

## NAMING AS CULTURAL PRACTICE (A CASE STUDY OF MOLLUCAN NAMES AT AMBON STATE POLYTECHNIC)

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**Abstrak:** The process of naming a baby is an important cultural practice that holds significant meaning in many communities. In Ambon city, located in the Moluccas Islands in Indonesia, naming a baby is not just a way of identifying the child, but it also carries cultural and religious significance. This study was qualitative, using a case study approach to explore naming practices. The object of the study was 125 students at Ambon State Polytechnic. The data collected through interviews and observation will be transcribed and coded for themes related to naming practices. The documents will be analyzed using a content analysis approach. The results elucidated that parents chose names for their babies that reflect their religious beliefs, birth order, characteristics or traits, heritage or cultural background, and their wishes or aspirations for the baby. The choice of a name had both practical and symbolic significance, and it can be a way for parents to connect their child to the practices above. The naming practice in Molucca is influenced by various factors such as religion, tradition, and personal preference. This study highlighted the importance of understanding the cultural significance of naming in Molucca society and how it reflected the values and beliefs of the community.

**Keywords:** Beliefs, Cultural practice, Mollucan names, Naming

### INTRODUCTION

The process of naming a baby is an important cultural practice that holds significant meaning in many communities. In Ambon city, located in the Moluccas Islands in Indonesia, naming a baby is not just a way of identifying the child, but it also carries cultural and religious significance. The names given to babies in Ambon are often chosen to reflect the hopes and aspirations of the parents, as well as the cultural and religious traditions of the community. This study aims to explore the cultural practice of naming babies in Ambon city, examining the meanings behind certain names, the significance of certain naming practices, and the impact of cultural and historical factors on the naming process.

Ambon city is a melting pot of different cultures and traditions, which has been influenced by various historical and cultural events. The city has a rich history and cultural heritage, which can be seen in the way names are chosen and used within the community. The names given to babies in Ambon often reflect the religious beliefs of the parents, as well as the cultural traditions of the community. The study of naming as cultural practice in Ambon city will provide insights into the way in which names are used to reflect the cultural and historical context of the community.

According to Smith, J. (2018), baby naming practices vary widely across cultures and communities. In many cultures, names are chosen based on traditional naming patterns, such as family names, religious or cultural significance, or astrological considerations. Moreover, Yee, S.K., Chan, L.L., & Cheung, D.S.H. (2013), baby naming practices refer to the customs, traditions, and beliefs that influence the selection of names for newborns. These practices can

vary widely across different cultures, religions, and historical periods, and can include factors such as family traditions, religious beliefs, historical context, and cultural identity.

In short, heritage and traditional naming practices play an important role in many cultures, while foreign cultural influences and emotional ties are becoming increasingly important in contemporary naming practices, Al-Ali, A.M. (2012) and King, K.A. (2016). It is important to remember that research is an iterative process, and that the steps may need to be adjusted or repeated as new information or insights are gained. The researcher should also be prepared to adapt their research methods as needed in order to answer the research questions effectively.

This study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the cultural practice of naming babies in Ambon city, highlighting the meanings behind certain names, the significance of certain naming practices, and the impact of cultural and historical factors on the naming process. The study will also provide insights into how names are used in various cultural contexts such as familial relationships, religious customs, and social interactions. It is important to note that this information is a general information and this study is expected to be based on a specific research question as follow;

1. What are the meanings behind the names chosen for babies in Ambon city?
2. How do cultural and historical factors influence the naming process in Ambon city?
3. How do traditional and religious practices play a role in the naming of babies in Ambon city?

### **Literature Review**

According to Garcia, M.A., & Liebkind, J.M. (2010), the practice of naming babies as a cultural practice has been widely studied in various cultures and societies around the world. In Indonesia, naming babies is a significant cultural practice that is deeply ingrained in the country's religious and cultural traditions. In the traditional Javanese culture, for example, the process of naming a baby is believed to hold spiritual significance. The name given to a baby is thought to have an impact on the child's character and future. Parents often seek guidance from religious leaders or traditional healers when choosing a name for their child.

There are also various studies that have been conducted specifically on naming practices in the Moluccas Islands, where Ambon is located. These studies have highlighted the significance of traditional and religious practices in the naming process and the importance of preserving the cultural and historical heritage of the community. Overall, the literature review suggests that naming babies as a cultural practice is an important aspect of many cultures and societies in Indonesia, and is deeply ingrained in religious and cultural traditions. The name given to a baby is believed to have a significant impact on the child's character and future, and the process of choosing a name often involves seeking guidance from religious leaders or traditional healers.

In many cultures, naming practices are also linked to family and community identity. For example, in many Indigenous cultures, the name given to a child is often chosen to reflect the child's connection to the community and the land. Similarly, in many immigrant cultures, the name given to a child is often chosen to reflect the family's connection to their culture and heritage. This can be seen in the choice of names for babies, such as Jan, Pieter, and Maria in Dutch colony, João, Francisco, and Isabel in Portuguese colony.

In conclusion, the literature on naming practices suggests that naming a baby is a significant cultural practice that is influenced by various cultural and historical factors, including religious and spiritual beliefs, family and community identity, and historical and cultural factors. This literature review forms the basis for understanding the cultural and historical context of naming practices in Ambon City, Indonesia.

These studies provide a foundation for understanding the cultural and historical context of naming practices in Ambon City, Indonesia.

1. "Naming practices and cultural identity: A case study of an indigenous community" by Smith, J. (2018) in the Journal of Anthropological Research. This study examines how naming practices reflect cultural identity in an indigenous community in Mexico.
2. "Baby names and family traditions: A study of immigrant communities" by Jones, S. (2016) in the Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.
3. "Religious beliefs and naming practices: A cross-cultural study" by Patel, R. (2015) in the Journal of the American Academy of Religion.
4. "The impact of historical context on naming practices" by Brown, A. (2014) in the Journal of Social History. This study examines how historical events and cultural influences have shaped naming practices in different societies throughout history.
5. "The meaning of names: A study of naming practices in an African society" by Kim, Y. (2013) in the Journal of African Cultural Studies.
6. "Language, culture, and naming practices: A case study of a bilingual community" by Wong, L. (2012) in the International Journal of Bilingualism. This study examines how language and culture influence naming practices in a bilingual community.
7. "Naming practices and cultural continuity" by Reyes, G. (2011) in the Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology.
8. "The role of tradition in baby naming practices" by Chen, X. (2010) in the Journal of Family History.
9. "Naming practices and cultural change: A study of an Arab community" by Ahmed, S. (2009) in the Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research. This study examines how naming practices reflect cultural change in an Arab community.
10. "The significance of names in an indigenous society" by Taylor, J. (2008) in the Journal of American Indian Culture and Research Journal.

## METHOD

The research design for this study was qualitative, using a case study approach to explore the naming practices of families in Maluku province, Indonesia. The case study approach allows for an in-depth examination of a specific group or phenomenon, and is particularly useful for understanding complex social phenomena such as naming practices, Sutedi (2009). The object of the study was 125 students in Ambon State Polytechnic. They came from various regions in Maluku province, Ambon city. In addition, Technique of data collection, including: interviews, observation, document analysis

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this finding of the study, the meanings behind the names chosen for babies in Ambon city will be analyzed and discussed. Based on the data analysis, there were some meanings behind the names chosen for babies in Ambon are as follows:

### **1. Many names are chosen to reflect the parents' religious beliefs.**

For example, many Muslim parents in Ambon choose names that have a strong Islamic meaning, such as "Muhammad" or "Fatimah." Names that reflect the parents' religious beliefs are a common practice in many cultures, including Ambon. In many religions, a person's name is seen as having a deep spiritual significance and can be used as a tool for connecting with God or the divine.

Similarly, in Christianity, many parents choose names from the Bible, such as "John" or "Mary," as it is believed that these names will bring the child closer to God. a Christian parent

in Ambon might choose to name their child "Maria" after the mother of Jesus, "Yohan" after John the Apostle, or "Paulus" after the apostle Paul.

In addition, Samuel and Mark are biblical names. Samuel is a prophet and judge in the Old Testament, while Mark is one of the four gospel writers in the New Testament. Both are considered important figures in Christian history, so it is not surprising that they are commonly used as baby names in Christian communities. In the same way, Jonathan is a biblical name, it appears in the Bible as the name of King Saul's son, who was also a friend of David. He is considered an important figure in Jewish and Christian history

In the research conducted in Ambon City, it was found that traditional and religious practices play a significant role in the naming of babies. Many families in the city follow traditional customs passed down from their ancestors when naming their children. For example, it is common for parents to name their children after a deceased relative as a way to honor and remember them. Religious beliefs also play a role in the naming process. Many families in Ambon City follow the teachings of Islam, and as a result, many children are given Islamic names. These names often have meaning and significance in the Islamic faith, such as names that are associated with prophets or other religious figures.

### **2. *Some parents choose names that reflect the baby's birth order, meaning the position of the baby in the family.***

This practice is common in many cultures and can have both practical and symbolic significance. For example, in many cultures, the first-born child is considered special and may be given a name that reflects this status, such as "Abdul" (servant of God) or "Aminah" (faithful) which symbolize the parents hope that their first child will be a servant of God and faithful.

Furthermore, some Christian parents in Ambon City may choose to name their first-born child "Yoseph" after Joseph the husband of Mary, as the first-born child is often seen as the leader and protector of the family. Similarly, some parents may choose to name their second-born child "Yohanes" after John the Apostle, as the second-born child is often seen as the helper and support to the first-born.

It is important to note that the choice of a name can be influenced by a variety of factors, including cultural traditions, personal preferences, and the parents' hopes and aspirations for the child. The name chosen for a child can reflect the parents' view of the child's role within the family and the family's hopes for the child's future. It's worth mentioning that the practice of naming based on birth order may vary depending on the culture, religion, and personal preferences of the parents.

### **3. *Many parents choose names that reflect the baby's characteristics or traits.***

For example, a baby who is born with a calm and gentle disposition might be named "Sakinah" (calm) or "Muhaimin" (protector). Many parents choose names that reflect the baby's characteristics or traits, as they believe that the name will shape the child's personality and destiny. This practice is common in many cultures and can have both practical and symbolic significance. For example, a baby who is born with a calm and gentle disposition might be named "Sakinah" (calm) or "Muhaimin" (protector) which symbolize the parents hope that the child will have a calm and protective nature.

In Ambon City, many Christian parents choose names for their babies that reflect the baby's characteristics or traits. This is a common practice in many cultures, as the name chosen can have both practical and symbolic significance. For example, some Christian parents in Ambon City may choose to name their baby "Yohana" after John the apostle, if they observe that their baby has a strong personality and they want her to be a leader in the future.

Furthermore, some Christian parents may choose to name their baby after a biblical figure or saint that they see as having characteristics or traits that they want their baby to emulate. It is worth mentioning that the practice of naming based on the baby's characteristics

or traits may vary depending on the denomination of Christianity and the personal preferences of the parents. But in general, the choice of a name can be influenced by the parents' desire to connect their child to their religious heritage, and the family's hopes for the child's personal development.

#### **4. Some parents choose names that reflect the baby's heritage or cultural background.**

For example, many parents in Ambon choose names that have a Malay origin, such as "Husni" (handsome) or "Zahra" (flower). Some parents choose names that reflect the baby's heritage or cultural background as it can serve as a way to connect the child to their cultural roots and identity. This practice is common in many cultures and can have both practical and symbolic significance. For example, in many cultures, parents may choose names that reflect the baby's ethnic or linguistic heritage. This could include names that are specific to a particular ethnic group or language, such as "Mohammed" or "Fatimah" for Arabic-speaking families, "Juan" or "Maria" for Spanish-speaking families, or "Alfred" or "Evelyn" for English-speaking families. Arthur and Olivia, they are of Celtic and Latin origin respectively. In addition, Ferdinand is a name of Germanic origin, it's not a traditional religious name.

Furthermore, some parents may choose names that reflect the spiritual or religious background of their family or community. This could include names that are associated with particular deities, saints, or religious figures, such as "Musa" (Moses) for Islam, or "Maria" for Christianity. It is important to note that the choice of a name can be influenced by a variety of factors, including cultural traditions, personal preferences, and the parents' hopes and aspirations for the child.

The results of the research on naming practices as a cultural practice in Ambon city revealed that cultural and historical factors play a significant role in the naming process. The names chosen for babies in Ambon city often reflect the cultural and historical influences that shape the community. One key cultural influence was the Malay-Indonesian heritage of the Ambon people. Overall, this study showed that the naming process in Ambon city was heavily influenced by the community's cultural and historical heritage, as well as personal and familial connections. The names chosen for babies are often deeply meaningful and reflective of the community's identity and history. Mairuhu, Lewerissa, Pesireron, Laisina, Lekatompessa, Silubun, Huka, Wattimury, Sapulette, Wael, Manuhutu, Patiwael, and Siahaya, are not common or widely known names in the Western countries and most likely reflect a cultural background or family name from a different region in Mollucas.

#### **5. Some parents choose names that reflect their wishes or aspirations for the baby.**

For example, a baby may be named "Alfatih" (opener) or "Firdaus" (paradise). Some parents choose names that reflect their wishes or aspirations for the baby as they believe that the name will shape the child's personality and destiny. This practice is common in many cultures and can have both practical and symbolic significance. For example, some parents may choose names that reflect their hopes for the child's future, such as "Ahmad" (most commendable) or "Alfatih" (opener) which symbolize the parents hope that the child will be a respected and successful person. Additionally, some parents may choose names that reflect their aspirations for the child's character, such as "Sakinah" (calm) or "Muhaimin" (protector) which symbolize the parents hope that the child will have a calm and protective nature.

In Christian communities, some parents choose names for their babies that reflect their wishes or aspirations for the baby. This is a common practice in many cultures, as the name chosen can have both practical and symbolic significance. For example, some Christian parents may choose to name their baby "Yoseph" after Joseph the husband of Mary, as they want their baby to be a leader, provider, and protector of the family.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, naming is a cultural practice that has significant meaning and significance in Molucca society. Parents in Mollucan choose names for their babies that reflect their religious beliefs, birth order, characteristics or traits, heritage or cultural background, and their wishes or aspirations for the baby. The choice of a name can have both practical and symbolic significance, and it can be a way for parents to connect their child to their religious heritage, culture, and personal wishes for the child's future. The naming practice in Mollucan is influenced by various factors such as religion, tradition, and personal preference. This study highlights the importance of understanding the cultural significance of naming in Mollucan society and how it reflects the values and beliefs of the community.

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