According to research, instructors are more equipped to foster an inclusive and encouraging learning environment for Indigenous students when they are aware of the intersections of gender, culture, and education. This leads to improved educational results and gender equity (Cajete, 2018).

The teacher training module in Medan should stress cultural understanding as well as practical ways for overcoming gender-based obstacles in education. Teachers should be trained to detect and resolve latent gender biases in the classroom, construct gender-inclusive lesson plans, and design learning activities that encourage equal involvement from all students, regardless of gender. The module should also encourage the use of digital platforms to preserve and share local knowledge, providing educators with an easily available collection of culturally relevant materials. This would allow teachers to include a variety of local traditions and values into their instruction while also fostering gender equity.

Integrating local wisdom into the school curriculum is an essential strategy for enhancing social cohesion and understanding in multicultural communities. To achieve this, educational policymakers must design curricula that blend values and practices from various ethnic groups, ensuring that students from different cultural backgrounds see their heritage reflected in their education. One potential approach is the development of multidisciplinary modules that connect subjects such as history, social studies, and language to local knowledge. For instance, teaching about the Batak Toba community's ideals of collaboration or the role of women in Minang society can be tied to lessons on social responsibility, gender equality, and community building. By integrating local wisdom into core curricula, students not only learn about their own culture but also develop respect for the diverse groups around them. Wati and Budi (2017) argue that when curricula reflect local cultural values, students become more engaged and form stronger connections with their communities.

Moreover, incorporating local wisdom into the curriculum can help address social issues arising from cultural misunderstandings and biases. A multicultural curriculum that integrates unique

behaviors and traditions from various ethnic groups can reduce misconceptions and foster inclusivity.

This can be achieved by encouraging students to participate in discussions, projects, and activities that explore cultural diversity. For example, students might collaborate on projects that examine the traditions, gender roles, and social systems of Medan's various ethnic communities. Such activities not only inform students about the diverse cultural identities in their community but also cultivate empathy and understanding. Schools that have adopted a multicultural curriculum have seen increased student participation in community-building activities and shifts in attitudes toward diversity, as highlighted in Chandra's (2019) study.

Advocating for the inclusion of local knowledge in school curricula can have profound implications for policy and societal transformation. It promotes a shift toward an education system that values cultural diversity and prepares students to thrive in a globalized world. Advocacy efforts can target school boards, education ministries, and community leaders to emphasize the importance of integrating local knowledge into curricula as part of a broader intercultural education initiative. In countries such as Canada, advocacy for a multicultural curriculum has led to educational policies that highlight both indigenous and immigrant cultural perspectives.

Similarly, in South Africa, post-apartheid educational reforms focusing on reconciliation and social cohesion have prioritized the integration of indigenous knowledge systems into the national curriculum. These examples demonstrate how advocacy can result in systemic changes in education that preserve local wisdom while fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. Such efforts in Indonesia, particularly in cities like Medan with its ethnic diversity, hold great potential for creating a more inclusive and culturally aware education system.

2.3 Local Wisdom as a Catalyst for Gender Equality in Medan City

In the context of multiculturalism in Medan City, local wisdom from various ethnic groups plays an important role in shaping the understanding of gender equality. This local wisdom not only functions as traditional values that are maintained in the community. However, it also influences the adaptation of gender roles during dynamic inter-ethnic interactions. Various ethnic groups in Medan City, such as Batak Toba, Malay, Mandailing, and Karo, have diverse views regarding the roles of men and women. However, through the process of transculturalism and urban life, there is an integration

of values that support gender equality in education and daily social life (Andersen, 2015; Sihombing & Hutapea, 2017).

The significance of developing educational frameworks that uphold regional customs while advancing gender equality is underscored by the growing integration of cultural values in Medan's multicultural culture. It is crucial that educational systems take into account this changing perception of gender roles since these ideals continue to influence Medan's social structure. Assuring that gender equality is not simply a worldwide aim but also one that is culturally relevant for Medan's different communities, educators can close the gap between traditional practices and contemporary educational goals by integrating local wisdom into the curriculum. A more equal and inclusive learning environment that supports both regional values and global development objectives will result from this.

To match local wisdom with SDGs 4 (Quality Education) and 5 (Gender Equality) in Medan, a strategic strategy that incorporates cultural values into the educational framework while maintaining gender inclusion is required. One useful technique is to incorporate local rituals and practices into the curriculum, particularly those that encourage gender equality, such as the Minang matrilineal system or Batak Toba's Daliha Na Tolu. Integrating these values allows educators to produce more culturally relevant teachings that resonate with students from varied ethnic backgrounds, resulting in increased engagement. For example, including gender-sensitive education into local customs may serve to challenge patriarchal institutions in some communities and promote a more inclusive understanding of gender roles.

This strategy can be similar to Indonesia's Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter (Character Education Strengthening Program), which integrates traditional knowledge into lessons to encourage gender equality and societal ideals (Sutrisno, 2018). In order to ensure alignment with both national and international educational goals, this program encourages teachers to incorporate local customs with educational aims.

One example is Morocco's "Education for All" program, which successfully incorporates gender equality and indigenous knowledge into its educational reforms. The goal of this project is to combat gender inequality while utilizing Morocco's rich cultural traditions to make education more applicable to local people. Indigenous knowledge, such as local agricultural practices, weaving techniques, and regional storytelling, will be included into the curriculum to give a more culturally inclusive education. By encouraging girls to pursue careers in traditionally male-dominated professions like community leadership and agriculture, it also

advances gender equality. Culturally relevant education is crucial for attaining both SDG 4 and SDG 5, as demonstrated by a 2019 study by Ait Younes that found that incorporating local wisdom into education has empowered women, improved school retention rates among girls, and decreased gender-based educational gaps.

In South Africa, the National Department of Education's Life Orientation curriculum utilizes indigenous knowledge systems to promote gender equality. The program teaches students about the values, traditions, and gender roles of many South African ethnic groups, including Zulu, Xhosa, and Sotho. It promotes gender-sensitive talks based on indigenous cultural practices, with a focus on mutual respect and gender roles that promote equality. This curriculum emphasizes traditional community structures in which women are valued for their roles in decision-making and leadership. According to Le Roux (2018), this method has helped to transform conceptions of gender in schools and enhance educational outcomes for girls in rural and underserved communities. South Africa's approach, which incorporates indigenous beliefs, fights gender biases and empowers students, both of which are in line with global education ideals.

Finally, "Cultural Schools" in Finland, which attempt to conserve traditional Sámi culture, provide another example. The Sámi, an indigenous population in Northern Europe, have traditionally valued traditional knowledge, particularly in terms of gender roles in their society. Finnish cultural schools have incorporated Sámi customs into their curriculum to guarantee that Sámi children not only learn in their native tongue, but also appreciate gender equality in their cultural setting. The curriculum covers Sámi history, traditions, and gender roles, with a focus on how women have traditionally participated in decision-making and community leadership. Kärkkäinen (2020) found that the Sámi approach to education, which incorporates gender equality while preserving their culture, has dramatically improved educational achievements for Sámi females, encouraging cultural pride as well as equal chances.

The results of interviews with several community leaders and educators in Medan show that local wisdom has a significant role in encouraging gender equality, especially in access to education. All informants representing ethnic groups in Medan City believe that interactions in multicultural socio-cultural life in urban areas such as Medan City, influence each ethnic group in developing a local wisdom paradigm in terms of education in a more positive direction, especially for gender equality. The development of this paradigm is driven by modernization and increasingly strong cross-cultural interactions in big cities like Medan. All these ethnic

groups show that local wisdom can adapt to the demands of the times, where gender equality in access to education is part of the values that are valued. Several relevant studies also show that cultural interactions in Medan City have enabled the exchange of progressive values, including in terms of women's education. Local wisdom that is oriented towards collective progress has encouraged all ethnic groups to recognize the importance of education for women as a key element for community welfare.

Local wisdom makes an important contribution to gender equality, especially by challenging old norms and empowering women. The Minang tradition, with its matrilineal system, demonstrates how cultural practices can promote gender equity. Women play important roles in decision-making and inheritance in this system, contributing to a culture that values women's education and civic engagement. Integrating these ideals into educational frameworks can help to break down patriarchal conventions and promote gender-inclusive practices in schools. Sutrisno (2017) argues that local wisdom based on gender equality provides a solid framework for resolving socioeconomic inequities, particularly in education. Similarly, Islamic teachings in Medan's Malay population highlight the value of education for both genders as a tool for societal advancement. Endorsements from Islamic authorities reinforce women's education as a community responsibility, showcasing how Islamic values can effectively challenge gender biases (Sulaiman, 2018b).

Other ethnic groups in Medan, such as the Batak Toba and Karo, help to advance gender equality by changing social behaviors. While the Batak Toba have traditionally followed patriarchal customs, there is a rising realization of the economic and social benefits of educating girls, fueled by cross-ethnic interactions with tribes such as the Minang and Javanese. These exchanges promote mutual learning while reducing patriarchal views and incorporating progressive behaviors. Harahap (2015) observes that such transitions in indigenous knowledge provide unique chances to empower women in education and leadership within households and society. These instances demonstrate the transforming power of local wisdom in promoting gender equality throughout Medan's different communities.

As expressed by several informants representing the Malay ethnic group: Initially, the Malay community, in general, had certain limitations regarding education for women, but over time, influenced by interactions with other ethnic groups that were more open to women's education from the start, such as the Minang, Javanese and Chinese ethnic groups, this view began to change. We, the Malay ethnic group, began to see that higher education for women could bring great benefits, not

only for individuals but also for our community as a whole. The informants also revealed that this change had occurred significantly in the last few decades. They also added that the maintenance of values such as cooperation and mutual respect between ethnic groups in Medan City to date has facilitated the implementation of the process of adopting more inclusive educational practices.

In the Malay ethnic group in Medan, local wisdom that emphasizes the importance of religious values, especially Islam, has a major impact on access to education for women. For a long time, religious education in Islamic boarding schools or madrasahs for girls has been widely accepted in the Malay community. The role of women in Islamic education has grown with the support of religious figures who encourage equality in education. Malay women's access to education is increasingly expanded, especially because of the understanding that good education for women will contribute to the welfare of the family and society. This is in line with research by Zainuddin (2018), that the influence of local wisdom of the Malay ethnic group has also begun to have an impact on other ethnic groups that live side by side with them in Medan City, where a religion-based approach to advancing women's education has been adopted by other groups.

This is different from what was expressed by several informants representing the Batak Toba ethnic group. They stated that currently, women have gained a more equal position in education and social life compared to the past. Although patriarchal culture is still strong, women's access to education and work is increasingly recognized as important for the progress of the family and society as a whole. This is also supported by recent research showing that local values that emphasize the importance of education as a means of social mobility have helped women in the Batak Toba ethnic group to be more involved in professional sectors (Siregar, 2020).

The informant, who is an academic from the Batak Toba ethnic group, stated that interactions with other ethnic groups such as the Minang and Javanese who have a culture of higher education for women have influenced perceptions in their community. He stated: In the Batak Toba ethnic group, women's education is now more prioritized. This is especially after we saw positive results from the Minang community, where women are encouraged to get higher education. This is also what has caused many Batak families to now realize the importance of providing equal opportunities for their daughters to learn and develop, he explained. The academic emphasized that this cross-cultural influence is very important in driving progressive social change in Medan.

Meanwhile, another informant who is a community leader of the Batak Toba ethnic group stated that: In the past, in the Batak Toba ethnic group, access to education was enjoyed more by men, but values such as *marbinda* (community cooperation) and teachings about respecting the role of women have changed the views of many families so that they are more supportive of education for girls. This confirms that although patriarchal culture still has a significant influence on the Batak Toba ethnic group, there are positive changes that continue to take place. Women's access to education and the professional sector is increasingly recognized and encouraged, making education an effective instrument of social mobility.

Another example can be seen in the practice of the Mandailing ethnic group which is still included in the Batak ethnic group, besides the Toba Batak. Several community leaders from the Mandailing ethnic group in Medan City, argue that although traditional Mandailing culture still has patriarchal elements, values in terms of education for women have existed for a long time. This is assumed because of the geographical proximity of this ethnic group to Minangkabau. However, some informants state that: In the past, education for women was limited to basic skills, but now many Mandailing families want their daughters to have the same opportunities in education as boys. This is the result of our interactions with other ethnic groups who have previously paved the way for women's education, such as Minang and Java.

He added that this increasing awareness is driven by the need for quality human resources and the role of women in the economic and social sectors. Cross-cultural influences in life in Medan City, with its diverse ethnic communities, are key factors driving this change. We see that highly educated women can contribute significantly to their families and communities, and this has become a value that is starting to be accepted as part of our local wisdom, he said.

Another informant, a traditional leader from the Mandailing ethnic community in Medan City, said that changes in views on women's education have been increasingly felt in recent years. Mandailing tradition prioritizes family values and education, but in the past women's education was not always a priority. However, when we interacted with various ethnic communities such as Chinese, Minang, Acehnese, and Javanese who have strong views on women's education, the Mandailing community began to see the importance of providing equal opportunities for women to get an education, he explained. He added that many families in Mandailing are now more open to supporting their daughters to continue their education to a higher level.

Based on the interview results, it can be seen that multicultural interactions in Medan play an important role in changing the traditional paradigm of the role of women in education among the Mandailing ethnic group. This follows a study by Hidayat and Syafitri (2021) which emphasized that the city of Medan as a multicultural urban center encourages the adaptation of new values, including increasing women's access to education, as an effort to follow more inclusive social developments.

The Minang ethnic community in Medan, which traditionally adheres to a matrilineal system, provides an interesting example in terms of gender equality. The Minang ethnic group, with a legacy of local wisdom such as the *adat basandi syarak*, and *syarak basandi kitabullah*, has a system that supports women as heirs to the lineage and managers of heirloom property. This local wisdom also supports women's access to education, because women are considered the main pillars in the family who must be educated to maintain and manage family assets. The phenomenon in Medan City, the Minangkabau ethnic group who live in a multicultural community still maintains these values. Minangkabau women are traditionally encouraged to pursue higher education, as they are seen as the continuers of family values and guardians of social stability.

This experience was reflected in an interview with a Minang educator in Medan, who emphasized that women in their community are often encouraged to pursue higher education and play an active role in society, which strengthens women's position in social and cultural aspects. She explained that their ethnicity has long had a matrilineal tradition that supports women's roles, including in education. We often share experiences and practices with other ethnic communities, and I see that in recent years, there has been a significant change in the Malay and Batak ethnic groups. They have begun to imitate our practices in encouraging education for women. This shows that local wisdom that prioritizes women's education can spread through harmonious interactions between ethnic groups, she said.

Based on statements from several informants from the Minangkabau ethnic community in Medan, it can be concluded that local wisdom that supports women in education and management of heirloom property plays an important role in elevating women's position in society. The matrilineal tradition that recognizes women as heirs to the lineage and managers of family assets, as well as norms that prioritize women's education, are increasingly recognized and accepted among the Minang community in Medan. Along with social changes, these values not only persist in the Minang community but also inspire other communities such as the Batak and Malay to introduce more educational

opportunities for women. This shows that local wisdom that prioritizes women's education not only strengthens the position of women in their communities but also has a positive impact on social transformation at the multicultural city level of Medan. Recent research also confirms that an education system that supports gender equality, as seen in the Minang ethnic group, plays an important role in advancing the welfare of society as a whole (Rahman, 2021; Putra & Hadi, 2023). Cross-cultural interactions that occur in Medan have accelerated the process of adopting local wisdom that promotes gender equality, creating a more inclusive and harmonious community.

Next, the Javanese ethnic community in Medan City, which is influenced by the culture brought from Java that values harmony and the role of women in the family, has also experienced important transformations related to women's education. As an ethnic group with a fairly large population in Medan City, the Javanese ethnic group has values that emphasize harmony and family responsibility, and rely on cooperation and religious values. The Javanese ethnic group in Medan City also has local wisdom that supports education for women. The role of Javanese women in supporting the education of children and communities has become part of the social structure. In addition, in recent decades, the values of inclusive education have begun to be more recognized, with more Javanese women receiving formal education at a higher level. As expressed in interviews with mothers from the Javanese ethnic community, who emphasized that understanding the importance of women's roles in society has been enhanced through formal and informal education. This is in line with the findings of Hidayati's research (2018), which noted that the social practice of local wisdom in the form of collective support for education encourages gender equality in access to education (Hidayati, 2018).

Furthermore, a community leader from the Javanese ethnic community in Medan explained that Javanese tradition historically values education, but priority is often given more to men. He said: In Javanese culture, women's roles tend to be prioritized at home and in family roles. However, interactions with the Chinese and Minang ethnic groups, who prioritize women's education, brought about significant changes in our views. We see that education for women can have a positive impact, not only for individuals but also for the family as a whole, he explained. He added that more and more Javanese families in Medan are now encouraging their daughters to continue their higher education and actively participate in the professional world. This is in line with research by Susilo (2021), Javanese society in Medan is increasingly encouraging

women's education as an effort to improve the social and economic status of the family. These values are not only limited to the Javanese community but are also adopted by other ethnic groups that interact with them in Medan.

Next, regarding the Karo ethnic group in Medan City, the values and local wisdom of this ethnic group, especially in the context of Medan City in terms of education for women, reflect a blend of tradition and social development. Traditionally, the Karo ethnic group is known for its more egalitarian values compared to the values of other ethnic groups in the Batak group (Batak Toba, Mandailing, and Pakpak). The Karo ethnic group also emphasizes the importance of education for all family members, both men and women. However, despite the influence of the patriarchal system in many aspects of life, there is a strong emphasis on women's education as part of the progress of the family and society. This is in line with research by Sihombing & Purba (2021) which found that there is a tendency among Karo families living in Medan to provide higher education opportunities for women, which is influenced by multicultural cultural practices in the city.

An informant who is a senior teacher from the Karo ethnic community revealed that Karo culture has always valued education, but there has been a significant shift in views on women and education. Initially, men tended to get priority in education. However, interactions with groups such as Javanese, Chinese, and Minang made the Karo community more aware of the benefits of equal education for women. Existing local wisdom began to transform, accommodating new, more progressive values, he said. He also noted that many Karo women are now active in various professional fields thanks to more open access to education.

Furthermore, The Pakpak ethnic group from North Sumatra traditionally upholds a patriarchal structure, with men typically controlling land and family decisions. However, in Medan's multicultural environment, social interactions and the influence of Christianity have gradually shifted these dynamics. According to Pakpak community informants, exposure to other ethnic groups that prioritize education has encouraged the Pakpak community to reconsider women's roles in education. One community leader noted that observing the Minang and Chinese communities' emphasis on women's education led to a greater appreciation for supporting Pakpak women's academic advancement as a means of community development. Religious institutions have played a significant role in expanding educational access for Pakpak women, particularly through church-based schools. Sitanggang (2021) highlights that such schools are instrumental in promoting educational equality among Pakpak

women, with education viewed as a collective asset for community progress.

Similarly, the Nias ethnic group, originating from the Nias Islands, has seen a shift in gender roles due to modernization and the influence of Christianity. Traditionally, Nias women's roles were primarily domestic, but interactions with other groups in Medan have sparked a reevaluation of women's education. Research by Telaumbanua (2018) suggests that educational advancement for Nias women is increasingly regarded as vital for family resilience and social mobility in the face of economic challenges. Informants from the Nias community observe that in the past two decades, cross-ethnic interactions have inspired families to support higher education for daughters, taking cues from Minang and Malay communities that prioritize women's education. A cultural figure from the Nias group emphasized that seeing examples of successful women from other communities has helped motivate Nias families to invest more in daughters' education. These examples from the Pakpak and Nias communities illustrate how local wisdom and religious values can intersect with multicultural influences to foster gender equality in education. The transformation of traditional views within these communities demonstrates the role of local wisdom in advancing women's education in a diverse urban setting like Medan.

The Acehese ethnic community in Medan City has developed local wisdom rooted in Islamic values that promote education as a right and obligation for men and women. A study by Sulaiman (2018a) shows that Acehese women in Medan have relatively good access to education compared to those in rural Aceh. Islam is a strong foundation in promoting women's education as part of community service and progress. In addition, cross-cultural interactions in Medan have broadened the views of the Acehese people on the importance of women's education to strengthen the social and economic position of the community.

Several informants from the Acehese ethnic community in Medan agree that currently, education for women is starting to get more attention among the Acehese people. An informant who is a female academic said that: Traditionally, women in Aceh have an important role in the family and society, but higher education for women has not always been a priority. However, along with increasingly intense interactions with the Minang and Malay communities who have long prioritized women's education, the Acehese people have begun to see education as an important tool for empowerment, she said. She added that cross-cultural influences in the city of Medan have driven changes in views and opened up greater opportunities for Acehese women to pursue higher education.

Education for women in Acehnese society, although not yet fully equal to men in some traditional aspects, has made significant progress. According to Sulaiman (2018b), Acehnese women in Medan have better access to education compared to women in rural Aceh, indicating a positive influence of a more multicultural urban life. The Acehnese ethnic group in Medan, which traditionally prioritizes the role of women in the family and society, is now increasingly opening up opportunities for women to pursue higher education. This is mainly influenced by interactions with other ethnic groups, such as the Minang and Malay, who have long prioritized women's education as part of social empowerment.

In addition, interviews with several informants from the Acehnese ethnic group in Medan revealed that cross-cultural interactions in the city have further broadened the Acehnese community's view of the importance of education for women. A female academic from the Acehnese ethnic group stated that although Acehnese women traditionally have an important role in the family, higher education for women is now more valued and encouraged by society. This reflects the social changes that have occurred as the Acehnese community has become more open to the educational values offered by other ethnic communities in Medan.

The role of the Chinese community in shaping Medan's multicultural identity is notable. As one of the city's major ethnic groups, the Chinese community has made substantial contributions to Medan's social, economic, and cultural landscapes, fostering a collective urban identity through enduring inter-ethnic relationships. While retaining their traditions, language, and cultural values, the Chinese community has also adapted to local norms, enriching the city's diverse social fabric, especially through trade, education, and the arts.

The local wisdom of the Chinese ethnic group aligns closely with gender equality, particularly in the realm of education. Education is highly valued in the Chinese community, with both boys and girls encouraged to pursue academic achievement. This tradition, rooted in the belief that education is crucial for personal and familial advancement, has led to the establishment of schools by the Chinese community that promote equal access to quality education for all children.

Informants in Medan indicate that inter-ethnic interactions support educational equality for women. A local education activist from the Chinese community noted that although the Chinese have long valued education for women, other groups in Medan, such as the Javanese and Minang, also display a strong commitment to women's education, fostering mutual respect and learning. According to Tan (2020), this commitment to education among ethnic

Chinese is often guided by Confucian values and is increasingly supported by modernization, which empowers Chinese women to engage in academic and professional fields. Lim and Tan (2019) similarly highlight the role of values such as *guanxi* (social relationships) and *xiao* (filial piety) in promoting education for all children regardless of gender. Additionally, Lee and Tan (2019) emphasize that family expectations of all children's success have historically supported educational access for Chinese women, promoting their contributions to family and community stability. In Medan, this has resulted in a consistent community emphasis on education as a pathway for empowerment and social mobility for women.

Based on the explanation above, overall, ethnic diversity in Medan City has created a rich multicultural ecosystem, where local wisdom from each ethnic group serves as a foundation for building shared understanding and strengthening gender equality. Each ethnic group, from the Toba Batak, Malay, Mandailing, Karo, Aceh, to the Chinese, brings unique values that actively adapt to urban life. These values not only maintain traditions but also develop to meet changing social and economic needs.

Through cultural interactions and adopted values, local wisdom in Medan has created an environment that supports gender equality. This process of transculturalism not only serves to address the challenges of gender mainstreaming but also builds broader social justice in a multicultural society (Santosa, 2021). As a result, local wisdom becomes an important element in creating awareness of the need for gender equality and the active role of women in education and social life.

Given Medan's social and cultural complexity, a successful plan for assessing the effects of incorporating local wisdom into education and gender equality requires a robust and active approach. A key component of this strategy would be the formation of a multi-stakeholder monitoring committee consisting not only of academics and policymakers, but also community leaders and cultural practitioners. This committee would oversee the integration process and evaluate how local wisdom is being applied in school curricula. Regular surveys, focus group discussions, and community feedback sessions would provide valuable qualitative data on students', parents', and teachers' assessments of the integration's effectiveness in promoting gender equality and cultural understanding. According to Heron and Reason (2015), participatory evaluation methods such as these help ensure that all stakeholders' perspectives are heard and the assessment process remains transparent and inclusive.

In addition to qualitative feedback, quantitative data collection tools should be implemented to track

measurable outcomes, such as student engagement, academic performance, and gender equality indicators. For example, monitoring enrollment rates, academic proficiency, and extracurricular participation rates for both boys and girls before and after the integration of local wisdom into the curriculum can offer concrete evidence of the program's effectiveness. Surveys assessing students' views on gender roles and ethnic diversity can also help track shifts in perceptions over time. Longitudinal studies that examine these metrics over several years would be valuable in understanding the long-term impact of incorporating local wisdom on educational and gender outcomes. Bamberger, Rugh, and Mabry (2017) found that combining both qualitative and quantitative data is essential for conducting comprehensive evaluations of educational innovations.

Furthermore, the monitoring and assessment process for integrating local knowledge should be linked to teacher training and professional development. Teachers must be equipped with the tools to reflect on and assess the impact of local wisdom integration in their classrooms, particularly in terms of gender dynamics and student participation. Creating an online platform where teachers can share their experiences, challenges, and best practices would foster collaboration and ongoing support. The platform could also feature tools for tracking classroom activities that incorporate local knowledge and gender-sensitive pedagogies. This platform would serve both as a monitoring tool and as a resource for professional development. Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon (2014) found that peer collaboration and continuous teacher reflection are critical for successful educational reforms, especially when gender-sensitive and culturally responsive approaches are employed.

One successful monitoring approach in Indonesia is the implementation of the Program Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter (Character Education Strengthening Program), which integrates cultural values and promotes inclusivity in schools. This program features a multi-tiered monitoring and evaluation system that includes regular Ministry of Education assessments, school-level self-evaluations, and community feedback. It utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data, such as student surveys on cultural diversity and gender equality, as well as academic performance indicators. Similarly, New Zealand's Te Kotahitanga program enhances Māori students' engagement and achievement through a comprehensive monitoring mechanism involving educators, students, and whānau (family). Classroom observations, student surveys, and achievement data are used to evaluate the integration and impact of culturally responsive teaching approaches on student

outcomes. Smith, Hamer, and Te Rito (2016) found that both programs were effective in improving student engagement and academic performance by ensuring continuous feedback from all stakeholders and adjusting strategies based on that feedback.

Local wisdom has become a catalyst that encourages more equal access to education for women in Medan. For example, the Chinese tradition that values education regardless of gender, as well as Islamic values in the Malay and Acehnese communities that support education for both men and women, show that local values can function as a bridge in building a more inclusive society. Ultimately, cross-cultural interactions in Medan have facilitated the exchange of progressive values, allowing all ethnic groups to adapt to the demands of the times, and creating a harmonious and just society. Through transculturalism, Medan is an example of how local wisdom can play a significant role in promoting gender equality and social cohesion.

3 CONCLUSIONS

The ethnic diversity in Medan City creates a unique socio-cultural dynamic, where local wisdom from various ethnic groups plays an important role in promoting gender equality, especially in education. Each ethnic group, such as Batak Toba, Mandailing, Malay, Acehnese, Minang, Karo, and Chinese, brings distinctive local values that influence the paradigm of women's education in urban environments. These values, which have developed through the process of transculturalism, demonstrate flexibility in responding to the challenges of modernity and changing social demands.

Through cross-cultural interactions in Medan, local values from various ethnicities are transformed, creating a more inclusive environment for women to access education and play an active role in social life. The strong educational tradition of the Chinese community, the Minang matrilineal system, and Islamic values in the Malay and Acehnese communities, all contribute to eroding traditional gender boundaries. This process not only strengthens the position of women in their respective communities but also enriches the multicultural ecosystem of Medan as a whole.

In Medan, a city renowned for its cultural diversity, fostering collaboration among ethnic communities is essential to enhance both education and gender equality. One effective approach is forming inter-ethnic educational partnerships, where community leaders and educators from various groups, such as Batak Toba, Minang, Malay, and

Tionghoa, work together to share best practices in gender-sensitive education. These partnerships can create joint programs that blend local traditions with contemporary gender equality initiatives, enabling local wisdom to coexist with modern educational techniques. A study by Putra and Hadi (2023) found that such community-driven partnerships improve educational access and gender equality by creating an inclusive atmosphere. Additionally, establishing forums for dialogue and knowledge exchange among ethnic communities can help identify shared values and goals for promoting gender equality. For instance, the Minang matrilineal system, which empowers women in family decisions, could serve as a model for fostering gender-inclusive educational practices. Similarly, Batak Toba's *Dalihan Na Tolu*, with its emphasis on mutual respect and collective responsibility, could be applied to develop a collaborative, gender-sensitive educational approach.

Similar strategies have been successful globally, such as New Zealand's *Te Kotahitanga* program, which integrates Māori cultural traditions into the school curriculum, leading to better gender equality and academic outcomes for Māori students. By acknowledging and incorporating students' cultural identities, this initiative improved scholastic performance (Smith et al., 2016). This model could be adapted in Medan by incorporating local cultural values into the curriculum, creating a more inclusive educational environment that fosters gender parity across all ethnic groups. The success of these initiatives relies on long-term monitoring and evaluation. A local advisory council, consisting of community leaders, educators, and gender advocates, could oversee the implementation of these programs in Medan. Regular community assessments and feedback sessions would identify challenges and allow for adjustments to ensure lasting success. According to Kabeer (2016), such programs must be flexible and responsive to local feedback to remain effective. By continually assessing and adapting gender equality programs, Medan can create an inclusive educational environment that reflects its diverse cultural landscape.

The city of Medan with its social and cultural complexity shows that local wisdom, when integrated with modern values, can be a catalyst for significant social change. The ethnic diversity of Medan City creates a dynamic socio-cultural environment where local wisdom from different ethnic groups influences gender norms and educational practices. To fully harness this diversity, educators should use digital platforms to document, share, and promote local wisdom. These platforms can bridge the gap between traditional knowledge and modern educational needs by preserving cultural values while adapting to contemporary contexts. For example, digital tools

could house multimedia content, such as oral histories, educational resources, and interactive modules that highlight the distinct cultural characteristics of Medan's ethnic groups, including the Minang, Batak Toba, Malay, and others. A digital platform tailored to Medan's multicultural context could enable educators to integrate ethnic-specific values into their teaching materials, enriching students' understanding of diversity and promoting inclusivity in schools. According to the Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (n.d.), platforms like *Rumah Belajar*, which provide free access to educational resources, have demonstrated the value of integrating local knowledge to enhance learning experiences.

A global example of how digital platforms can effectively disseminate local wisdom is the Digital Green platform in India, which started as a tool to share agricultural practices and has since expanded to education and community development. Kumar and Correa (2020) highlight how Digital Green's model allows rural communities to create and share instructional videos, demonstrating the potential of digital tools in preserving and promoting local knowledge. Similarly, the Smithsonian Learning Lab offers a model for organizing diverse cultural content for educational purposes (Smithsonian Institution, n.d.). Both platforms show that digital technology can effectively preserve local traditions while making them accessible for educational use. For Medan, leveraging these global best practices could lead to a tailored digital platform that encourages collaboration across ethnic groups, supports gender equality, and fosters cultural awareness in schools.

The development of such a platform for Medan could include features like an interactive map for exploring ethnic-specific wisdom, video storytelling by cultural practitioners, and lesson materials aligned with Indonesia's national curriculum. This initiative would require collaboration among local governments, cultural institutions, and educational stakeholders to ensure the platform's sustainability and relevance. Medan's rich ethnic diversity can become an educational asset by documenting and disseminating local wisdom through technology, promoting cultural awareness and gender equality in schools. As Reinicke (2019) suggests, community-driven approaches to social innovation are key to ensuring the long-term impact of educational initiatives, as they empower local communities to engage with and shape the educational content being used in their schools.

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