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Finding the Meaning of Multiculturalism in Tari *Bonet*: A Christian Religious Education Perspective

Esti Regina Boiliu^{1*}, Dirk Roy Kolibu²

Christian University of Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Esti Regina Boiliu estireginaboiliu02@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Tari *Bonet*, as a cultural heritage of the Dawan ethnic group in East Nusa Tenggara, holds values of unity and kinship that are relevant in building a multicultural society. However, modernization and globalization have shifted the attention of the younger generation from local culture to popular culture, threatening the existence of the values embedded in Tari *Bonet*. This study aims to explore the meaning of multiculturalism in Tari *Bonet* from the perspective of Christian Religious Education, using a qualitative approach through ethnographic methods. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, church leaders, and educators, as well as observations of the performance of Tari *Bonet* in various social contexts. The research findings indicate that Tari *Bonet* is not only a symbol of togetherness but also a learning tool for instilling Christian values such as love, tolerance, and respect for diversity. The discussion highlights the role of Christian Religious Education in integrating local cultural values with multicultural principles, while also contributing to cultural preservation efforts. The conclusion of this research emphasizes the importance of synergy between education, the church, and society in preserving Tari *Bonet* as a medium for shaping the character of the younger generation to appreciate cultural diversity within the framework of Christian faith. This study offers new insights into how local culture can serve as a bridge toward multicultural harmony.

INTRODUCTION

Local culture is an invaluable heritage that reflects the identity of a community. In the context of the Dawan ethnic group in East Nusa Tenggara, the *Bonet* Dance represents a cultural art form rich in values of togetherness, unity, and reverence for ancestors. This dance, performed in a circle with lyrical chants in the Dawan language, embodies the spirit of collectivity that is the core of community life. However, along with the currents of globalization and modernization, cultural heritages like the *Bonet* Dance face serious challenges to their continuity. Frederikus Suni (2023) revealed in his writing that young generations tend to adopt popular cultures offered by global media, such as K-Pop and other modern cultural trends, which often divert their attention from local cultural roots.

The lack of literacy and documentation about the *Bonet* Dance further aggravates this situation. Dawan culture rarely becomes a focus in scientific publications, digital media, or formal education curricula, making it less recognized by younger generations. Efforts to preserve the *Bonet* Dance are often trapped in the formality of cultural events, which lack active community involvement, particularly from Millennials and Generation Z. Consequently, this dance is increasingly losing its relevance as a medium for imparting life values in a multicultural society.

From a multicultural perspective, the *Bonet* Dance holds great potential to serve as an effective medium for

teaching the values of diversity and unity. The values embedded in the *Bonet* Dance, such as mutual respect, cooperation, and love, align with the basic principles of multiculturalism and Christian teachings. However, this potential has not been fully utilized in educational contexts, especially in Christian Religious Education (CRE). In fact, CRE can play a strategic role in integrating local cultural values with faith-based values, enabling young generations to appreciate their cultural identity while building multicultural awareness.

Additionally, the challenges of globalization and modernization, which bring about shifts in societal values, demand educational approaches that are relevant and contextual. CRE, which teaches values such as love, tolerance, and fellowship, can serve as a powerful means of shaping young generations who are not only rooted in their faith but also appreciate cultural diversity. In this context, the *Bonet* Dance can be a teaching medium that connects Christian values with the social realities of multicultural communities.

The importance of synergy between cultural preservation and faith reinforcement becomes the fundamental reason for making the *Bonet* Dance a subject of study in the context of CRE. Although some efforts have been made by local governments and communities to preserve the *Bonet* Dance, approaches involving education, particularly CRE, remain very limited. Yet, this approach can enhance the spiritual and cultural values within young generations.

The lack of integration between local cultural values and CRE also reveals a gap in the formal education system in East Nusa Tenggara. Education often focuses on academic aspects, while character development through local culture is underemphasized. In a multicultural society, character building based on local culture, such as the *Bonet* Dance, can provide a foundation for creating stronger social harmony.

Therefore, this study seeks to address these challenges by exploring the meaning of multiculturalism in the *Bonet* Dance from the perspective of CRE. This study aims to integrate local cultural values into education, so that the *Bonet* Dance not only becomes a cultural heritage but also serves as a relevant learning tool for building a society that values cultural diversity within the framework of Christian faith.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods to understand the meaning of multiculturalism in the *Bonet* Dance from the perspective of CRE. Ethnography was chosen because it provides an in-depth understanding of culture and community behavior through direct interaction with them in their social contexts (Creswell, 2014).

Data were collected through two main techniques: interviews and observations. Interviews were conducted with traditional leaders, church leaders, educators, and community members directly involved in the performance of the *Bonet* Dance to explore their views on the cultural values embedded in the dance and its

relevance in religious education. Additionally, observations were conducted indirectly during various cultural events and traditional ceremonies involving the *Bonet* Dance to observe how the dance is received and practiced by the community and its role in fostering multicultural awareness.

This technique allows researchers to gain contextual understanding of the relationship between the *Bonet* Dance and CRE values in a multicultural society. Data sources for this study were obtained through direct participation, observations of ongoing social practices, and a literature review on Dawan culture and religious education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The *Bonet* Dance in the Dawan Ethnic Culture of East Nusa Tenggara

- **Concept of the *Bonet* Dance**

The *Bonet* Dance is one of the most famous traditional dances in South Central Timor Regency, especially among the Dawan community. This dance is often performed at various events, such as national holidays, the inauguration of traditional houses, wedding ceremonies, celebrations of 40-day-old infants, welcoming important guests such as religious and government figures, and religious festivals. The *Bonet* Dance is known as one of the oldest dances on Timor Island and is a symbol of the spirit of togetherness for the Dawan community, particularly in South Central Timor.

Typically, around 20 or more people participate in the *Bonet* Dance. The dancers form a circle, holding hands while singing songs and chants in the Dawan language called "nel". The movement begins with the recitation of the chant, followed by stepping the left foot twice forward, then the right foot once, and this movement is repeated while singing and rotating. Even without musical accompaniment, the dancers still hold hands, dance, and exchange rhymed verses. This dance represents the culture and life of the Dawan people, especially in celebrating the success of a hunt or other important events.

The name "*Bonet*" comes from the Dawan term *Na Bonet*, which means to encircle or form a circle. The dance involves several important elements, namely movement art, vocal art, and literary art. The lyrics in the *Bonet* Dance are adapted to the circumstances experienced by the community. There are several types of *Bonet*, such as *Boen Nitu* (praise to the spirits), *Boen Ba'e* (praise during joyful events such as births or weddings), *Boen sium amnemat* (welcoming guests), and *Boen Mepu* (work songs). In addition, the *Bonet* Dance has an educational function because the lyrics contain moral messages, one of which is about the value of marriage (Yeremias Banusu, 2020).

The *Bonet* Dance is not merely entertainment but a part of cultural heritage that contains many positive values and serves as a guide for the Dawan community. Therefore, it is crucial to preserve this dance so that these values are not lost.

- **Origin of the *Bonet* Dance**

The *Bonet* Dance is a valuable cultural heritage of the Dawan ethnic group, who inhabit the Timor region, including East Nusa Tenggara and part of East Timor. This dance has existed for a long time, rooted in oral traditions and rituals passed down from generation to generation. In the Dawan community, the *Bonet* Dance is not just a performance art but an expression of their cultural identity and ethnic existence. This dance tradition contains important lessons and values for the community, such as togetherness, mutual respect, and cultural continuity. The transmission of this culture continues despite external influences, maintaining its core values.

The *Bonet* Dance is typically performed in the context of traditional ceremonies, reflecting the diverse life experiences of the community. Its existence serves not only as entertainment but also as a way to strengthen social bonds within the community (Hotlif Arkilaus Nope and Melvianus Selan, 2021). In every performance, the dancers wear colorful traditional costumes adorned with ornaments, creating an atmosphere rich in symbolism and meaning. The music accompanying this dance uses traditional instruments, which further enhance the Dawan cultural ambiance. The Dawan people believe that dancing is not merely a physical activity; it carries a ritualistic influence that can protect and bless the community.

Over time, the *Bonet* Dance has adapted to the modern context, but its essence remains intact. Despite being influenced by global pop culture, the

younger generation tends to hold *Bonet* Dance performances in various forms, from traditional stages to formal events. Various efforts to preserve the dance are also being made, such as introducing the *Bonet* Dance in local educational curricula to ensure future generations remain connected to their cultural roots. This is essential in facing the challenges of globalization, which affects the mindset and orientation of the younger generation toward culture.

The important role of the *Bonet* Dance in Dawan culture is evident in how it unites various aspects of community life, from the spiritual to the social. Through every event, the *Bonet* Dance becomes a bridge connecting historical backgrounds and current social conditions, creating a lively dialogue space among different social layers (Ramona Mathias Mae, 2017). By understanding the history and meaning of the *Bonet* Dance, the community not only celebrates their cultural heritage but also strengthens solidarity and ethnic identity, which form the foundation for harmonious social ties.

- **Symbolism of Movement, Music, and Lyrics in the Dance as Representation of Unity and Togetherness Values**

The movement in the *Bonet* Dance involves steps forward, backward, and turning in a circle, symbolizing mutual respect and togetherness within the community. Each movement pattern is not just a performance but holds deep meaning reflecting the balance between the individual and the group (Dashbach, Richard, 1992). For instance, the

forward movement signifies bravery and confidence, while the backward movement reflects respect for the past and tradition. Thus, the *Bonet* Dance serves as a medium conveying messages about harmonizing personal and collective aspects in Dawan community life.

As explained by Yeremias Banusu (2020), the music, accompanied by traditional instruments like drums and gongs, adds depth and nuance to each performance. The melodies produced can raise collective spirit and create a festive atmosphere, helping to foster a sense of togetherness among dancers and spectators. Additionally, the rhymed lyrics sung in Dawan carry moral messages and life philosophies, providing teachings about values that should be upheld in daily life. Thus, the sound of this dance is not just for entertainment but also inspires positive values within the community.

Therefore, the symbolism embedded in the *Bonet* Dance offers a strong representation of unity and community strength. In a world increasingly fragmented by modernization, the *Bonet* Dance serves as a reminder of the importance of mutual respect and cooperation among community members. Through every aspect of the dance—movement, music, and lyrics—the *Bonet* Dance acts as a reminder that diversity and togetherness are key to building a cohesive and harmonious society.

- **Role of the *Bonet* Dance in Traditional Ceremonies and Social Life of the Dawan Community**

The *Bonet* Dance plays a crucial role in various traditional ceremonies of the Dawan community. One significant moment when the *Bonet* Dance is performed is during the reception of important guests, such as leaders or visitors from outside the region (Hotlif Arkilaus Nope and Melvianus Selan, 2020). In this context, the dance serves as an expression of respect and a warm welcome from the Dawan community to the guests. Through meaningful dance movements and flowing music, the community shows its cultural identity and creates a friendly atmosphere. The *Bonet* Dance symbolizes that guests are valued and embraced in unity, reflecting the local wisdom that emphasizes individual relationships and group solidarity.

Harvest celebrations are also one of the occasions when the *Bonet* Dance plays an important role. During this ceremony, the dance is presented to celebrate the abundant harvest, creating an atmosphere of gratitude and joy (Valens Boy, 2020). Through this performance, the Dawan community not only celebrates their agricultural success but also strengthens social ties among residents. In Dawan tradition, celebrating the harvest is not only about material results but also about togetherness, in both good and bad times. Therefore, the *Bonet* Dance becomes a means to express gratitude and reinforce bonds among community members, creating

collective awareness of the importance of unity in facing life.

Additionally, the *Bonet* Dance is also integrated into various social events in the community, such as weddings and celebrations of significant holidays. In these moments, the *Bonet* Dance is not only meant to entertain but also to preserve noble values that build character and solidarity among the people. As the dancers move together in harmony, they create a visual symbol of unity and collaboration. The *Bonet* Dance becomes a medium to teach the younger generation about tolerance and mutual cooperation in community life, ensuring that these values are preserved and transmitted among them.

- **Values and Meanings Embedded in the *Bonet* Dance**

The *Bonet* Dance contains several important values that are highly relevant to the Dawan community, including solidarity, unity, and cooperation. The value of solidarity is clearly seen in every dance movement that emphasizes synchronized movement in harmony (Metropoly Merlin J. Liubana and Ibrahim Nenohai, 2021). This dance not only requires individual skill but also highlights the importance of collaboration among dancers. By performing movements simultaneously and complementing each other, the dancers reflect mutual support and encouragement, which form the foundation of cohesiveness in the Dawan community. In this context, the *Bonet* Dance serves as a medium to strengthen values that support

strong social ties among community members.

Another meaning embedded in the *Bonet* Dance is the effort to maintain harmony in communal life. This dance serves as a reminder that each individual, despite differences in background and abilities, has an important role in society. Respect for differences is honored, and the values present become the basis for fostering mutual respect. By honoring differences and celebrating diversity, the Dawan community can preserve the cultural heritage passed down by their ancestors. Every time the *Bonet* Dance is performed, it creates a space for reflection and dialogue that strengthens awareness of the importance of diversity within unity.

Additionally, the dance also depicts the importance of sharing happiness and sorrow within the community circle. In daily life, the Dawan people believe that every individual has unique life experiences, and in the *Bonet* Dance, they are invited to celebrate those experiences together. The series of movements involving interactions among the dancers creates a deep sense of solidarity, both in moments of joy and sorrow. This reinforces the idea that no one can face life's challenges alone; we all depend on each other.

Thus, the *Bonet* Dance is not just a performance but a representation of the values that bind the Dawan community in everyday life. This dance functions as a tool to instill cultural values, strengthen relationships, and serve as a reminder of the importance of mutual respect and sharing within the community. When the people

dance together, they are not only expressing their culture but also committing to keeping these values relevant and alive in every aspect of their lives. Through the *Bonet* Dance, not only is cultural heritage preserved, but also the character and identity of the Dawan community are strengthened.

In its practice and preservation, the *Bonet* Dance offers a significant chapter in the character development of the Dawan youth. By involving them in performances and recognizing the values within the dance, the new generation will be educated to understand and appreciate their cultural heritage. This, in turn, facilitates harmony and unity in a diverse society. Therefore, the *Bonet* Dance can function as an effective educational medium, teaching new members of society not only to preserve tradition but also to actively uphold values that guide them toward a life of mutual respect and coexistence.

The *Bonet* Dance in the Context of Multiculturalism

- **Definition of Multiculturalism**

Multiculturalism is an approach that emphasizes the appreciation and recognition of cultural diversity within a society (Zakiyuddin Baidhaw, 2005). This concept emerged as a response to globalization and increasing cross-cultural interactions, where individuals come from various ethnic, religious, and traditional backgrounds. In the context of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), which is home to various ethnic groups such as the Dawan, Flores, and Sumba, multiculturalism becomes an important foundation for creating

social harmony. By respecting differences, the people of NTT are able to maintain peace and avoid social conflicts that may arise due to misunderstanding or rejection of other cultures.

Tarmizi argues that the importance of multiculturalism lies in its potential to enrich individual experiences and perspectives (Tarmizi, 2020). By respecting and engaging in cultural exchange, societies can create a creative and innovative environment. NTT, as a region rich in traditions and local wisdom, can benefit from this concept by promoting positive interactions between ethnic groups, which in turn strengthens cultural identity and community. Appreciation for cultural diversity is essential for preserving traditional values while facilitating integration and social cohesion amidst the rapid global changes.

- **Meaning of the Bonet Dance as a Symbol of Unity**

The *Bonet* Dance holds profound meaning as a symbol of unity among various ethnic groups in Timor, including its connection with the people of East Timor. As explained by Hotlif Arkilaus Nope and Melvianus Selan (2021), in every performance, the Bonet Dance displays movements that carry messages about collaboration and mutual respect. When dancers from different ethnic backgrounds come together to perform this dance, they demonstrate that despite cultural differences, they can create something meaningful through togetherness. This symbolism is reinforced when the *Bonet* Dance becomes a tool for

socializing and promoting harmony in multicultural communities.

By understanding the meaning of this dance and the values it carries, it becomes clear that the Bonet Dance not only connects the people of the Dawan ethnicity but also unites them with other ethnicities in Timor. This shared cultural heritage transcends individual boundaries and serves as a bridge for fostering mutual understanding. Therefore, the Bonet Dance can play an essential role in promoting multiculturalism, creating peace, and respecting the diversity of ethnic groups in Timor.

- **Integration of Local and External Cultures**

Tari *Bonet* not only serves as a medium for representing local culture but also as a concrete example of the integration of local and global cultures. In recent decades, Tari *Bonet* has absorbed influences from various external cultures, enriching its performance elements. For example, the use of modern musical instruments and variations of movements inspired by other types of dances have added new colors and dynamics without eliminating the essence of Tari *Bonet*. According to Anastasya Selly Harjanto Putri et al. (2024), this process demonstrates that cultural identity is not static; it can evolve and adapt to the changes of time while still maintaining its traditional roots.

Through the fusion of local and global cultures, Tari *Bonet* provides a platform for expressing a broader cultural identity. The Dawan community not only draws inspiration from global trends but also upholds the fundamental values that form the

core of their identity. In this way, Tari *Bonet* simultaneously preserves its authenticity and accommodates modern elements, showing that cultural integration can be achieved harmoniously. In the context of multiculturalism, this serves as an example of how diversity can enrich cultural identity and create space for better understanding and appreciation among different communities.

Christian Religious Education and Multiculturalism Values

- **Concept of Christian Religious Education**

Christian Religious Education aims to shape individuals' character based on Christian teachings, prioritizing values of love, tolerance, and respect for differences. Imam Sibaweh et al. (2024) state that, in a diverse society, this education functions to encourage the development of positive attitudes among learners. Elis Teti Rusmiati (2023) explains that children are taught not only to understand their own religious teachings but also to appreciate and accept the differences that exist between religions and cultures. By integrating spiritual values with humanistic principles, Christian education seeks to instill empathy and a deep understanding of others, which is essential for creating a harmonious environment.

Furthermore, Christian Religious Education also focuses on developing social skills that support healthy interactions in a multicultural society (Melkisedek et al., 2024). By creating space for open discussions about differences and challenges faced in diverse communities, educators equip the younger generation with the ability

to adapt and contribute positively. Through the application of love and tolerance values, they can learn to respect others regardless of ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds. Thus, Christian Religious Education plays a crucial role in supporting the creation of unity and harmony amidst cultural differences in society.

- **The Relationship between Christian Teachings and Cultural Diversity**

Christian teachings view diversity as an integral part of creation and God's greater plan. The Bible offers many examples where Jesus teaches the importance of love and acceptance, regardless of differences. For example, the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37 and John 4:7) emphasizes the importance of helping others without regard for their background or identity. This demonstrates that, fundamentally, Christian teachings encourage individuals to accept and embrace others, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or religion. In this way, a society grounded in Christian teachings can create an environment full of love, mutual respect, and harmony.

Moreover, Christian teachings invite believers to see diversity as a wealth, not a threat. In her writings, Joice Ester Raranta (2021) elaborates that, in the context of multiculturalism, values like mutual respect and the ability to collaborate are essential. Christian teachings encourage congregants to engage in positive dialogue and interaction with other communities, offering opportunities to share experiences and perspectives. By

building cultural bridges, these teachings highlight the importance of unity in diversity, which is highly relevant in a society with diverse cultural backgrounds.

By accepting and celebrating cultural diversity, Christian teachings can promote the development of a more inclusive society. The Church, as a religious institution, can serve as a platform to encourage collaboration among various ethnic groups and different communities. In this context, acceptance of differences not only creates harmony but also fosters solidarity and a sense of togetherness among diverse societies. By emphasizing that all humans are created in the image of God, Christian teachings encourage us to care for and respect one another, making diversity a gift.

- **The Role of the Church and Christian Educational Institutions**

The Church and Christian educational institutions play an important role in introducing and teaching multicultural values to the younger generation (Josep Tatang and Victor Deak, 2022). As centers of spiritual life, churches can create programs that embrace diversity, such as seminars on intercultural relations and social activities involving various ethnic groups (Taufani Taufan, 2019). Character development conducted by the church can also help build attitudes of mutual respect among the congregation, encouraging them to open themselves to differences and eliminate negative stigmas or prejudices against other groups. Thus, the church contributes to preparing

individuals who are sensitive to issues of diversity and social harmony.

In addition, Christian educational institutions play a role in preparing inclusive curricula that encompass various cultural perspectives around the students (Andy Saputra, 2024). By introducing the history, traditions, and values of various ethnicities and religions, educational institutions can help create a welcoming learning environment for students from diverse backgrounds. In this way, students are taught to appreciate and respect diversity as an important factor in building a peaceful and respectful society. Yhadi Firdiansyah and Nunung Nurlaili (2020) explain that through experiential learning and group discussions, students can learn to understand and respect differences, ultimately enhancing their ability to interact positively with others outside their community. The application of multicultural values in the concept of education includes mainstreaming themes of equality, inclusion, and togetherness in all aspects of teaching.

Furthermore, Debora Kaka et al. (2024) explain that the Church and Christian educational institutions can also serve as mediators in resolving intercultural conflicts. In situations where differences trigger disputes, these institutions can use Christian teachings as a guide to encourage constructive dialogue and peaceful resolution. By emphasizing love, understanding, and forgiveness, the Church can provide a space for individuals from diverse backgrounds to meet, discuss, and seek solutions together. In this way, multicultural

values are not only taught but also applied in real-life practices.

- **Integrating Religious and Cultural Values into Daily Life**

Christian Religious Education also promotes the integration of religious values and local cultural practices into daily life. Talizaro Tafonao (2019) emphasizes that educators introduce the concept that Christian teachings are not separate from social life but can serve as a guide in daily interactions, whether with fellow believers or those of different faiths. By understanding how Christian values can be applied in the context of local culture, individuals can develop a more holistic understanding of their identity as members of a multicultural society.

In this way, society can not only blend religious practices with cultural traditions but also find ways to honor and celebrate all cultural elements in their lives. For example, religious celebrations that incorporate local cultural elements can create an inclusive atmosphere where all communities feel involved and valued. This creates synergy between faith and culture, which is crucial for the formation of society's identity in a multicultural context. By integrating religious values into local culture, individuals can build bridges between beliefs and traditions, fostering tolerance and respecting values in a diverse society.

***Bonet* Dance as a Tool for Learning in Christian Religious Education**

- ***Bonet* Dance to Teach Christian Values**

The *Bonet* Dance can be an effective tool for teaching Christian values, such as mutual respect, sharing

love, and togetherness (Yunus Selan, 2023). Through collective movements performed together, the dancers reflect the principles of harmony and solidarity that are highly valued in Christian teachings. Every movement in this dance not only depicts physical togetherness but also conveys a moral message about the importance of respecting individuals and groups. Thus, the *Bonet* Dance can bring students closer to the values taught by religion, making learning more interactive and enjoyable.

Moreover, participating in the *Bonet* Dance as a form of practice also teaches children about sharing love in a tangible way. In the learning process of dancing, students are confronted with the experience of cooperation, where they must share space, time, and attention to create a harmonious performance. The values developed in this context are relevant to Jesus' teachings on love for others, where each individual is invited to make sacrifices and care for others. Therefore, the teaching of love is preserved not only through words but also through actions and collective experiences.

The *Bonet* Dance also creates opportunities for children to reflect on the meaning of unity in faith. While dancing, they can be taught to appreciate diversity among themselves, understanding that, although they come from different backgrounds, they are still part of one body in Christ (Hotlif Arkilaus Nope and Melvianus Selan, 2021). Through this dance, children learn that in the Christian faith, unity in diversity is something beautiful. As each

performance progresses, they can feel the vibrations of mutual respect and understanding, strengthening their social relationships.

Thus, the integration of *Bonet* Dance into religious education can raise children's awareness of the importance of preserving cultural heritage rooted in values of faith. By understanding that the *Bonet* Dance is part of their community's identity, children can appreciate and preserve it. This dance functions as a means to deepen their understanding of their own history and cultural values, synergizing spiritual experience with local traditions, and ultimately building a more inclusive future based on love and mutual respect for future generations.

- **Usage in Sunday School**

The *Bonet* Dance can be included in Sunday School programs to introduce children to local culture while teaching Christian values that promote unity and love. In a relaxed and educational environment, children can learn about the history of the *Bonet* Dance and its meaning as a symbol of intercultural relationships. In this way, they not only gain new knowledge but also practical experiences that can be remembered and felt in daily life. Teaching the *Bonet* Dance in the context of Sunday School also provides an opportunity for them to understand the importance of preserving cultural heritage amidst the challenges of modernization.

Dance activities in Sunday School can be a means of encouraging children to follow Christian teachings and develop as individuals who love

their community and culture. When children engage in the *Bonet* Dance, they build connections with friends from various backgrounds, creating strong bonds that transcend ethnic or religious boundaries. This experience can increase mutual respect and cooperation among children, teaching them how to live in a multicultural society from a Christian perspective.

- **Enhancing Cultural and Religious Love**

Through the *Bonet* Dance, the younger generation not only learns to appreciate local culture but also develops a deeper understanding of how Christianity values diversity and differences (Hotlif Arkilaus Nope and Melvianus Selan, 2021). By engaging in a tradition filled with meaning, children are taught that respecting others is part of their faith. This gives them a positive perspective on diversity and strengthens mutual understanding among individuals from different backgrounds. Committed to ensuring they understand how Christian teachings can synergize with cultural diversity, children can become agents of change in their social environments.

Moreover, by integrating the *Bonet* Dance as part of the learning experience, children can learn that Christian values such as love and understanding can also be applied in broader contexts, such as in a diverse society (Ni Nyoman Fransiska, 2024). They not only learn to appreciate their own traditions and cultures but are also taught to understand and respect the traditions and beliefs of others. This contributes to the formation of a younger generation's character that is

more open, empathetic, and ready to be part of a complex world. Thus, learning through the *Bonet* Dance is not limited to local cultural aspects but also broadens their inclusive view of existing differences.

- **Building Character and Cultural Identity**

The *Bonet* Dance in religious education can help students build strong character, foster pride in their cultural heritage, and nurture a Christian identity based on the values of love and unity (Sumiati Titi et al., 2024). Through active participation in dance, students are directly involved in the process of transmitting and celebrating their cultural values. They learn how to move in harmony, collaborate in groups, and develop social responsibility. This process teaches them not only dance skills but, more importantly, how to value cooperation and perseverance needed to achieve something together.

Furthermore, the role of the *Bonet* Dance in religious education helps students understand that their identity as Christian individuals is not separate from their cultural heritage. Santi Indra Astuti et al. (2021) state that this is important in the formation of positive character, where children are taught to accept and integrate both aspects into their daily lives. When students dance and celebrate their cultural values, they realize that having a dual identity as a Christian and as part of a local culture is not only possible but also beneficial. This strengthens their attachment to the community while deepening their religious beliefs and practices.

By internalizing the values embedded in the *Bonet* Dance, students can grasp the essence of love and unity as part of Christian teachings. Character development becomes a manifestation of what they have learned, where they can show love for others, respect one another, and celebrate cultural diversity in their social interactions. Thus, the *Bonet* Dance serves as an important tool in shaping individuals who are not only strong in faith but also proud and caring of their culture, creating a generation ready to lead with inclusive and harmonious love values.

- **Implementation in Church Social Programs**

In addition to Sunday School, the *Bonet* Dance can be included in church social programs, such as celebrations of Christian holidays, to introduce multicultural values to church members and the wider community. In these events, the *Bonet* Dance can be the highlight, where the congregation is invited to participate and celebrate together, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Using the *Bonet* Dance in this context shows that the church not only speaks about unity in sermons but also applies it in real actions that reflect love and harmony.

Through celebrations involving the *Bonet* Dance, the church can provide a clear example of how faith and culture can unite. These events offer ample opportunities for the congregation to broaden their perspective on cultural diversity, while celebrating their attachment to the Christian faith. Thus, the *Bonet* Dance becomes not only entertainment but also an educational tool for the entire community, instilling

the values of love and mutual respect necessary to build a harmonious and inclusive society. This implementation shows that through cultural activities, the church can strengthen Christian messages and spread multicultural values more vibrantly.

Relevance of Tari *Bonet* for Contemporary Multicultural Society

- **Tari *Bonet* as a Medium for Understanding Diversity**

Tari *Bonet* has great potential as a medium for fostering better understanding of diversity, both in terms of religion and culture. Rif'atul Khoriyah et al. (2023) explain that in an increasingly connected society with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, it is important to have tools that help individuals appreciate differences and recognize the universal values that unite us. Through collaborative movements and rhythms, Tari *Bonet* invites people to feel and understand that, despite variations in culture and beliefs, the core of the human experience—such as love, friendship, and solidarity—remains constant. By participating in this dance, individuals can learn to look beyond mere physical or ideological differences.

Furthermore, Tari *Bonet* also serves as a bridge between generations, where older dancers pass down knowledge and local wisdom to younger generations (Hotlif Arkilau Nope & Melvianus Selan, 2021). Through this dance, the younger generation is encouraged to recognize and understand their cultural roots, which in turn gives them the context to appreciate other cultures. In joint performances, students not only learn

about their own traditions but also how these traditions contribute to a larger cultural mosaic. This is where multicultural education becomes important, as Tari *Bonet* functions as an interactive tool that highlights the beauty of diversity within a broader social structure.

Tari *Bonet* also creates a safe space for dialogue, allowing individuals to explore their own experiences and identities. While dancing, they can share stories and perspectives, indirectly building awareness of the value of diversity. This is important because, in a society often divided by stereotypes and preconceived notions, this dance encourages people to see each other as true companions in life's journey. This collaborative experience changes how people from different backgrounds interact and build stronger relationships.

Moreover, the values taught through Tari *Bonet* are highly relevant in the current context of globalization, which brings various beliefs and cultures into everyday life. In a world where tensions from differences can lead to conflict, this dance helps create a harmonious environment where dialogue can take place. Through graceful and meaningful movements, individuals are reminded to appreciate diversity as a gift, not a burden. Therefore, Tari *Bonet* is not only a cultural ritual; it is an expression of a mindset that upholds inter-cultural harmony.

Hence, participation in Tari *Bonet* raises collective awareness about the importance of respecting cultural differences. By encouraging people to engage in rich and diverse cultural

practices, this dance strengthens social bonds that are essential in building a cohesive society amidst many differences. Tari *Bonet* serves not only as an art form but also as a platform to celebrate diversity, where all can gather, share, and grow together.

- **The Positive Impact of Tari *Bonet* in Shaping the Character of the Younger Generation**

Tari *Bonet* has a significant positive impact in shaping the character of the younger generation, particularly in creating individuals who are more open, tolerant, and appreciative of differences (Hotlif Arkilaus Nope & Melvianus Selan, 2021). When children and teenagers participate in Tari *Bonet*, they are challenged to understand and apply values such as solidarity, cooperation, and affection in their social interactions. Through various movements that require collaboration, they learn that every individual has a role to play, and that diversity in our identities enriches shared experiences. This becomes a valuable exercise in fostering an inclusive attitude, which is important for the future generation.

Participation in Tari *Bonet* also teaches young people about the importance of empathy. By engaging in rhythmic dance steps, they practice feeling and understanding one another, fostering sensitivity to others' emotions and experiences (Yeremias Banusu, 2020). This process helps them develop the ability to communicate and collaborate outside of the dance context, which is crucial in today's multicultural environment. Through the cultivation of values such as

empathy and love, Tari *Bonet* becomes a bridge for young people to navigate the differences in their community. Through shared experiences in dance, they learn that, despite differences in cultural backgrounds and beliefs, universal values like love, understanding, and mutual respect can still unite them. Thus, Tari *Bonet* functions as an effective educational medium, helping to shape tolerant and inclusive character.

Furthermore, through Tari *Bonet*, the younger generation is encouraged to recognize the importance of their role in maintaining good relationships within a diverse society (Yeremias Banusu, 2020). Internalizing the values embodied in this dance strengthens positive attitudes towards differences. A better society can only be achieved if each of its members respects and promotes the values of togetherness, and Tari *Bonet* is one way to instill this principle from an early age. Therefore, involvement in Tari *Bonet* is not just an artistic activity, but also a profound learning process in building a resilient individual character.

The success of the Tari *Bonet* preservation program among the younger generation has the potential to produce individuals who are not only proud of their cultural heritage but also possess the social skills necessary to live in an increasingly global and connected world (Martinus Lafu et al., 2008). By adopting and practicing the values taught through dance, they can be better prepared to contribute positively to a harmonious and just society. In this context, Tari *Bonet* is not only a symbol of culture but also a tool for social

transformation that can shape the character of the younger generation towards a better future.

Thus, the positive impact of *Tari Bonet* in shaping the character of the younger generation to be open, tolerant, and appreciative of differences is highly significant. This process is crucial to ensuring that the next generation not only recognizes and values cultural diversity but also has the ability to cooperate and empathize with one another in facing the challenges of everyday life in a multicultural society.

- **Implications of This Research for the Development of Religious Education Curriculum**

This research offers valuable insights for the development of a religious education curriculum that focuses more on the values of diversity. In the context of an increasingly diverse society, the religious education curriculum needs to be designed to accommodate and acknowledge the various traditions and beliefs around it. By prioritizing the teaching of pluralism and interfaith interaction, this enriched curriculum will provide students with a more comprehensive understanding of the world in which they live. Such inclusive education should not only teach students about the religion they adhere to but also equip them with the knowledge to respect and appreciate the beliefs of others. This is important for building the foundation of a harmonious and respectful society, while minimizing the potential for ethnic and interfaith conflicts.

Furthermore, emphasizing the preservation of local culture in religious education plays a vital role in shaping students' identities. A curriculum that accommodates local cultural elements, such as *Tari Bonet*, will not only enrich the students' learning experience but also deepen their pride in the cultural heritage they possess. By integrating cultural aspects into the teaching of spiritual values, teachers can help students see the connection between their faith and cultural identity. This provides students with an opportunity to realize that culture and religion often go hand in hand in shaping their character and behavior. Through this holistic teaching approach, it is hoped that the younger generation will not only become devout followers of their religion but also active preservers of culture, maintaining and celebrating the rich local wisdom.

Finally, strengthening spiritual values aligned with the spirit of unity should be the core of religious education curriculum development. This research demonstrates that values of love, tolerance, and unity are crucial in creating a harmonious society. Therefore, the religious education curriculum should be realized in the form of learning experiences that enable students to not only understand but also apply these values in everyday life. Through action-based approaches, students are trained to actively contribute to creating a respectful and understanding environment, both in school and in the broader society. In this way, religious education functions not only as a space to learn spiritual values but also

as a platform to prepare future generations committed to the principles of diversity and unity, moving towards a more tolerant and inclusive society.

CONCLUSION

This research affirms the important role of Tari *Bonet* in Christian Religious Education as a tool to teach the values of diversity, togetherness, and the preservation of local culture. Tari *Bonet* functions not only as a traditional art expression but also as an effective educational medium for fostering empathy, tolerance, and solidarity among individuals, especially the younger generation. By integrating local cultural elements into the religious education curriculum, it is hoped that students can understand and appreciate the various cultural identities in a multicultural society, while also strengthening their character with values of love and unity. The implications of this research suggest the development of a more inclusive and responsive curriculum to diversity, creating individuals who are not only religious but also appreciate diversity as a gift, and contribute to a harmonious and respectful society.

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