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Author for correspondence:

Siti Khodijah MY

E-mail: [khodijahmysiti@gmail.com](mailto:khodijahmysiti@gmail.com)

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# Comparison of Cultural Values in Families A Case Study: Indonesia and Cambodia

<sup>1</sup>Siti Khodijah MY, <sup>2</sup>Farida Hanim Harahap, <sup>3</sup>Miftah Rahman, <sup>4</sup>Andri Nurwandri, <sup>5</sup>Ismail Nasution, <sup>6</sup>Nilasari Siagian

Daar Al-Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute, Indonesia

The unique culture of each region is realized through the instillation of cultural values in the family, which shape the character and identity of each community. This process not only maintains traditions but also enriches life experiences and relationships between family members. The aim of this research is to find out what culture is like in the family environment for Indonesian society and Cambodian society. The method used in this research is qualitative using a literature-based approach. This research obtained results that with cultural development it is able to form a character that exists in a family, both children and parents. Indonesia and Cambodia are countries that are famous for their strong culture. Instilling cultural values through parental advice to their children is an effective way to pass on traditions and principles of life, teach the importance of respecting culture, and shape children's character and identity so that they remain connected to the family's cultural roots. The meaning of the culture taught by parents at home to their children will be instilled and carried out every day. The culture that is used to form religious behavior is such as respecting other people's culture, respecting those who are older than us, dressing politely, parental activity plays a very important role in forming the cultural character of the family.

# 1. Introduction

Culture is a crucial aspect of family life that influences interaction patterns, values, and social norms. A comparative study of family cultures provides deep insights into how various cultural elements shape family structure and dynamics across different parts of the world. This research focuses on comparing family cultures between Indonesia and Cambodia, two countries with rich and distinct cultural backgrounds. (Nguyen, T. H. 2021).

Indonesia, with over 17,000 islands and hundreds of ethnic groups, boasts immense cultural diversity. Each ethnic group in Indonesia has its own unique traditions, language, and values. Generally, families in Indonesia are often built on extended family structures, emphasizing the importance of wide kinship ties and mutual support. Values such as cooperation, respect for elders, and traditional gender roles often dominate family dynamics in Indonesia.

On the other hand, Cambodia, located in the Indochina Peninsula, has a cultural background shaped by its long history and the influence of Theravada Buddhism. Family structures in Cambodia tend to be more focused on nuclear families compared to the extended family model in Indonesia. Values such as respect for elders and the influence of religion in daily life play an important role in shaping family interactions in Cambodia. (Santosa, S. S. 2019).

This study aims to explore the differences and similarities in family structures and values between Indonesia and Cambodia. The primary focus is on understanding how culture influences family relationships, gender roles, communication patterns, and decision-making within families in both countries. Through this analysis, the study seeks to identify specific patterns reflecting the influence of culture on family life and contribute to the global comparative study of cultures.

By presenting case studies from both countries, this research not only aims to enrich understanding of family dynamics in different cultural contexts but also provides practical insights for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners involved in the study of families and cultures. The study hopes to identify

cultural factors that shape family structure and function, and lay the foundation for further research on how culture influences family life across the globe. (Rithy, H. 2020).

## 2. Method

The methodology of this journal employs a qualitative approach with a literature review method to compare family cultures between Indonesia and Cambodia. First, relevant literature, including books, articles, and research reports on family structure, social norms, and cultural practices in both countries, is identified and collected. Then, a thematic analysis is conducted to identify differences and similarities in family practices. These findings are synthesized to provide deep insights into how cultural factors influence family structure and function in each country. (Prasetyo, M. J. 2021).

## 3. Result and Discussion

### **Comparison of Cultural Values in Families:**

#### **Case Study in Indonesia**

Indonesia is an expansive archipelago rich in culture. According to the official website of the Republic of Indonesia, the country is home to 300 ethnic groups or tribes, each with its own distinct culture shaped by its living environment. Similarly, family culture within Indonesian society varies greatly. A child in a family is raised according to the cultural values embraced by their parents. In Indonesia, family culture is diverse and influenced by local customs. For instance, in Javanese culture, there is the tradition of "rukun," which emphasizes the importance of harmony in family relationships. In Sumatra, the matrilineal system remains strong in some tribes, such as the Minangkabau, where lineage and inheritance are passed down through the female line. These various traditions highlight the significant role culture plays in shaping family dynamics and values in Indonesia.

#### **Family Cultures in Indonesia**

##### **1. Religious Culture**

Religion plays a significant role in Indonesian society, shaping social norms

and cultural identities. Islam is the largest religion, followed by Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism, each contributing to the social diversity of the nation. According to the official website of Indonesia Population (2024) and data from the Central Statistics Agency of Samarinda City, the current population of Indonesia is 280,014,457, with 87.2% identifying as Muslim, 6.9% as Protestant, 2.9% as Catholic, 1.7% as Hindu, 0.7% as Buddhist, and 0.05% as Confucian. This section broadly discusses the main religions in Indonesia: Islam, Christianity (including Catholicism), Hinduism, and Buddhism.

Every individual has an innate desire to affiliate with a religion. Children are born into religious households, where they first learn the principles of their faith and are given their religious identity. During their early years, the family serves as the primary environment for children to learn and internalize religious principles. As parents guide their children, they instill values of virtue, honesty, obedience, responsibility, empathy, hard work, respect, patience, sincerity, and love, all of which contribute to building trust. Given the diverse religious beliefs within Indonesian families, religious ceremonies must honor interfaith tolerance. Each family member should draw strength from the examples set by others and grow in their faith and devotion to God. The development of better religious practices serves as a roadmap for existence in this world and the hereafter.

The cultivation of character values within the family can be achieved through religion and tradition. Religion provides a strong moral and ethical foundation, emphasizing teachings about honesty, responsibility, and compassion. Worship practices, such as communal prayers and celebrations of significant religious days, strengthen family bonds and instill noble values. (Geert Hofstede 2010).

## **2. Communication Culture**

Communication is essential for building strong family relationships, allowing members to share experiences, express needs, and resolve issues. In Indonesia, many families follow a patriarchal communication style, where the father, as the head of the household, holds the primary decision-making role. The quality of

communication is heavily influenced by the head of the family, and parents' communication styles shape family dynamics. Indonesian family communication is also shaped by cultural values, emphasizing respect for elders and often relying on indirect or non-verbal cues to maintain harmony. Traditional gender roles still influence family interactions, though these are evolving. Cultural diversity across the country further affects communication styles, as shaped by ethnicity, religion, and region (David Easton, 2023).

### **3. Culture of Respecting Others**

Respecting parents and elders, known as "santun" or "etika sopan santun," is a fundamental principle in Indonesian family ethics, deeply rooted in religious teachings, customs, and social norms. This respect is shown through formal language, such as "kromo," and polite gestures like bowing when passing elders. Javanese traditions, for instance, involve bowing or gently touching elders' hands, reinforcing familial hierarchy. This culture of respect fosters harmony within families and strengthens social bonds that support collective well-being (Max Weber, 2020).

### **4. Etiquette in Public Places**

Indonesian family culture, particularly the practice of "tegur sapa," shares similarities with Cambodian traditions. "Tegur sapa," which involves greeting and welcoming others warmly, is key to fostering positive relationships and reflects Indonesia's renowned hospitality. In families, greetings go beyond words and may include physical gestures like hand grasping and kissing or placing hands on the chest, especially when greeting elders, signifying respect and honor. Family gatherings often involve hugs or cheek kisses, emphasizing affection and the close-knit nature of Indonesian familial relationships (Muhammad Asyfa Dafi, 2024).

### **5. Culture of Discipline**

Self-regulation to achieve goals and avoid inappropriate behavior involves perseverance, responsibility, and self-control. In Indonesia, discipline is shaped by religious teachings, customs, and social structures. Javanese culture, for instance, emphasizes "rukun," or harmony within family relationships, which requires disciplined behavior. Formal education reinforces these values through

lessons on punctuality and responsibility, while parents guide their children to follow rules. This blend of traditional and modern values helps Indonesian families foster discipline in children, preparing them for future challenges.

### **Case Study in Cambodia**

Cambodia is a country bordered by Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam in Southeast Asia. Until 1970, much of Cambodian culture and artistic expression was influenced by the pride of its citizens in their nation's history, including the long-standing presence of Buddhism and ancestral ties to the Khmer Empire since the medieval period (also known as Angkor). However, Cambodian culture has since recovered and been rebuilt after the mass killings carried out by the Khmer Rouge regime during the 1970s. Contemporary Cambodia is experiencing a resurgence of traditional cultural values and practices while grappling with the legacy of the Khmer Rouge regime.

Family culture in Cambodia generally entails certain expectations, roles, and responsibilities among family members. Each individual is expected to support, care for, and show respect to their elders. There is also a collective responsibility to maintain the family's reputation, as families are interconnected in their social standing. Specific roles are often assigned to particular family members; for example, if a family requires assistance (such as managing the family business or household), the youngest daughter is frequently expected to leave school to assume these responsibilities. (Septi Mulyani Siregar 2016).

### **Cultures within Families in Cambodia:**

#### **1. Religious Culture**

The religious landscape in Cambodia is predominantly Buddhist, with 96% of the population identifying as such. In the Champ region, however, most people practice Islam, primarily of the Sunni branch from the Shafi'i school, making up about 1.6% of the population, or 236,000 individuals. Islam has significantly influenced Cambodian culture, shaping family interactions and emphasizing respect as a core value.

In Muslim Cambodian families, Islamic institutions play a crucial role in educating children about monotheism, Quran reading, morals, and Islamic jurisprudence. Interaction between men and women is closely regulated, with women encouraged to stay home, except for educational and religious purposes. While schools are vital for imparting religious values, family influence remains strong, with Islam providing a moral framework that highlights respect, filial duty, and virtuous living.

## **2. Communication Culture**

The communication culture within Muslim families in Cambodia is shaped by Islamic values and local norms. Respect and etiquette, especially in greetings like “Assalamu’alaikum,” reflect politeness and hospitality. Younger generations use formal language when communicating with elders, emphasizing respect for age hierarchies. Everyday conversations in Cambodian Muslim families often involve Champa or Khmer, characterized by courtesy and humility. Traditional gender roles also influence communication, with men typically taking primary decision-making roles. This blend of Islamic teachings and local values shapes daily family interactions (Hikmat, B. S., 2015).

## **3. Culture of Respecting Others**

In Cambodian families, respect is shown through slight bowing, with the head bowed and hands on the chest, especially when passing in front of someone older. It is considered disrespectful to make eye contact with elders or those of higher status. Muslim families in Cambodia uphold a culture of respect rooted in Islamic teachings, emphasizing politeness, respectful language, and attentiveness to parents. These practices promote harmonious family relationships, fostering an environment of mutual respect and affection (Rahmawati, M., 2020).

## **4. Etiquette in Public Places**

In Cambodia, greetings are taught through the gesture “Som Pas,” pressing palms together and bowing slightly, with higher hands and deeper bows indicating greater respect. Failing to reciprocate is considered impolite. Among Muslim families in Cambodia, public etiquette reflects a blend of Islamic teachings and local customs. Dress codes emphasize modesty, with women wearing hijabs and loose-

fitting clothes, while men also dress modestly. Both cultures emphasize politeness and respect, though their expressions are shaped by their unique social norms and values (Amelia Pramezwary, 2023).

### **5. Culture of Discipline**

The culture of discipline in Cambodian Muslim families is heavily influenced by Islamic teachings, promoting orderly and responsible behavior. Children receive religious education from a young age, particularly in madrasahs, which instills both personal and social discipline. This integration of religious values and social norms helps shape disciplined character within families and communities. A comparison with Indonesian families reveals both similarities and differences, with Indonesian families emphasizing ethnic diversity and collectivism, while Cambodian Muslim families prioritize Sharia principles. Both cultures center familial values within their unique religious and social frameworks (Siti Hajar, 2023).

## **4. Conclusion**

The main conclusion that can be drawn is that, while there are similarities in certain aspects of family culture in both countries, significant differences also reflect their respective social and historical contexts. In Indonesia, family values are often heavily influenced by strong customs and social hierarchies, emphasizing respect for elders and the importance of family solidarity. This is evident in more traditional family structures with well-defined roles for each family member.

In contrast, Cambodian family cultural values also stress the importance of familial relationships but are more significantly shaped by Buddhist teachings that emphasize simplicity and self-control. Within this context, family relationships tend to be more flexible and open to change, reflecting an adaptation to dynamic social situations. This adaptability is seen in the shifting roles and responsibilities within families, which are more responsive to the changing times.



Overall, this comparison highlights how family cultural values are influenced by factors such as religion, history, and social structure. While there are commonalities in the fundamental principles of family, the differences in practices and value emphasis reflect how societies in both countries respond to challenges and changes within their unique contexts.

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- Wawancara dengan Ustadzah Nasihah Amin, salah satu Warga di Phum 2, dan Guru di SEPAMA, Cambodia, Rabu 21 Agustus 2024, Pukul 08.30 WPP.

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