

Family Conflict Resolution Patterns: A Study of Wet Sesait in North Lombok

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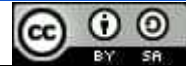
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Abstract

This study examines the patterns of family conflict resolution practiced by the Sesait Customary Law Community (Wet Sesait) in North Lombok. Using a legal sociology approach with qualitative methods, this research analyzes the integration between Tau Lokaq Empat (the traditional leadership structure) and the Majelis Krama Desa (MKD) in resolving family conflicts. Tau Lokaq Empat consists of four pillars: Mangku Gumi (traditional/adat leader), Jintaka (socio-economic leader), Penghulu (religious leader), and Pemusungan (governmental leader). The MKD, established under North Lombok Regent Regulation No. 20 of 2017, functions as a formal village institution integrating three legal systems: positive law, customary law, and religious law. Research findings reveal that conflict resolution follows a structured yet flexible procedure involving complaint submission, victim-centered verification, formal meetings integrating all four Tau Lokaq Empat pillars, and participatory mediation that synthesizes positive law, customary, and religious perspectives. The binding force of MKD decisions derives from dual legitimacy: formal legal legitimacy through the regent's regulation and socio-cultural legitimacy through the involvement of Tau Lokaq Empat. This integrative model demonstrates constructive legal pluralism in practice, where different legal systems function as complementary resources that create comprehensive and contextual justice, rather than competing entities. This study contributes to understanding how indigenous communities maintain traditional conflict resolution mechanisms while adapting to formal legal systems, offering important lessons for victim-centered restorative justice approaches.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Family conflict is an unavoidable social phenomenon in any society. Such conflicts may take various forms, including marital disputes, domestic violence, inheritance disputes, and child custody matters. In the context of Indonesia as a country that adheres to a pluralistic legal system, the resolution of family conflicts is carried out not only through formal court processes, but also through customary law mechanisms deeply embedded in local communities (Suci Ramadhani Putri, 2025). The existence of dispute resolution mechanisms based on customary law reflects the continuity of traditional values and norms still upheld by indigenous communities across Indonesia (Jailani & Faaisal, 2023).

The Sesait Customary Law Community (Wet Sesait) in North Lombok represents one such indigenous community that continues to maintain a dispute resolution system

grounded in local wisdom. Located in Kayangan District, North Lombok Regency, the Sesait community possesses a unique approach to managing internal conflicts, particularly family conflicts (Nirmala & Taufik, 2024). This uniqueness lies in the integration between the Majelis Krama Desa (MKD), a village-level institution established under North Lombok Regent Regulation No. 20 of 2017, and the traditional institution of Tau Lokaq Empat, which represents the customary governance structure of Wet Sesait (Zahra Nirmala et al., 2023).

The MKD is a village institution regulated by the regent's regulation and is present in all villages in North Lombok, including Sesait Village. Based on North Lombok Regent Regulation No. 20 of 2017, the MKD functions as a comprehensive forum for resolving community disputes at the village level (Mariani et al., 2025). The MKD does not rely solely on customary law; rather, it integrates three pillars representing the three legal systems applicable in Indonesia: positive law (village governance), customary law (traditional leaders), and religious law (religious leaders) in the conflict resolution process (Hidayat & Pratiwi, 2022).

Tau Lokaq Empat is a traditional leadership structure unique to Wet Sesait, consisting of four elements: (1) Mangku Gumi (the traditional adat leader of Sesait); (2) Jintaka (the leader managing socio-economic affairs of Wet Sesait); (3) Penghulu (the religious leader of Wet Sesait); and (4) Pemusungan (the leader managing administrative affairs or village head, who must be a descendant of Wet Sesait). These four elements form the leadership pillars that have long existed within the social structure of the Sesait community (Zahra Nirmala et al., 2023).

In practice, family conflict resolution in Sesait Village demonstrates a close relationship between the MKD as the formal village institution and Tau Lokaq Empat as the customary leadership structure. Every conflict resolved by the MKD involves Tau Lokaq Empat as the representative of living customary values within the community. This involvement reflects the effort to integrate Indonesia's three legal systems (positive law, Islamic/religious law, and customary law) while maintaining the customary leadership structure deeply rooted in Sesait society.

A notable aspect of the conflict resolution practice in Sesait Village is the possibility of a two-stage resolution process. The first stage involves resolution by Tau Lokaq Empat using customary values and customary sanctions. The second stage involves resolution through the MKD, which focuses on mediation efforts to bring together the three legal systems present in Indonesia. These two mechanisms are not separate but are interrelated and complementary in creating comprehensive and just conflict resolution.

The conflict resolution approach adopted is also oriented toward victim recovery and victim protection. This is aligned with the philosophy of customary law, which emphasizes cosmic balance and social harmony (Mahmudi & Setiawan, 2023). This restorative approach differs from the formal judicial system, which tends to be adversarial and focused on imposing sanctions.

Several previous researchers have conducted studies on customary law-based dispute resolution in Lombok, particularly within the Sesait Customary Law Community. The first study, titled "Analysis of Out-of-Court Dispute Resolution Based on Customary Law as a Guarantee of Indigenous Rights Protection in Lombok Island" (Jailani & Faaisal, 2023), identifies that customary law-based dispute resolution plays a strategic role in guaranteeing indigenous rights protection, with high effectiveness in creating sustainable and mutually acceptable solutions.

The second study, titled "Implementation of Customary Dispute Resolution Through Customary Institutions in North Lombok Regency" (Mahardika et al., 2022), focuses specifically on the North Lombok context, exploring various customary institutions

and finding that they possess diverse organizational structures, with resolution processes conducted through deliberation and consensus. This study identifies variations in customary sanctions ranging from verbal warnings and customary fines to social ostracism.

The third study, titled "The Binding Force of Criminal Dispute Resolution Through Tau Lokaq Empat in the Wet Sesait Indigenous Community" (Zahra Nirmala et al., 2023), provides an in-depth analysis of Tau Lokaq Empat as the primary pillar in criminal case resolution. Findings indicate that decisions made through the Tau Lokaq Empat process carry strong binding force within the Sesait community, despite lacking the formal executive authority of district court decisions. This binding force derives from strong socio-cultural legitimacy, as the Sesait community regards Tau Lokaq Empat decisions as just because they consider multiple legal perspectives and involve respected figures.

From the above studies, several research gaps can be identified. First, although the concept of Tau Lokaq Empat and victim-centered approaches have been examined, no comprehensive analysis has integrated both aspects within the specific context of family conflict resolution. Second, there has been no in-depth study of the relationship between the MKD as a formal village institution and Tau Lokaq Empat as a customary leadership structure, nor how the two work integratively to resolve family conflicts. Third, the theoretical perspective remains limited and has not employed an analytical framework that simultaneously integrates conflict transformation theory, legal systems theory, legal pluralism, and indigenous legal knowledge. This study seeks to fill these gaps by comprehensively analyzing family conflict resolution patterns in Wet Sesait.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the patterns of family conflict resolution practiced by the Sesait Customary Law Community in North Lombok. Specifically, this research seeks to: (1) identify the mechanisms and procedures for family conflict resolution conducted by the MKD with involvement of Tau Lokaq Empat; (2) analyze the roles of various actors involved in the conflict resolution process; (3) examine how plural legal systems are integrated in conflict resolution practice; and (4) evaluate the binding force of MKD decisions and their orientation toward victim recovery and protection.

2. METHOD

This study employs a legal sociology approach with qualitative methods to understand the phenomenon of family conflict resolution in the Sesait Customary Law Community (Creswell, 2007). This approach was chosen because the research not only examines the normative aspects of customary law but also analyzes how law is practiced in social reality, including the interaction among various legal systems embodied in the concepts of Tau Lokaq Empat and Majelis Krama Desa.

The research location is Sesait Village, Kayangan District, North Lombok Regency. This location was selected on the grounds that the Sesait community possesses an active customary institution with the Tau Lokaq Empat mechanism. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with key informants including members of Tau Lokaq Empat, MKD members, and community members directly involved in conflict resolution processes. Participant observation was also conducted during MKD sessions, and documentation was gathered from relevant regulatory documents.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques, wherein data was categorized into relevant themes (Niam et al., 2024). The analysis process began with transcription of interview data, followed by coding to identify patterns, particularly regarding the implementation of Tau Lokaq Empat and the orientation toward victim recovery. Themes were analyzed using the following theoretical frameworks: conflict transformation theory (Johan Galtung), legal systems theory (Lawrence M. Friedman), legal pluralism theory (Sally Engle Merry), and indigenous legal knowledge (Franz and Keebet

von Benda-Beckmann). Data triangulation was employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Overview of the *Sesait Customary Law Community*

The *Sesait Customary Law Community* is an indigenous community that continues to exist in North Lombok Regency with distinct socio-cultural characteristics. The community predominantly adheres to Islam; however, religious practices are influenced by customary values and local wisdom passed down through generations.

3.2 *The Tau Lokaq Empat Customary Leadership Structure*

Within the customary governance system, *Wet Sesait* possesses a unique hierarchical leadership structure known as *Tau Lokaq Empat* (Zahra Nirmala et al., 2023). Etymologically, "Tau" means person, "Lokaq" means pillar, and "Empat" means the number four thus it can be interpreted as the four pillars that support the social life of the *Sesait* community. The four pillars are as follows:

First, *Mangku Gumi* is the highest traditional figure in the *Wet Sesait* leadership structure. *Mangku Gumi* holds authority in leading customary ceremonies, preserving cultural values, and rendering decisions on customary matters. In conflict resolution, *Mangku Gumi* plays a role in providing customary law perspectives and ensuring that the resolution reached does not contradict the customary values deeply rooted in the community.

Second, *Jintaka* is the figure who manages the social and economic aspects of *Wet Sesait*. *Jintaka* bears responsibility for regulating and managing community economic activities, including the management of natural resources, agricultural systems, and community economic welfare.

Third, *Penghulu* is the religious figure in *Wet Sesait* who holds authority in religious affairs. The *Penghulu* typically possesses deep knowledge of Islamic teachings and serves as the spiritual leader of the community. In family conflict resolution, the *Penghulu* provides Islamic law perspectives and moral-spiritual guidance. The *Penghulu* also frequently leads the mediation process, as they are regarded as possessing high moral integrity and being trusted by all parties. The *Penghulu's* role is critical in ensuring that conflict resolution aligns with religious values and cultivates spiritual awareness among the conflicting parties.

Fourth, *Pemusungan* is the figure managing governance aspects within *Wet Sesait*. The *Pemusungan* may be equated with the village head or governmental leader, but with the specific requirement that the holder of this position must be a descendant of *Wet Sesait*. This requirement reflects the principle of leadership legitimacy, which is based not only on formal legality but also on genealogical ties to the indigenous community.

The philosophy of *Tau Lokaq Empat* is grounded in the understanding that justice and social order are only achieved when the four dimensions of human life (cultural-traditional, socio-economic, moral-spiritual, and legal-formal) function harmoniously (Zahra Nirmala et al., 2023). Conflict is viewed as a disruption to this harmony, and its resolution must involve all four dimensions to achieve comprehensive recovery. In practice, *Tau Lokaq Empat* functions as a checks-and-balances mechanism, wherein each pillar possesses its own role and authority while mutually overseeing and complementing each other.

3.3 *The Majelis Krama Desa (MKD) as a Conflict Resolution Institution*

The *Majelis Krama Desa (MKD)* is a village institution established under North Lombok Regent Regulation No. 20 of 2017 concerning Guidelines for the Village

Krama Assembly (Suci Ramadhani Putri, 2025). The MKD exists in all villages in North Lombok Regency, including Sesait Village. The existence of the MKD receives formal legitimacy from the regent's regulation, which strengthens its position as a legally recognized dispute resolution institution.

The background for the enactment of Regent Regulation No. 20 of 2017 was to preserve values deeply embedded in the North Lombok community since ancient times. The primary value in question is deliberation for consensus (*musyawarah untuk mufakat*): when a dispute or conflict arises, resolution through deliberation and consensus is prioritized. This value is not only embedded in the North Lombok community but has also become part of the local wisdom principles of the Sasak ethnic group on a broader scale (Suci Ramadhani Putri, 2025).

According to Regent Regulation No. 20 of 2017, the MKD performs several functions: first, facilitating mediation of disputes occurring within the village community; second, developing coordination and cooperation among village institutions and the Village Government in preserving cultural values that grow and develop in the village; and third, documenting and inventorying values and norms developed or developing within the community. The disputes referred to in these provisions include minor criminal offenses (*tipiring*) that involve complaints, civil cases, or customary disputes (Hidayat & Pratiwi, 2022).

An important aspect to understand is that the Regent's Regulation on the MKD stipulates that in resolving any conflict, three elements must be involved: community figures (in this case, customary leaders), religious leaders, and the village government. These three elements represent the three legal systems in Indonesia: positive law (village government), Islamic/religious law (religious leaders), and customary law (customary leaders). This is consistent with the purpose of establishing the MKD as a forum for bringing together the various legal systems alive in the community.

3.4 Integration of Tau Lokaq Empat and MKD in Conflict Resolution

In the practice of family conflict resolution in Sesait Village, there exists a close relationship between Tau Lokaq Empat as the customary leadership structure and the MKD as the formal village institution. This relationship is integrative and mutually complementary. Every conflict resolved by the MKD involves Tau Lokaq Empat, either directly or indirectly.

A notable feature of the practice in Sesait Village is the possibility of a two-stage conflict resolution process. The first stage involves resolution through the Tau Lokaq Empat mechanism, which emphasizes customary values and sanctions. At this stage, conflicts are resolved with reference to the customary law deeply rooted in Sesait society, with sanctions in the form of customary fines, customary ceremonies to restore balance, or other social sanctions. This process is more informal yet carries very strong cultural legitimacy.

The second stage involves resolution through the MKD, which focuses on mediation efforts to bring together the three legal systems in Indonesia (positive law, religious law, and customary law). At this stage, the MKD conducts a formal mediation process involving all three elements in accordance with the Regent's Regulation, taking into account perspectives of positive law, religious law, and customary law simultaneously. The outcome of this mediation is then formulated into an MKD decision that holds juridical legitimacy by virtue of its basis in the regent's regulation.

These two resolution stages are not separate or contradictory; rather, they are interrelated and complementary. In some cases, resolution through Tau Lokaq Empat may serve as an initial step before the case is brought to the more formal MKD forum. In other cases, both mechanisms may operate in parallel, with Tau Lokaq Empat

providing customary value perspectives while the MKD ensures that the resolution also comprehensively addresses aspects of positive law and religious law.

The integration of Tau Lokaq Empat and the MKD reflects the Sesait community's effort to preserve customary values while adapting to the formal legal system operating in Indonesia. The MKD's juridical legitimacy derived from the regent's regulation provides formal authority to conflict resolution, while the involvement of Tau Lokaq Empat ensures that the resolution remains rooted in the cultural values of the Sesait community.

3.5 Practice of Family Conflict Resolution: A Case Study

The practice of family conflict resolution in Wet Sesait demonstrates complex and integrative dynamics among the various legal systems embodied in the concepts of Tau Lokaq Empat and the Majelis Krama Desa. Based on observation and interviews, the MKD in Sesait Village has actively resolved various conflicts, ranging from family conflicts and land disputes to social and community issues.

One case successfully resolved in 2025 involved domestic violence between a married couple. This case serves as an illustration for understanding the conflict resolution mechanism and procedure involving Tau Lokaq Empat and the MKD, as well as their orientation toward victim recovery and protection.

The handling procedure began when a complaint was submitted by the victim (wife) to the MKD through one of its members. Upon receiving the report, the MKD conducted preliminary verification to confirm the truth of the complaint and identify the victim's condition. Following verification, the MKD scheduled a meeting with all parties. The meeting was chaired by the MKD Head, who opened the proceedings with a prayer and a statement of the meeting's purpose and objectives.

In the meeting, each community element provided their perspective based on the legal system they represent. First, the positive law perspective was conveyed by the village government representative, clarifying that domestic violence constitutes a criminal offense regulated under Law No. 23 of 2004 on the Elimination of Domestic Violence. Perpetrators of domestic violence may be subject to criminal sanctions including imprisonment and/or fines. Victims' rights under the law, including the right to protection, healthcare, legal assistance, and rehabilitation, were also explained. The Pemusungan supported the effort to resolve the matter through deliberation, with the caveat that if violence were to recur, they would facilitate the formal legal process through law enforcement authorities.

Second, the customary law perspective was conveyed by the Mangku Gumi. According to Sasak customary law, violence against a wife constitutes a violation of the principle of *mu'āsyarah bil ma'rūf* and disrupts household harmony. The Mangku Gumi affirmed that the perpetrator may be subject to customary sanctions including a stern reprimand and an obligation to comply with customary sanctions. The customary law perspective presented by the Mangku Gumi reflects the concept of indigenous legal knowledge as developed by Franz and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann (Benda-Beckmann & Benda-Beckmann, 2006). Customary sanctions are understood not merely as punishment but as rituals for restoring cosmic and social balance. This approach also aligns with Johan Galtung's conflict transformation theory, which addresses not only the manifestation of conflict (physical violence) but also transforms the structures and cultures that constitute the root causes of conflict.

Third, the religious law perspective was conveyed by the religious leader. The religious leader cited Quranic verse An-Nisa 19, which teaches husbands to treat their wives well, along with the Prophet Muhammad's hadith about the best of people being those who are best toward their families. The concept of *sakinah, mawaddah, wa*

rahmah as the goal of marriage in Islam was also emphasized. The religious law perspective provides a moral-spiritual dimension that touches upon the individual consciousness of the perpetrator. This approach is significant within the conflict transformation framework as it seeks to transform the perpetrator's understanding and behavior from within (internal transformation).

The integration of these three perspectives reflects the practice of legal pluralism as conceptualized by Sally Engle Merry (Merry, 2023). In the MKD forum, there is no rigid hierarchy placing one legal system above the others. The three legal systems (positive, customary, and religious) operate with relatively equal and mutually complementary legitimacy. This process also demonstrates the phenomenon of vernacularization, whereby the formal legal norm on the elimination of domestic violence is not applied rigidly but is translated and adapted to the socio-cultural context of the Sesait community.

Following the presentations, the MKD provided opportunities for both the victim and the perpetrator to relay the sequence of events and express their feelings. After hearing both parties and considering the legal perspectives previously presented, the MKD conducted an internal deliberation to formulate a decision. The deliberation comprehensively considered various aspects.

During this deliberation, the legal culture of the Sesait community significantly influenced the decision-making process. Consistent with Friedman's legal systems theory, the strong legal culture of valuing deliberation and the authority of traditional leaders made the deliberative process effective (Ab. Halim & Amni, 2023). Decisions were not reached through voting or majority-minority mechanisms but through consensus that considered the interests of all parties. The results of the deliberation were then expressed in the form of a binding MKD decision for both parties, encompassing multiple structured and comprehensive points.

The binding force of MKD decisions derives from two mutually reinforcing sources of legitimacy. First, formal-judicial legitimacy from Regent Regulation No. 20 of 2017, which provides the legal basis for the existence and function of the MKD. Second, socio-cultural legitimacy from the involvement of Tau Lokaq Empat, who are respected and trusted by the community. This combination of legitimacies makes MKD decisions carry very strong binding force, even without the need for enforcement through formal authorities. The Sesait community complies with MKD decisions not out of fear of formal legal sanctions, but out of respect for the moral-cultural authority of Tau Lokaq Empat and the value of musyawarah mufakat (deliberation for consensus) deeply embedded in their culture.

3.6 Theoretical Analysis: Legal Pluralism and Conflict Transformation

The above case demonstrates that the practice of family conflict resolution in Wet Sesait possesses important characteristics reflecting the integration of the theories discussed. First, a holistic approach integrating three legal perspectives (customary, religious, and positive law) through the Tau Lokaq Empat and MKD framework. Second, a flexible yet structured procedure combining the informality of the customary approach with the formality of the village institution legitimized by the regent's regulation. Third, a strong orientation toward conflict transformation and victim protection rather than mere punishment, consistent with Galtung's conflict transformation theory (Galtung, 2000). Fourth, the participatory involvement of various parties reflecting the value of musyawarah mufakat as the legal culture of the Sesait community. Fifth, an emphasis on the perpetrator's responsibility to change and long-term commitment through counseling programs and monitoring.

This practice also demonstrates how indigenous legal knowledge adapts to modernity without losing its essence. Tau Lokaq Empat as a traditional customary leadership structure is not abandoned but is integrated into the MKD framework that carries formal juridical legitimacy. The process of vernacularization is clearly evident in the way formal legal norms on domestic violence are translated and adapted to the local context, while preserving the substance of victim protection.

These findings confirm that community-based conflict resolution mechanisms incorporating the Tau Lokaq Empat concept integrated within the MKD can serve as an effective alternative that: protects victims' rights, heals victim trauma, prevents the recurrence of violence, and maintains the cultural values and social integrity of the indigenous community. This conflict resolution model offers important lessons on how legal pluralism can be practiced constructively, where different legal systems are not viewed as competing entities but as complementary resources that can be integrated to create more comprehensive and contextual justice.

4. CONCLUSION

This study finds that the pattern of family conflict resolution in the Sesait Customary Law Community of North Lombok demonstrates a unique integrative model combining the Tau Lokaq Empat customary leadership structure with the formal village institution of the Majelis Krama Desa (MKD). Tau Lokaq Empat consisting of Mangku Gumi (customary leader), Jintaka (socio-economic leader), Penghulu (religious leader), and Pemusungan (governmental leader) constitutes a customary leadership structure deeply rooted in Sesait society. The MKD, meanwhile, is a village institution established under North Lombok Regent Regulation No. 20 of 2017 and present in all villages of North Lombok Regency.

The integration of Tau Lokaq Empat and the MKD creates a conflict resolution mechanism that combines cultural legitimacy with formal juridical legitimacy. The conflict resolution procedure is conducted through structured yet flexible stages: complaint submission, victim-protection-focused verification, formal meetings involving all four Tau Lokaq Empat pillars within the MKD forum, participatory mediation integrating positive law perspectives (through the Pemusungan), customary law (through the Mangku Gumi), religious law (through the Penghulu), and socio-economic aspects (through the Jintaka), through to post-decision monitoring.

This resolution model is oriented toward conflict transformation through relationship restoration and victim protection, rather than mere punishment, with the active participation of extended family and the community. This model offers important lessons on how legal pluralism can be practiced constructively, where different legal systems are not viewed as competing entities but as complementary resources that can be integrated to create more comprehensive and contextual justice.

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