

REFRAMING CUSTOMARY INSTITUTIONS AS SOCIO-CULTURAL CAPITAL IN FAMILY EDUCATION: EVIDENCE FROM AN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN INDONESIA

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Abstract : Customary institutions remain an important part of social life in many indigenous communities, yet studies examining their role as socio-cultural capital in strengthening family education are still limited. This study aims to analyze the role of customary institutions in reinforcing family education. The research employed a qualitative case study approach using in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Informants consisted of customary leaders, married couples, and community members selected purposively. The findings reveal that customary institutions contribute significantly to family strengthening through various traditional mechanisms, including Falöwa as a medium for reinforcing kinship relations, Famotu Ono Nihalö as premarital guidance for women, Fanika Era-Era Mböwö as moral education for men, and Amatunowa as a customary forum for family conflict resolution. These practices transmit values of responsibility, respect, solidarity, cooperation, and social harmony across generations. This study concludes that customary institutions function not only as cultural heritage but also as socio-cultural capital that enhances family resilience and maintains social cohesion within indigenous communities.

Keywords : Customary Institutions; Family Education; Socio-cultural Capital.

Abstrak : Lembaga adat masih menjadi bagian penting dari kehidupan sosial di banyak komunitas masyarakat adat, namun kajian yang meneliti perannya sebagai modal sosial budaya dalam memperkuat pendidikan keluarga masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran lembaga adat dalam memperkuat pendidikan keluarga. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif dengan teknik wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Informan terdiri atas tokoh adat, pasangan suami istri, serta anggota masyarakat yang dipilih secara purposif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lembaga adat memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan terhadap penguatan keluarga melalui berbagai mekanisme tradisional, termasuk Falöwa sebagai sarana mempererat hubungan kekerabatan, Famotu Ono Nihalö sebagai pembinaan pranikah bagi perempuan, Fanika Era-Era Mböwö sebagai pendidikan moral bagi laki-laki, serta Amatunowa sebagai forum adat untuk penyelesaian konflik keluarga. Praktik-praktik tersebut mewariskan nilai-nilai tanggung jawab, penghormatan, solidaritas, kerja sama, dan keharmonisan sosial antargenerasi. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa lembaga adat tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai warisan budaya, tetapi juga sebagai modal sosial budaya yang meningkatkan pendidikan keluarga serta menjaga kohesi sosial dalam komunitas masyarakat adat.

Kata Kunci : Lembaga Adat; Pendidikan Keluarga, Modal Sosial-budaya.

INTRODUCTION

The family constitutes the primary foundation of the social structure as well as the first non-formal educational space for shaping individuals' values, attitudes, and character (Alfiah et al., 2026). Before a person becomes familiar with formal schooling or the broader social environment, the family already functions as a natural learning environment in which values of responsibility, social norms, relational patterns, and cultural identity are transmitted through everyday interactions. However, the family institution today faces increasingly complex challenges. Modernization, globalization, social mobility, economic pressures, and digital transformation have altered patterns of interaction among family members and kinship relations. Emotional closeness, which was previously built through direct communication and shared involvement, has begun to decline, replaced by more concise, functional, and limited forms of communication mediated through digital platforms (Hasanovich, 2025; Herawati et al., 2024). This condition has weakened the role of the family as the primary space for transmitting life values, social responsibility, and intergenerational caregiving (Singh & Pandit, 2024).

Amid these challenges, communities possess social resources that can be utilized to strengthen families, namely socio-cultural capital embedded in local institutions. Customary institutions consist of a set of values, norms, rules, and social mechanisms collectively agreed upon and passed down from generation to generation (Mauliddin & Ismail, 2024). In addition to maintaining social order, these institutions also foster networks of trust, solidarity, collective responsibility, and social control that can support harmonious family relationships (Koopman, 2023). From the perspective of non-formal education, customary institutions can be understood as a "school of life" that teaches social values through the example of traditional leaders, community participation, and intergenerational interaction (Usman et al., 2024).

Previous studies indicate that research on customary institutions generally focuses on two main areas. First, customary institutions are understood as mechanisms for conflict resolution, social control, and traditional legal systems in maintaining social order (Arisjulyanto, 2024). Second, they are examined as symbols of cultural identity and instruments for preserving traditions amid modernization (Ninh & Tam, 2026). In the context of Nias society, various studies show that customary practices have a strong influence in regulating patrilineal kinship systems, family formation, and moral commitments in marriage (Gaurifa, 2025; Waruwu et al., 2024). Traditions such as *Owasa*, for instance, are understood as spaces for social deliberation that can restore relationships between families experiencing conflict (Zalukhu et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, an important research gap remains. Most previous studies still position customary institutions as anthropological objects, cultural symbols, or instruments of

traditional law. Meanwhile, studies that examine customary institutions as socio-cultural capital functioning to strengthen family education particularly from a non-formal education perspective remain very limited. In fact, various everyday customary practices, such as marital counselling, family deliberation, and community-based social supervision, demonstrate a clear educational function in building family resilience.

This phenomenon appears particularly noteworthy in Nias Regency, where the divorce rate is relatively low, with only one to three cases recorded annually during the 2022–2023 period (BPS Nias Regency, 2024). This condition is presumed to be associated with the continued strength of customary values, community-based social control, and the involvement of extended families in maintaining marital stability. This is further confirmed by a traditional leader, who stated that the low divorce rate in Nias is influenced by the effective functioning of socio-cultural capital within families through traditional values, customary practices, customary rules, and the role of traditional leaders in preserving family harmony (Interview with WR, February 2026).

One area that represents this condition is Nifalo’o Lauru Village in Nias Regency. In this village, practices such as *Famotu Ono Nihalö* (the provision of advice to brides), *Fanika Era-Era Mböwö* (education on responsibility for men), and *Amatunowa* (a mechanism for resolving family issues through customary deliberation) demonstrate that customary institutions continue to carry out non-formal educational functions embedded in community life. Based on this description, this study aims to analyse how customary institutions function as socio-cultural capital in strengthening family education within the community of Nifalo’o Lauru Village, Nias Regency. The novelty of this research lies in its effort to position customary institutions not merely as cultural traditions, but also as community-based non-formal education systems that transmit values of responsibility, harmony, and family resilience amid the challenges of modernization.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. The selection of a case study design is based on the research objective to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of customary institutions as socio-cultural capital in strengthening family education within a specific community context. This design enables the researcher to examine the phenomenon holistically, contextually, and comprehensively, particularly when the boundaries between the social phenomenon and its environment cannot be clearly distinguished (Yin, 2018). Through this approach, the study not only describes the existence of customary institutions but also explores the values, processes, interactions, and social dynamics that accompany them in family life. The research was conducted in Nifalo’o Lauru

Village, Gido District, Nias Regency, North Sumatra 22871. This location was selected purposively because the community continues to uphold customary values and practices in various aspects of social life, including marriage, kinship relations, conflict resolution, and the intergenerational transmission of values. These conditions make the village relevant research setting for examining the function of customary institutions in strengthening family education

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly through in-depth interviews and field observations. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, which involves deliberately choosing participants based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives. These criteria include active involvement in customary activities, direct experience with customary institutional practices, an understanding of customary values, and a willingness to provide information openly. The research informants include traditional leaders as key informants, married couples or individuals who have experienced customary practices, community leaders, and family members who understand the local social life.

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner using a flexible interview guide, allowing the researcher to explore informants' experiences, perspectives, and interpretations regarding the functions of customary institutions, the forms of socio-cultural capital they possess, and their contributions to family resilience and harmony. Observations were carried out directly on community social interactions, the implementation of customary activities, and family life practices related to customary norms and values. Meanwhile, documentation was used to complement the data through village archives, customary records, activity photographs, and other documents relevant to the research focus.

Secondary data were obtained from various written sources, such as books, journal articles, previous research findings, and academic references discussing social capital, customary institutions, and the strengthening of family education. These data were used to support the analysis, provide a theoretical foundation, and assist in interpreting the field findings. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different informants, while method triangulation involved cross-checking data from interviews, observations, and documentation. This process aims to enhance the credibility, consistency, and accuracy of the research data.

Data analysis employed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved selecting, simplifying, and categorizing data relevant to the

research focus. Data display was presented in the form of thematic narratives to facilitate understanding of the relationships among findings. Finally, conclusions were drawn gradually and continuously throughout the research process through repeated verification of field data, resulting in valid findings regarding the role of customary institutions as socio-cultural capital in strengthening family education in the community of Nifalo'o Luru Village, Nias Regency.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Results

To obtain in-depth data regarding customary institutions as socio-cultural capital in strengthening family education, this study involved informants representing customary leaders, married couples, and community members. The selection of these informants was intended to provide diverse perspectives based on their social roles, experiences, and direct involvement in customary life within the community. Customary leaders were chosen as key informants because of their authority and knowledge regarding customary values, norms, and institutional practices. Meanwhile, married couples and community members were involved as supporting informants to provide experiential perspectives on how customary institutions function in family life.

The diversity of informants enabled the researcher to explore data comprehensively, both from the normative perspective of customary institutions and from the practical experiences of families and community members. Through this combination of informants, the study was able to identify how customary institutions continue to operate as socio-cultural capital in maintaining family values, regulating social relations, and strengthening family resilience in Nifalo'o Luru Village, Nias Regency.

Based on the interviews conducted with informants in Nifalo'o Luru Village, the researcher found that customary institutions in this village still play an important role in the social life of the community, including in strengthening family education. The presence of *Satua Mbanua* as customary elders is regarded as important, as they are considered individuals who possess wisdom and deep understanding of traditions, including matters related to family and community life.

Customary institutions in this village do not merely function in ceremonial activities, but also play a role in shaping family values. This can be seen in various customs and traditions that function as forms of family education within the customary community. These customs and traditions are explained below;

a) *Falöwa* Customary Tradition

The *Falöwa* tradition in Nias society is not merely a marriage event between two individuals, but also a customary mechanism that functions to establish and strengthen family and kinship relationships within the community. Through this tradition, the relationship between the groom's family and the bride's family is not only socially united, but also legitimized through prevailing customary norms and values. *Falöwa* represents the culmination of all stages in the traditional Nias marriage process. During its implementation, this tradition involves all family members from both sides, including the groom's family and the bride's family. The presence of the extended family in this event demonstrates that marriage in Nias society is understood as the union of two kinship groups rather than merely a relationship between two individuals.

Interestingly, *Falöwa* also carries an important social function, namely as a means of reconciliation and restoration of kinship relations. Through the implementation of *Falöwa*, families that previously experienced disputes may be reunited, reconciled, and reminded of their social responsibilities as members of the extended family and wider community. This process is undertaken to maintain harmony and blessings according to custom, so that kinship ties remain well preserved. *Falöwa* also becomes a social space that strengthens family harmony because family members frequently communicate, gather, and meet directly throughout the customary stages carried out during the event.

In the *Falöwa* procession, the entourage from the groom's side (*tome*) proceeds toward the bride's family home in a long procession. At the front of the line is a group of women. Behind them walks the bride and groom, accompanied by two men whose task is to hold an umbrella over the groom as a sign of honour in the customary ceremony. Both the couple and their attendants wear formal suits during the occasion. Behind the bridal entourage is a group of men singing *bölihae* throughout the journey to the bride's house. This song functions to encourage and energize the entourage during the procession to the wedding venue. At the rear of the line is a group of children, two of whom play the *faritia* (small gong). However, the sound of the *faritia* does not directly accompany the *bölihae* song, but rather serves as an additional festive sound that enlivens the atmosphere of the *Falöwa* procession.

Table 1: Summary of Interview Results on Adat Falöwa

Informant	Focus of Statement	Key Statement	Main Meaning/ Finding
WR	Social function of <i>Falöwa</i>	" <i>Falöwa</i> is not only a wedding feast, but also a gathering place for the extended families of both sides. Through <i>Falöwa</i> , relatives who live far away can meet again, and kinship relations become stronger." (Interview with WR, February 2026).	<i>Falöwa</i> functions as a medium for reuniting dispersed relatives and strengthening kinship bonds within the extended family.
MS	Participation and interaction	"When there is a <i>Falöwa</i> , all family members usually come and help, including neighbors. That is where we gather, talk to one another, and strengthen family relationships." (Interview with MS, February 2026).	<i>Falöwa</i> encourages the active participation of family members and neighbors, fostering togetherness and mutual cooperation.
YL	Reconciliation function	"During <i>Falöwa</i> , the extended family can meet and talk with one another. If there were misunderstandings before, usually through customary events like this, relationships can be repaired and rebuilt." (Interview with YL, February 2026).	<i>Falöwa</i> serves as a mechanism for reconciliation, allowing conflicts or misunderstandings among family members to be resolved.
AI	Meaning of marriage	" <i>Falöwa</i> reminds us that marriage is not only the affair of two people, but also unites two extended families, and all family members are involved in the event." (Interview with AI, February 2026).	<i>Falöwa</i> reflects that marriage is a collective matter that unites two extended families, not merely an individual relationship.
DY	Social relevance today	"Nowadays families rarely gather because of their busy lives. But when there is a <i>Falöwa</i> , everyone usually comes, so family relationships can feel close again like before." (Interview with DY, February 2026).	<i>Falöwa</i> remains socially relevant in modern life as a rare occasion for families to gather and restore emotional closeness.

The findings indicate that *Falöwa* functions as more than a ceremonial event; it operates as a socio-cultural mechanism that reinforces kinship solidarity within Nias society. The data reveal three main thematic patterns. *First*, *Falöwa* serves as a space for social integration, where dispersed family members are reunited, and interpersonal communication is strengthened. *Second*, it functions as a mechanism for reconciliation, allowing conflicts or misunderstandings among family members to be resolved through direct interaction. *Third*, *Falöwa* reflects the collective nature of marriage, emphasizing the involvement and responsibility of extended families and

even the wider community. Furthermore, in the context of modern life where family interactions are increasingly limited, *Falöwa* plays an important role in restoring emotional closeness and maintaining social cohesion. The active participation of relatives and neighbours also highlights the values of cooperation and shared responsibility embedded in Nias customary practices.

b) The Tradition of *Famotu Ono Nihalö*

Within the series of *Falöwa* activities described above, there are several traditions that carry educational significance for couples preparing for marriage. One of them is the tradition of *Famotu Ono Nihalö*, namely the giving of advice to the bride by elderly women (*ina-ina*) and family parents. Through this tradition, the bride receives various forms of advice regarding household ethics, responsibilities as a wife, and her role as a mother and member of the extended family within the customary social structure.

Famotu Ono Nihalö (advice to the bride) is considered a highly valuable and important moment that must be carried out so that a young woman is prepared to become a wife and daughter-in-law. The parents of both sides have a responsibility to provide advice to their children during the wedding celebration in Nias society. *Fotu* serves as a sign that the family has conveyed proper teachings to the bride, witnessed also by the groom's side. This tradition is performed by the bride's mother (*mama niowalu*), the wives of the father's brothers (*tana nina*), the village head's wife (*fo'omo zalawa*), customary female elders, and other respected women attending the occasion.

Famotu is carried out as a form of respect toward the bride, indicating that she is ready to establish a family. The advice includes etiquette, dress, ways of sitting, transparent family life, and behavioural changes expected when becoming a mother. The advice also includes how to receive guests who come to the house, such as greeting them properly or offering betel leaves. These teachings reflect Nias cultural values, including moral, social, cultural, aesthetic, and ethical values. If a bride does not receive *Fotu* during her wedding celebration, she may be remembered negatively by society and considered dishonoured. Even if she later makes mistakes in family life, people may ridicule her as a bride who was never properly advised (*ira alawe silö nifotu*).

Table 2: Summary Of Interview Results Tradition of Famotu Ono Nihalö

Informant	Focus of Statement	Key Statement (Quote)	Main Meaning / Finding
WR	Function of the <i>Famotu</i> tradition	"The tradition of <i>Famotu Ono Nihalö</i> , also called <i>Famere</i> , is a tradition of giving advice to the prospective bride. Three days before the wedding, this ceremony is conducted as guidance for household life. In this tradition, the prospective groom also witnesses the event, accompanied by married women from his family." (Interview with WR, February 2026).	- <i>Famotu Ono Nihalö</i> is a vital preparation for the bride before entering married life. - It involves both families and emphasizes the importance of collective guidance.
MS	Ritual process and the bride's emotional experience	"In this tradition, first the prospective groom brings betel leaves as a sign of respect. Then the <i>ina-ina</i> (elder women) from the bride's family advise the bride about the daily routines she will face, including moral and social responsibilities in married life. I felt many and whenever he may be. During this ceremony, the bride usually cries (<i>fame'e</i>) as an expression of emotion, sadness, and respect toward her parents and family because she will leave her parental home to begin a new life with her husband." (Interview with MS, February 2026).	- The tradition begins with a symbolic gesture of respect (betel leaves) from the groom's side. - Elder women provide guidance on daily life, morality, and social responsibilities. - The bride's tears reflect respect, gratitude, and the transition to a new life.
YL	Moral teaching: self-improvement	" <i>henogu fefu mbua-mbua me ono alawe ba'öri'ö khema sae ho, andro nionemö ba wofanömö bua-bua sisökhi.</i> " (Interview with YL, February 2026).	- The bride is advised to abandon negative attitudes and bring good qualities into married life.
YL	Maintaining relationships	" <i>Böi olifu hesokhö ba he sifahuwu khönia, banua nia ena'ö böi olifu ia...</i> " (Interview with YL, February 2026).	- A married woman must not neglect her husband's family, relatives, and community. - She should maintain politeness, including greeting elders with <i>Ya'ahowu</i>.
YL	Good behavior and speech	" <i>Andrö walau'ö aya, noro zalawa sifarumba-rumba...</i> " (Interview with YL, February 2026).	- One must guard their behaviour and

			speech before others. - Good character earns respect regardless of social background.
YL	Respect and responsibility in the new family	"Henogu nö'ö rügi wowatö balefahende ndagö, labe'e khö mbola nafo ba öbizi." (Interview with YL, February 2026).	- The bride is expected to respect family members and carry out household duties properly. - Readiness to respond to family needs is essential.
YL	Woman as a unifier	"Böi ta'agö guti yomo banomo, ta'agö bana, ta'agö falöwalu..." (Interview with YL, February 2026).	- A woman should be like thread and needle that unite, not scissors that divide. - She plays a key role in maintaining family harmony.
DY	Importance of the Famotu tradition	"In my opinion, the Famotu tradition is very important because it is there that a woman is taught how to behave after marriage. The advice given by parents and the ina-ina becomes guidance for the bride in managing married life and maintaining good relations with her husband's family and the community." (Interview with DY, February 2026).	- Famotu provides practical guidance for married life. - The advice from parents and elders becomes a direction for managing family life and building harmonious relationships.

The findings indicate that *Famotu Ono Nihalö* functions as a structured socio-cultural educational mechanism in Nias society. The data reveal four major thematic patterns. *First*, the tradition serves as moral and ethical education, where brides are taught appropriate behaviour, speech, and attitudes expected in married life. *Second*, it functions as preparation for social roles, emphasizing responsibilities as a wife, daughter-in-law, and community member. *Third*, it acts as a mechanism of social control, as the absence of this process may result in negative societal judgment. *Fourth*, the symbolic teachings within the tradition highlight the role of women as unifiers within the family, reinforcing harmony and cohesion. Moreover, the emotional dimension of the ritual reflects the cultural significance of marriage as a life transition, not only socially but also psychologically. Through this process, *Famotu Ono Nihalö*

contributes to the internalization of cultural values, ensuring that family and social norms are preserved across generations.

c) *Fanika Era-Era Mböwö*

The tradition of *Fanika Era-Era Mböwö* is directed toward the groom and functions as a customary mechanism for reinforcing moral, social, and familial responsibilities after marriage. In this tradition, male customary elders provide guidance to the groom regarding his role as a husband, son-in-law, and member of the extended family. In addition, this tradition involves the recalculation and reaffirmation of bride wealth (*mböwö*), emphasizing that marital obligations are not only material but also social and moral commitments between two families. The ritual includes both advisory and evaluative components. The groom receives moral teachings alongside clarification of any remaining customary obligations related to bride wealth. Symbolic actions, such as a physical gesture (e.g., tapping the back), mark the completion of the advisory process. Importantly, unresolved customary obligations may affect the continuation of the marriage process, demonstrating the binding nature of this tradition within Nias society.

Table 3: Summary of Interview Results Tradition of *Fanika Era-Era Mböwö*

Informant	Focus of Statement	Key Statement (Quote)	Main Meaning / Finding
WR	Bridewealth (<i>mböwö</i>)	" <i>Fanika Era-Era Mböwö</i> is the recalculation of all dowry obligations that have been paid or remain unpaid ... <i>hono mböwö no awai, hono mböwö lo sawai.</i> " (Interview with WR, February 2026).	<i>Mböwö</i> is not merely material, but a social responsibility between two families; part has been paid and part remains.
MS	Groom's responsibilities	"The groom receives advice concerning customary debts ... a husband's obligations ... duties as a son-in-law ... and responsibilities as a member of the clan." (Interview with MS, February 2026).	The groom is guided on his duties as husband, son-in-law, and clan member.
MS	Social consequences	"If this advice is ignored, he is required to settle the unpaid bridewealth. If the discussion is not completed, the wedding celebration may be postponed or even canceled." (Interview with MS, February 2026).	Unresolved obligations can delay or cancel the marriage; customary norms function as a strong social control.

AI	Moral teaching (blessing & wisdom)	<i>"Ba noösöfö niwa'öma andre awö menemene ma ba ifahowu'ö fangambötami Lowalangi, ya tobali ami satua, ya tobali ami salawa, ya tobali ami tuwua."</i> (Interview with AI, February 2026).	Obedience to advice brings God's blessing; the couple will become wise leaders, grow in descendants, and prosper.
AI	Behavioral change after marriage	<i>"Yaugö sa no mangowalu, no tobali zatua ba tenga simanöme ono matua yaugö..."</i> (Interview with AI, February 2026).	After marriage, a man must change his way of life in work and attitudes.
AI	Respect for both families	<i>"Öfabe'eni gamuma mö, me satua mö moroi ba zidombua zitengabö'ö."</i> (Interview with AI, February 2026).	The groom now has two families (parents from both sides) to respect and must behave properly.
AI	Respect to wife's relatives	<i>"Fefu ndrasitenge'aboo moroi badambalingambö ira sibayau daö, öfosumangöira."</i> (Interview with AI, February 2026).	All relatives from the bride's side (e.g., uncles) must be respected as one's own family.
AI	Conflict management	<i>"Ba oyi niwaö zatua, aya gamonita ba mbasitö, aya gamonita ba wakhe..."</i> (Interview with AI, February 2026).	Disputes between husband and wife should be resolved privately; no violence or shameful behavior in public.
AI	Proverb: "Do not discard the mat"	<i>"Böi lau sitou dufo."</i>	Do not abandon or divorce the wife without clear reason.
AI	Proverb: "Do not dismantle the container"	<i>"Böi sikoi mbola nia."</i>	Do not destroy the household; protect family unity and maintain family honor.
AI	Hospitality and respect for relatives	<i>"Na matöromböngi ba böi oro'ökohoma zula..."</i>	Relatives who visit must be welcomed, greeted, and treated respectfully; customary obligations are fulfilled through it.
AI	Respect maternal relatives	<i>"He ya'aga soboto ba he ira sibayau ba böwai..."</i>	Relatives from the maternal uncle's side are also family members who must be respected.
AI	Protection of wife	<i>"Böi fofano lö awö."</i>	Husband must protect, care for, and accompany his wife.
AI	Internalizing the advice	<i>"Fo'ömö mböwö ba wamalua falöwa simane..."</i>	All advice must be planted in the heart, not only outwardly, and practiced sincerely.
AI	Sanctions for violation	<i>"Na'ösawö fefu niwaöma..."</i>	If the advice is violated, all customary obligations must be fulfilled; obedience brings blessings and goodness.

The findings demonstrate that *Fanika Era-Era Mböwö* functions as a comprehensive socio-cultural mechanism shaping the groom's responsibilities in married life. Four major thematic patterns emerge from the data. First, the tradition reinforces social and economic responsibility, particularly through the concept of bride wealth (*mböwö*), which symbolizes ongoing obligations between families. Second, it serves as moral and behavioural guidance, emphasizing transformation from single life to responsible adulthood. Third, it functions as a mechanism of social control, where non-compliance with customary norms may result in sanctions, including delays or cancellation of marriage. Fourth, the symbolic proverbs and teachings highlight the importance of family unity, respect, and conflict management, positioning the groom as a central figure in maintaining household harmony. Furthermore, the integration of moral, social, and symbolic teachings within this tradition reflects the holistic nature of customary education in Nias society. Through *Fanika Era-Era Mböwö*, cultural values are internalized and transmitted, ensuring the sustainability of family education and social order.

d) *Amatunowa*

Furthermore, customary institutions in Nias society also possess a family dispute resolution mechanism known as the tradition of *Amatunowa*. This tradition is a customary deliberation forum used to discuss and seek solutions to various problems occurring in family life as well as in the wider community. In this process, customary elders act as mediators who provide consideration and decisions based on the values and customary rules prevailing in society. Through the tradition of *Amatunowa*, various family problems may be resolved collectively through deliberation. Issues commonly discussed in this forum include conflicts between parents and children, land disputes, inheritance distribution, and other social problems occurring within community life. In the settlement process, *satua mbanua* (village customary elders) play an important role as mediators who help both parties find the best solution.

Table 4: Summary of Interview Results Tradition of *Fanika Era-Era Mböwö*

Informant	Focus of Statement	Key Statement (Quote)	Main Meaning / Finding
MS	Conflict resolution process	"When a conflict occurs, the party who feels harmed usually reports the matter to the customary elders. Afterwards, the elders gather several other <i>satua mbanua</i> to	- Conflicts are reported to customary elders. - A customary meeting (<i>Amatunowa</i>) is held with all relevant parties.

		hold a customary meeting. In that meeting, all parties involved in the problem are called to explain the matter. Afterwards, the elders provide advice and considerations based on customary rules and their experience in resolving various community disputes." (Interview with MS, February 2026).	- Elders give advice and decisions based on custom and experience.
MS	Role of elders	"When a conflict occurs, the party who feels harmed usually reports the matter to the customary elders. Afterwards, the elders gather several other <i>satua mbanua</i> to hold a customary meeting. In that meeting, all parties involved in the problem are called to explain the matter. Afterwards, the elders provide advice and considerations based on customary rules and their experience in resolving various community disputes." (Interview with MS, February 2026).	- Elders act as mediators and hold authority in providing solutions accepted by all parties.
AI	Inheritance disputes	"For example, in resolving inheritance disputes, Nias society has certain customary rules regarding the division of family property. In some cases, inheritance in the form of gardens or land is usually given to sons as successors of the family line. If there is more than one son, the inheritance is divided through deliberation by considering family agreement." (Interview with AI, February 2026).	- Inheritance (land/gardens) is given to sons as family successors. - Division is conducted through deliberation and family agreement.
AI	Field verification	"In this process, customary elders usually go directly to the disputed land or garden to ensure that the division is carried out fairly and accepted by all parties." (Interview with AI, February 2026).	- Elders may directly visit the disputed land. - Aims to ensure fairness and acceptance by all parties.
AI	Social sanctions – pregnancy outside marriage	"In cases where a woman becomes pregnant outside marriage without	- Social violations are subject to customary sanctions.

		responsibility from the man involved, the woman's family is usually required to pay customary compensation in the form of a pig weighing four <i>alisi</i> , or approximately twenty kilograms." (Interview with AI, February 2026).	- Compensation (livestock) must be fulfilled as customary obligation.
AI	Elopement cases	"In cases of elopement, the man is obliged to marry the woman according to custom. The woman's family first settles certain customary obligations ... ranging from five million to fifty million rupiah." (Interview with AI, February 2026).	- Relationships must be legitimized through customary marriage. - Customary and bridewealth obligations must be met.
AI	Social limitation	"Women who marry through elopement or through processes considered inconsistent with proper customary procedures usually face limitations in participating in certain customary traditions, such as <i>Famotu Ono Nihalö</i> together with other women in the community." (Interview with AI, February 2026).	- Non-customary marriages have social consequences. - Affects participation in certain customary activities.
WR	Principle of equality	"Ba zitoolonia ba mbanua da andre, ba natolu noronia macua ba labagi tolu kabu da." (Interview with WR, February 2026).	- Inheritance must be divided fairly and equally among children.
WR	Limitation principle	"Boi moi fidoni ebua khomi zambua zamasona..." (Interview with WR, February 2026).	- Do not desire or demand more than what has been fairly decided in deliberation.
WR	Moral consequence	"Banalolarongo gametila, lalau mangandro kho malaika zatua." (Interview with WR, February 2026).	- Ignoring customary rules brings moral or spiritual consequences from the ancestors.
WR	Obligation to obey	"Ba fehedama andre ba boi misawo." (Interview with WR, February 2026).	- All advice, provisions, and decisions must be obeyed and not violated.

In addition to family and inheritance disputes, the tradition of *Amatunowa* is also used to resolve other social issues, such as cases of elopement or women becoming pregnant outside marriage. In such cases, the customary elders convene a

meeting to discuss the matter and determine the customary sanctions that must be carried out by those who violated social norms. For example, in cases where a woman becomes pregnant outside marriage without responsibility from the man involved, the woman's family is usually required to pay customary compensation in the form of a pig weighing four *alisi*, or approximately twenty kilograms. This sanction cannot be replaced with money because it is believed to be a customary provision established by the ancestors and therefore must be obeyed by the community. If such a provision is violated, people believe it may bring misfortune upon the family concerned.

After the customary obligation has been fulfilled, the woman is usually married to a man willing to accept her as his wife, even if he is not the man responsible for the pregnancy. In some cases, the man may be a widower or another man willing to marry her. Afterwards, the *ina-ina* provide prayers and advice to the woman before she is sent to her husband's house. In this procession, the woman usually does not wear customary dress and is not carried ceremonially as in ordinary Nias customary weddings. This differs from cases of elopement involving couples who had previously been in a relationship. In such situations, the man is obliged to marry the woman according to custom. To resolve the matter, the woman's family usually first settles certain customary obligations that have been mutually agreed upon, which in some cases may reach approximately six million rupiah. Thereafter, the man is also required to pay *böwö* or bridewealth to the woman's family according to the agreement of both parties, usually ranging from ten million to fifty million rupiah.

After all customary obligations have been fulfilled, the woman is sent to the man's family home on foot after receiving prayers from the *ina-ina*. However, within the customary life of Nias society, women who marry through elopement or through processes considered inconsistent with proper customary procedures usually face limitations in participating in certain customary traditions, such as *Famotu Ono Nihalö* together with other women in the community.

Based on the interview results, it can be concluded that the tradition of *Amatunowa* is a customary conflict resolution mechanism that plays an important role in maintaining the harmony and stability of family education in Nias society. This tradition serves as a collective deliberation space that enables family and social problems to be resolved jointly through principles of justice, balance, and respect for customary values. The role of *satua mbanua* as mediators demonstrates that customary institutions possess authority in regulating, mediating, and issuing decisions accepted by all parties. Through this process, conflicts are not only formally settled, but are also directed toward restoring social relationships and preserving the unity of the

extended family. In addition, the existence of binding customary rules, including inheritance division and the settlement of social violations, shows that *Amatunowa* also functions as a form of social control regulating individual behavior in family and community life.

2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that customary institutions in Nifalo'o Lauru Village continue to play a significant role in strengthening family education. However, unlike previous studies that predominantly position customary institutions as cultural symbols or traditional legal mechanisms, this study shows that they actively function as socio-cultural capital embedded in everyday family life. This finding is important in addressing the existing research gap, particularly in understanding customary institutions from a non-formal education perspective.

The presence of *Satua Mbanua* (customary elders) reflects figures who possess cultural authority, wisdom, and a deep understanding of traditional values (Zalukhu et al., 2025). Their role is not limited to ceremonial functions, but extends to guiding, advising, and maintaining social balance within families and the wider community. This supports the argument that customary institutions consist of values, norms, and social mechanisms that are collectively agreed upon and transmitted across generations (Mauliddin & Ismail, 2024).

From the perspective of social capital, these findings indicate that customary institutions function as mechanisms that foster trust, norms, and social networks within society (Suaib, 2023). In this context, customary institutions strengthen family cohesion by reinforcing solidarity, collective responsibility, and social control (Radjak et al., 2024). This is consistent with previous studies showing that customary practices contribute significantly to maintaining family resilience through shared values and cooperation (Fitria et al., 2024). However, this study extends these findings by emphasizing that such roles are not only symbolic but are continuously reproduced through everyday social interactions and practices within families.

Furthermore, customary institutions can also be understood as spaces of non-formal education, where values are transmitted through participation, interaction, and example. This aligns with the view that local cultural practices function as "learning spaces" that shape individual behaviour and social responsibility (Usman et al., 2024). In this regard, customary institutions do not merely regulate social life but also play an active role in educating individuals and strengthening family dynamics.

The *Falöwa* tradition, as identified in this study, illustrates how customary practices function as concrete mechanisms for strengthening family education. The findings show that *Falöwa* is not merely a marriage event between two individuals, but a social process that unites and strengthens relationships between two extended families. This supports previous findings that marriage in Nias society is collective in nature and involves broader kinship networks (Zalukhu et al., 2025).

Falöwa also functions as a space for social interaction and communication among family members. Through this process, relatives who rarely meet can reconnect, strengthen emotional bonds, and rebuild relationships (Zalukhu et al., 2025). In some cases, *Falöwa* becomes a medium for reconciliation among family members who previously experienced conflict or misunderstanding (Laia et al., 2024). This finding is consistent with Arisjulyanto (2024), who argues that customary traditions function not only as cultural practices but also as mechanisms for conflict resolution. Similarly, Usman et al. (2024) emphasize that local cultural practices can serve as effective instruments in maintaining social harmony within society. From a social capital perspective, *Falöwa* reflects the strengthening of social relationships through intensive interaction, cooperation, and collective participation. The observational findings showing active involvement of family members and the community indicate the presence of strong social bonds, trust, and shared responsibility. These elements are central to the concept of social capital, which highlights the role of social networks and norms in sustaining social life (Suaib, 2023).

Moreover, *Falöwa* can also be interpreted as a process of value transmission, where values such as togetherness, solidarity, and social responsibility are reproduced across generations. This supports previous studies indicating that collective cultural practices play a crucial role in strengthening social relationships and maintaining family integration in traditional communities (Usman et al., 2024). However, this study provides a more specific contribution by showing how these values are embedded within concrete customary practices that directly influence family education. From a non-formal education perspective, *Falöwa* serves as a medium through which individuals learn social roles, responsibilities, and norms through direct participation. This indicates that customary institutions function not only as cultural preservation mechanisms but also as informal educational systems that shape family behavior and relationships.

Nevertheless, it is important to critically consider the sustainability of this role in the context of modernization. While the findings show that *Falöwa* remains actively practiced, previous studies have indicated that modernization and social change can influence patterns of interaction and value transmission within families (Herawati et al.,

2024; Hasanovich, 2025). This suggests that the continuity of customary practices as socio-cultural capital may depend on their ability to adapt to changing social conditions.

The findings of this study indicate that the *Famotu Ono Nihalö* tradition plays a strategic role in strengthening family education, particularly through the preparation of women for married life. While previous studies describe this tradition as a process of giving advice by elderly women (*ina-ina*) and experienced family members (Laia et al., 2024), this study demonstrates that its function extends beyond symbolic guidance into a structured socio-cultural educational mechanism embedded within customary institutions.

From a socio-cultural capital perspective, *Famotu Ono Nihalö* can be understood as a mechanism for transmitting norms, values, and social expectations that regulate family life. The advice delivered during this process reflects collectively agreed standards regarding women's roles, responsibilities, and behaviour within both nuclear and extended family structures. This supports the argument that customary institutions function as systems of values and norms that are reproduced across generations to maintain social order (Mauliddin & Ismail, 2024). In this context, *Famotu Ono Nihalö* contributes to strengthening family education by ensuring that individuals enter marriage with a shared understanding of social responsibilities and relational ethics.

Furthermore, this tradition reflects the characteristics of non-formal education that is contextual, experiential, and value oriented. Unlike formal education, the learning process in *Famotu Ono Nihalö* occurs through direct interaction, observation, and the authority of experienced individuals. This aligns with the concept of social learning, where individuals acquire knowledge and behaviour through engagement within their social environment (Said et al., 2024). At the same time, it reinforces the view that community-based cultural practices function as effective educational spaces that shape individual character and social responsibility (Usman et al., 2024). This study thus strengthens previous findings by showing that such educational processes are not incidental but are systematically embedded within customary practices.

In addition to its educational role, *Famotu Ono Nihalö* also functions as a form of social control. The existence of social expectations and community judgments toward women who do not undergo this process indicates that customary norms operate as binding mechanisms within society. This finding supports the view that local cultural values regulate individual behaviour through unwritten yet socially enforced norms (Zubaedi, 2013). Moreover, it confirms that customary institutions maintain social order not only through formal sanctions but also through collective awareness and social pressure (Mauliddin & Ismail, 2024).

However, this study also reveals a critical dimension that requires attention. While *Famotu Ono Nihalö* strengthens family education through value internalization, it simultaneously reflects a gendered structure of responsibility, where women are positioned as central actors in maintaining family harmony. This raises important questions regarding the balance of roles between men and women in contemporary contexts. In the era of modernization and shifting gender dynamics, such expectations may require reinterpretation to remain relevant and equitable. Previous studies have shown that social change and modernization can influence patterns of interaction and value transmission within families (Herawati et al., 2024; Hasanovich, 2025), suggesting that the sustainability of this tradition depends on its adaptability.

The observational findings further reinforce the analytical interpretation of this tradition. The structured and emotionally charged advisory process, including expressions such as the bride's crying (*fame'e*), indicates a deep process of value internalization and psychological transition. This suggests that *Famotu Ono Nihalö* is not merely a transfer of knowledge, but also a transformative experience that prepares individuals emotionally and socially for their new roles. The involvement of the groom as a witness also indicates that the values conveyed are socially recognized and collectively legitimized, rather than being purely individual guidance.

These findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing that cultural practices function as effective means of social education in shaping individual character and maintaining family values (Rozikin et al., 2025). Similarly, studies in other customary communities show that customary institutions strengthen family resilience through value transmission, role modeling, and the reinforcement of social norms (Manuputty et al., 2024; Sonia & Sarwoprasodjo, 2020). However, this study contributes more specifically by demonstrating how these processes occur in a structured and ritualized form that directly targets marital readiness and family formation.

Therefore, *Famotu Ono Nihalö* can be understood not only as a cultural tradition but as a form of socio-cultural capital that integrates educational, normative, and social control functions. Through the internalization of values such as respect, responsibility, and harmony, this tradition contributes significantly to strengthening family education. At the same time, it highlights the importance of viewing customary institutions as dynamic systems that must continuously adapt to changing social conditions to sustain their relevance in contemporary society.

The findings of this study indicate that the *Fanika Era-Era Mböwö* tradition plays a crucial role in strengthening family education, particularly through the preparation of men for their social and familial responsibilities after marriage. While it is commonly understood as a process related to the recalculation of dowry (*mböwö*), this study shows

that its function extends beyond economic aspects into a normative and educational mechanism embedded within customary institutions. From a socio-cultural perspective, the concept of *mböwö* represents more than a material obligation; it functions as a symbol of social commitment and relational responsibility between two extended families. The process of recalculating both paid and unpaid dowry reinforces the continuity of obligations and mutual respect that must be maintained after marriage. This supports the argument of Waruwu et al. (2024), who emphasize that marriage in Nias society is fundamentally a union between extended families rather than merely an individual relationship. In this context, *Fanika Era-Era Mböwö* strengthens family education by ensuring that marital relationships are embedded within a broader framework of social accountability.

Furthermore, this tradition reflects a form of non-formal education that specifically targets the moral and social development of the groom. The advice delivered by male customary elders contains guidance on responsibilities as a husband, respect toward parents and in-laws, and the ability to maintain harmony within the household. These values indicate that masculinity within the customary context is constructed not only in terms of economic provision, but also in terms of moral leadership and social responsibility (Zubaedi, 2013). This finding extends previous studies by showing that customary institutions actively shape gender roles through structured and culturally embedded learning processes.

From the perspective of social learning, the interaction between customary elders and the groom reflects a process in which knowledge is transmitted through experience, observation, and symbolic communication (Mauliddin & Ismail, 2024). The use of metaphors, symbolic gestures (such as tapping the groom's back), and traditional expressions enhances the internalization of values, making them more memorable and meaningful in everyday life. This supports the view that culturally embedded learning processes are more effective in shaping behaviour compared to abstract or formal instruction.

In addition to its educational role, *Fanika Era-Era Mböwö* also functions as a mechanism of social control. The existence of customary consequences, such as the obligation to fulfil outstanding dowry payments, demonstrates that social norms are reinforced through both symbolic meaning and material accountability. Moreover, the requirement to complete this tradition as part of the marriage process indicates that adherence to customary values is not optional but constitutes a fundamental aspect of social legitimacy within the community (Hura & Firdaus, 2022). This finding aligns with Koopman (2023), who argues that customary practices in traditional societies serve as

instruments for regulating social relations and maintaining structural stability within families.

The observational findings further strengthen this analysis by showing that the implementation of *Fanika Era-Era Mböwö* is conducted in a formal, structured, and symbolically rich manner. The authority of male customary elders plays a central role in legitimizing the values conveyed, while the serious and attentive attitude of the groom indicates a process of deep value internalization (Fakhyadi et al., 2025). This suggests that the tradition is not merely ceremonial, but functions as a transformative moment in which individuals transition into socially recognized roles within the family and community.

However, this study also highlights a critical dimension regarding the sustainability of this tradition in the context of social change. As modernization influences patterns of gender relations and individual autonomy, the expectations placed on men as primary bearers of responsibility may undergo transformation. This raises important questions about how such customary norms can adapt to contemporary values while maintaining their core functions. Previous studies have shown that social change can affect value transmission and role expectations within families (Herawati et al., 2024; Hasanovich, 2025), suggesting that the continuity of *Fanika Era-Era Mböwö* depends on its flexibility in responding to evolving social dynamics.

Therefore, *Fanika Era-Era Mböwö* can be understood as a form of socio-cultural capital that integrates economic, moral, and social dimensions within family formation. Through the internalization of values such as responsibility, commitment, and respect, this tradition contributes significantly to strengthening family education. At the same time, it demonstrates that customary institutions function not only as cultural heritage, but also as dynamic systems of non-formal education and social regulation that shape family resilience in customary communities

The findings of this study indicate that the *Amatunowa* tradition functions as a central mechanism within customary institutions for resolving family and social conflicts. While it is commonly understood as a deliberative forum, this study demonstrates that *Amatunowa* operates as a multi-dimensional socio-cultural system that integrates conflict resolution, social regulation, and value reinforcement within community life. From a socio-cultural capital perspective, *Amatunowa* reflects the existence of strong social networks, shared norms, and collective trust that enable communities to manage conflict internally. The active involvement of *satua mbanua* (customary elders) illustrates the role of culturally legitimate authority in mediating disputes and guiding decision-making processes. This supports the argument that customary institutions function not merely as cultural symbols but as operational social

systems that maintain order and regulate behavior (Arisjulyanto, 2024). In this context, *Amatunowa* contributes to strengthening family education by ensuring that conflicts are resolved in ways that preserve relationships rather than damage them.

Furthermore, the deliberative nature of *Amatunowa* highlights the importance of participatory and consensus-based decision-making. Unlike formal legal systems that tend to be adversarial and outcome oriented, *Amatunowa* emphasizes dialogue, mutual understanding, and collective agreement. This aligns with the concept of community-based conflict resolution, in which social harmony is achieved through inclusive participation and shared responsibility (Christens, 2019). The findings suggest that such an approach is particularly effective in family-related conflicts, where emotional ties and long-term relationships are central considerations.

In addition, *Amatunowa* also functions as a mechanism of restorative justice. The application of customary sanctions in cases such as inheritance disputes, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, or elopement demonstrates that the goal of conflict resolution is not merely to impose punishment, but to restore social balance and repair damaged relationships. Sanctions such as fines or the fulfilment of customary obligations reflect forms of accountability that are socially recognized and collectively enforced. This supports the view that customary sanctions are understood as moral agreements rather than coercive measures (Neupert-Wentz, 2024). Thus, *Amatunowa* strengthens family education by ensuring that social disruptions are addressed in ways that reinforce, rather than undermine, communal cohesion.

From the perspective of social regulation, *Amatunowa* also serves as a form of social control. The binding nature of customary decisions and the expectation of compliance indicate that norms within the community are strongly internalized. This finding is consistent with the argument that customary institutions establish behavioural boundaries and maintain social order through collectively upheld values and norms (Arisjulyanto, 2024). Moreover, the integration of moral considerations, fairness, and kinship relations in decision-making processes shows that social regulation within *Amatunowa* is not rigid, but context-sensitive and relational. The role of *Amatunowa* in managing inheritance disputes further illustrates how customary institutions integrate legal, social, and cultural dimensions. Decisions are not based solely on formal ownership rights, but also consider fairness, family harmony, and mutual agreement. This supports previous findings that customary institutions are effective in mitigating social conflict and maintaining balance within communities (Bella et al., 2019). At the same time, this study extends these insights by showing that such mechanisms are

directly linked to the strengthening of family education, particularly through the preservation of relational stability.

However, it is important to critically consider the challenges faced by *Amatunowa* in the context of modernization and legal pluralism. As formal legal systems and state regulations become more dominant, there is a potential tension between customary decision-making and formal legal frameworks. In addition, increasing individualism and changing social values may influence the willingness of community members to fully adhere to collective decisions. This suggests that the effectiveness of *Amatunowa* as socio-cultural capital depends on its ability to adapt and remain relevant within evolving social and legal contexts.

The observational findings further reinforce this analysis by showing that *Amatunowa* is conducted in an open, participatory, and consensus-oriented manner. The opportunity for all parties to express their views, combined with the guiding role of customary elders, creates a process that is both inclusive and authoritative. The serious yet familial atmosphere of deliberation indicates that the process functions not only as a problem-solving mechanism but also as a space for reinforcing social relationships and collective identity. This demonstrates that *Amatunowa* is not merely reactive to conflict, but also proactive in maintaining social cohesion within families and the wider community.

Therefore, *Amatunowa* can be understood as a form of socio-cultural capital that integrates conflict resolution, social control, and restorative justice within a single customary framework. Through its emphasis on deliberation, fairness, and relational balance, this tradition plays a significant role in strengthening family education. Moreover, it highlights the importance of viewing customary institutions as dynamic systems that contribute not only to cultural preservation but also to the sustainability of social harmony in contemporary society.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that customary institutions in Nifalo'o Lauru Village continue to function as active socio-cultural capital in strengthening family education through practices such as *Falöwa*, *Famotu Ono Nihalö*, *Fanika Era-Era Mböwö*, and *Amatunowa*. These traditions operate as living systems that transmit values of responsibility, solidarity, kinship cohesion, and conflict resolution, indicating that family resilience in local communities is sustained not only by formal institutions but also by culturally embedded practices. The study contributes to the social capital perspective by highlighting customary institutions as arenas of trust, norms, and intergenerational value transmission, while also offering novelty in positioning them as practical mechanisms for maintaining family harmony and social

cohesion in contemporary contexts. However, this research is limited to a single case study and qualitative approach, thus restricting generalizability; therefore, future studies are recommended to conduct comparative research across different communities and explore the transformation of customary institutions in the context of modernization.

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