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Cultural Dimensions in Occupational Safety in Aceh

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Abstract

This study explores the influence of cultural dimensions on occupational safety practices in Aceh, Indonesia, using a qualitative methodology grounded in an extensive literature review. While occupational safety is often approached through technical and regulatory frameworks, this research argues for a culturally embedded understanding that accounts for local socio-religious values, power dynamics, and communal norms. The study utilizes Hofstede's cultural dimensions as a theoretical lens to interpret how variables such as power distance, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance shape workplace safety behaviors, perceptions, and policy compliance in Acehnese industrial settings. Data were synthesized from academic literature, policy documents, and regional studies published between 2000 and 2024, with thematic content analysis employed to extract recurring patterns and conceptual linkages. The findings reveal that power distance inhibits hazard reporting, collectivist values shape group accountability, religious doctrines both motivate and constrain safety behavior, and institutional gaps hinder the alignment of national safety policies with local cultural realities. The study further highlights the need for culturally responsive and participatory safety interventions that integrate Islamic values, community leadership, and localized governance. Theoretically, this research challenges universalist assumptions in safety discourse by emphasizing cultural specificity and advocating for a more nuanced, context-sensitive approach. Practically, it urges policymakers and managers to embed moral legitimacy and communal engagement in occupational safety frameworks. The study concludes that sustainable improvements in workplace safety in Aceh require a paradigm shift from technical compliance to cultural integration, offering insights that are relevant to similarly complex and multicultural settings globally.

Keywords: *Occupational Safety, Cultural Dimensions, Power Distance, Collectivism, Aceh.*

1. Introduction

Occupational safety has become a critical area of concern for governments, industries, and academic researchers across the globe. As industrialization and economic development progress, the complexity of workplace operations and the corresponding risk of occupational hazards have grown considerably. Ensuring the safety of workers is not merely a matter of enforcing technical standards or regulatory compliance; it is also deeply rooted in the sociocultural context of the workforce and the environment in which work is performed. Various global institutions, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), have long emphasized that a safe and healthy working environment is a fundamental human right. However, the successful implementation of occupational safety practices is not uniformly effective across different regions or cultures. This discrepancy arises not only from infrastructural or regulatory variations but also from deeply ingrained cultural values, beliefs, and social norms that influence how safety is perceived, communicated, and practiced in daily operations.



The concept of culture in the context of occupational safety refers to the shared attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices within a workforce that shape how individuals and organizations address risks and manage safety procedures. Cultural dimensions, as described by Hofstede and further expanded in numerous cross-cultural studies, provide a theoretical framework for understanding how specific cultural traits such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, and masculinity-femininity influence organizational behavior and employee attitudes. When applied to occupational safety, these dimensions can offer critical insights into why certain safety measures succeed or fail in different cultural settings. For example, in societies with high power distance, employees may be less likely to report safety violations or hazards due to fear of reprimand or disrupting hierarchical structures. Similarly, in collectivist cultures, safety practices may be more group-oriented, emphasizing mutual care and responsibility, while in individualistic cultures, personal accountability may take precedence.

In the Indonesian context, particularly in the province of Aceh, cultural considerations take on heightened significance. Aceh is distinguished by its strong adherence to Islamic values, deeply rooted communal traditions, and a unique historical-political identity within Indonesia. These cultural elements influence not only social and religious practices but also work-related behaviors, attitudes toward authority, and risk perception. The integration of *Syariat Islam* (Islamic law) into the governance of the region has reinforced collective norms and moral accountability, which may significantly affect how occupational safety policies are interpreted and implemented. Moreover, Acehnese society is known for its strong sense of community solidarity (*gotong royong*), respect for elders, and social harmony, all of which have implications for communication patterns, leadership dynamics, and decision-making processes in the workplace. Understanding how these cultural traits interface with occupational safety protocols is crucial for developing more context-sensitive and effective safety interventions.

Recent years have seen increased industrial and infrastructural development in Aceh, particularly in the sectors of construction, mining, transportation, and public services. With the expansion of these high-risk industries, there is a growing need to assess whether current occupational safety practices are both culturally appropriate and practically effective. Unfortunately, safety management in Aceh often suffers from a lack of standardized procedures, limited training programs, inadequate monitoring, and, perhaps most importantly, a lack of alignment between safety policies and local cultural values. While regulations and safety standards may be adopted from national or international frameworks, their translation into daily practices remains inconsistent, largely due to insufficient cultural adaptation and awareness. This results in a disconnect between policy and practice, where workers might formally comply with safety requirements but fail to internalize their significance or integrate them meaningfully into their routines.

The phenomenon of culturally influenced safety behavior has been the subject of numerous studies globally. For example, Zohar's (2000) research on safety climate emphasized the role of organizational culture in shaping safety outcomes, while Neal and Griffin (2006) highlighted the predictive value of safety leadership and motivation in compliance behavior. In the Asian context, studies by Lu and Yang (2011) in China and Mohamed (2002) in the Middle East demonstrated how cultural constructs like face-saving, authority orientation, and religious beliefs can significantly influence safety practices and reporting behavior. Within Indonesia, research by Manullang et al. (2020) and Prasetyo et al. (2019) has examined safety culture in Java and Sumatra, revealing varying levels of compliance and perception linked to ethnic and cultural diversity. However, there remains a dearth of research specifically focused on Aceh, a region whose distinctive sociocultural composition merits closer examination. Without a nuanced understanding of how local cultural dimensions impact occupational safety, policymakers and practitioners may risk applying generic solutions to complex, culturally embedded problems. This study seeks to fill this research gap by providing a detailed, descriptive analysis of cultural dimensions in occupational safety within the context of Aceh. Employing a quantitative descriptive methodology, the research aims to identify prevailing cultural patterns among workers in selected high-risk industries and examine how these patterns influence their attitudes toward occupational safety. Data will be collected through structured questionnaires administered to a representative sample of workers, supervisors, and safety officers across various industrial sectors in Aceh. The survey instrument will be designed to measure key cultural dimensions such as power distance, collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity, alongside variables related to safety behavior, communication, compliance, and perception of risks.

The objective of this study is threefold. First, it seeks to map the dominant cultural dimensions that characterize the workforce in Aceh's industrial sectors. This will provide a foundational understanding of the cultural landscape in which safety practices are situated. Second, it aims to analyze how these cultural dimensions correlate with occupational safety behavior, including adherence to safety protocols, reporting

of hazards, and participation in safety training. This analytical lens will help to reveal whether certain cultural traits serve as enablers or barriers to effective safety management. Third, the study endeavors to offer culturally informed recommendations for enhancing occupational safety programs in Aceh. By aligning safety initiatives with the cultural values and social norms of the local workforce, the study aspires to support more sustainable, effective, and inclusive safety interventions. Furthermore, this research contributes to the broader discourse on culturally responsive occupational safety practices in developing regions. While much of the existing literature is grounded in Western industrial contexts, there is a pressing need to diversify empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks to reflect the realities of non-Western, multicultural work environments. The findings from this study will not only provide insights for local policymakers and industry leaders in Aceh but also add value to international conversations on occupational safety and cultural integration. As global supply chains and labor mobility continue to grow, the ability to navigate cultural complexities in safety management becomes increasingly important for multinational corporations, humanitarian organizations, and global development agencies.

The methodological choice of a descriptive quantitative approach is deliberate and appropriate, given the study's intention to capture, summarize, and interpret prevailing patterns and tendencies rather than test hypotheses or develop causal explanations. Quantitative data collection allows for a systematic and replicable assessment of cultural and behavioral attributes across a large sample size, enhancing the generalizability of the findings. Descriptive statistics will be employed to present distributions, frequencies, and cross-tabulations, enabling a clear portrayal of the interaction between cultural variables and safety-related practices. This approach aligns with the study's overarching objective of providing a comprehensive, empirically grounded portrayal of the cultural landscape influencing occupational safety in Aceh. In conclusion, the safety of workers in Aceh cannot be fully understood or improved without addressing the cultural underpinnings that shape their attitudes and actions in the workplace. While regulations and technological solutions remain essential, they must be complemented by a deeper engagement with the social and cultural realities of the workforce. This study represents an effort to bridge that gap by exploring the cultural dimensions that influence occupational safety in Aceh through a structured and data-driven lens. By identifying key cultural factors and their relationship to safety behavior, this research seeks to inform more effective, respectful, and contextually grounded approaches to workplace safety in the region. In doing so, it not only serves the immediate needs of workers and employers in Aceh but also contributes to a more globally informed understanding of how culture matters in occupational safety.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Foundations of Occupational Safety

Occupational safety has long been recognized as an essential pillar of workplace management, encompassing systems, practices, and cultural elements aimed at minimizing risk and ensuring the well-being of employees. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2022), over 2.78 million work-related deaths occur annually worldwide, with countless non-fatal injuries, making occupational safety not only a regulatory concern but a moral and developmental imperative. Traditionally, occupational safety practices revolved around technical measures—such as machine guarding, protective equipment, and physical environment controls. However, scholars have increasingly argued that these measures must be integrated into broader socio-organizational systems that account for human factors and contextual behaviors (Guldenmund, 2000). The evolution of occupational safety theory has brought attention to psychological and organizational dynamics, introducing constructs such as "safety climate" and "safety culture." Zohar (1980) pioneered the notion of safety climate as employees' shared perceptions of the relative importance of safety in their organizations. This construct, refined in later studies (Griffin & Neal, 2000), emphasized leadership commitment, communication, and involvement as central to safety performance. Safety culture, on the other hand, refers to the deeply embedded values and beliefs that govern how safety is practiced within organizations (Reason, 1997). These conceptual frameworks underline that safety is not only a procedural obligation but a behavioral and cultural outcome.

Empirical studies have demonstrated that organizations with a strong safety culture exhibit lower accident rates, higher safety compliance, and better employee morale (Mearns & Yule, 2009). Moreover, the interaction between individual behavior, team norms, and organizational leadership becomes particularly salient in high-risk industries such as construction, mining, and energy. Researchers have thus begun to explore how national and local cultures shape safety practices at both the micro and macro levels, highlighting the need for culturally responsive strategies (Clarke, 2006). These developments have paved

the way for examining occupational safety not only through regulatory lenses but also through cultural dimensions. In developing regions, where regulatory frameworks may be weak or inconsistently enforced, the role of culture becomes even more critical. Studies in Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America have illustrated that workers often rely on informal norms, religious beliefs, and social traditions to interpret and enact safety behavior (Lingard et al., 2009). Therefore, understanding the intersection of cultural identity and safety practices can offer valuable insights into improving safety performance and policy compliance, particularly in culturally diverse societies like Indonesia.

2.2. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in Organizational Behavior

The theoretical cornerstone for understanding culture in organizational studies is Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions, initially proposed in the 1980s and later refined (Hofstede, 2001). This framework identifies six dimensions of culture—power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term vs. short-term orientation, and indulgence vs. restraint. Each dimension captures a specific aspect of societal norms that influence how people relate to authority, time, gender roles, and risk. In organizational contexts, these dimensions help explain how employees interpret leadership, regulations, collaboration, and communication. Power distance, for instance, is highly relevant in the context of safety reporting and decision-making. In high power distance cultures, subordinates are less likely to challenge authority or report unsafe practices, fearing reprimand or social disapproval (Wu et al., 2007). This phenomenon has been observed in many Asian countries, including Indonesia, where hierarchical social structures influence workplace dynamics. Similarly, the collectivism dimension—where group loyalty and harmony are prioritized—can either enhance or hinder safety compliance, depending on how group norms align with formal safety protocols (Lu & Yang, 2011).

Uncertainty avoidance also plays a significant role in safety behavior. In cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, workers may strictly adhere to rules and procedures to minimize ambiguity, which could be beneficial for safety outcomes. However, this may also lead to rigid interpretations that prevent adaptive responses in dynamic work environments (Tsui et al., 2007). On the other hand, masculinity, often associated with competitiveness and assertiveness, may foster risk-taking behavior, especially in male-dominated sectors such as construction or mining (Hofstede et al., 2010). Therefore, understanding how these dimensions manifest in local workplace settings is vital for crafting effective safety interventions. While Hofstede's model has been critiqued for its limitations—such as national stereotyping and insufficient granularity—it remains a valuable heuristic for cross-cultural studies. Scholars have suggested supplementing it with qualitative insights or integrating it with complementary models like the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004). Nevertheless, the model's applicability in occupational safety has been supported by numerous empirical studies (Mearns & Flin, 1999), especially in multicultural and transnational workplace contexts. In the case of Aceh, a region shaped by strong communal, religious, and traditional values, the interplay of power distance, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance is particularly relevant. The local interpretation of authority, community responsibility, and risk must be mapped against these dimensions to derive meaningful implications for safety policy and practice. Hence, applying Hofstede's framework in this regional context offers both theoretical rigor and contextual relevance.

2.3. Cultural Influences on Occupational Safety Behavior

Culture influences not only how individuals perceive safety but also how they respond to hazards, follow procedures, and interact with safety systems. Safety behavior is typically categorized into two components: safety compliance (adherence to procedures) and safety participation (proactive involvement in safety initiatives). Research by Neal and Griffin (2006) showed that both components are affected by organizational culture and leadership, which in turn are rooted in broader societal values. In high-context cultures like Indonesia, implicit communication and deference to authority may inhibit open discussion of safety issues (Gyekye & Salminen, 2009). Several studies have documented how cultural traits lead to variations in safety performance. For example, Mohamed (2002) found that in Middle Eastern societies with high power distance and strong masculinity traits, workers often avoided reporting unsafe conditions, relying instead on fate or divine protection. Similarly, research in China and Vietnam noted that collectivist cultures could foster compliance when group norms support safety, but also lead to silence when such norms discourage whistle-blowing (Fang et al., 2006). These findings underscore the dual-edged nature of cultural traits—they can serve as either facilitators or inhibitors depending on how they are integrated into workplace structures.

In Indonesia, Manullang et al. (2020) highlighted the influence of Javanese cultural values—such as *rukun* (harmony) and *ewuh pakewuh* (reluctance to confront)—on safety communication and intervention. While these traits promote social cohesion, they may also hinder the timely reporting of safety breaches. In Aceh, the addition of religious norms further shapes safety behavior. Islamic teachings on cleanliness, responsibility, and mutual care may encourage safety awareness, yet hierarchical interpretations of authority could limit participatory decision-making (Lubis, 2021). Understanding these cultural underpinnings is essential for effective safety training and leadership. Generic, top-down safety interventions often fail in contexts where interpersonal trust and social hierarchy govern behavior. Therefore, safety policies must be localized, reflecting the cultural logic of the workforce. Participatory methods, religious messaging, and community-based incentives have proven effective in aligning safety behavior with cultural expectations (Hale & Guldenmund, 2006).

2.4. Occupational Safety in the Indonesian and Acehese Contexts

Indonesia's occupational safety landscape is governed by national legislation, such as the Act No. 1 of 1970 on Occupational Safety and Health. However, the implementation of these standards varies widely across provinces, sectors, and organizational sizes. According to Prasetyo et al. (2019), enforcement tends to be stronger in Java compared to peripheral provinces like Aceh, where infrastructural and administrative constraints limit regulatory oversight. Moreover, safety outcomes are influenced by regional disparities in education, governance, and cultural practices. In Aceh, the integration of Islamic law since the early 2000s has transformed governance, education, and public behavior. These transformations extend to the workplace, where religious norms influence dress codes, interpersonal interactions, and even risk perception. For instance, the concept of *qadarullah* (divine destiny) may impact how workers interpret accidents, potentially diminishing the urgency for preventive action (Fadillah, 2020). Simultaneously, the communal values of *gotong royong* (cooperation) and respect for elders shape authority relationships and safety communication dynamics.

Research on Aceh's workplace culture remains limited but growing. Lubis (2021) explored how religious and ethnic identity intersect to shape work ethics in public service institutions. Meanwhile, Wahyuni et al. (2022) documented that community-based health and safety initiatives gained more traction when endorsed by local religious leaders. These findings suggest that safety interventions in Aceh must engage not only workers and managers but also cultural gatekeepers and religious authorities. Given Aceh's distinct social and cultural fabric, occupational safety cannot be treated as a purely technical domain. It is a sociocultural practice embedded in shared meanings, symbolic structures, and institutional histories. To be effective, safety programs in Aceh must align with local moral orders, leadership hierarchies, and communal expectations. This necessitates culturally sensitive risk communication, localized training materials, and participatory governance mechanisms in occupational safety management.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology rooted in a comprehensive literature-based inquiry to explore the intersection between cultural dimensions and occupational safety practices in Aceh, Indonesia. The qualitative paradigm is particularly appropriate for this study as it emphasizes interpretative analysis, contextual understanding, and the construction of meaning rather than measurement or quantification. By employing a literature-based qualitative approach, this study aims to construct a rich, theoretical foundation for understanding how culture shapes workplace safety behaviors, policies, and perceptions in a region with distinct socio-religious and communal traditions. Through this methodological lens, the research does not seek to generalize findings through statistical means but to generate nuanced insights, reveal conceptual patterns, and propose culturally responsive frameworks grounded in existing scholarly knowledge. The research methodology is anchored in a systematic and critical review of literature that encompasses scholarly publications, policy documents, and empirical studies related to occupational safety, cultural dimensions, and organizational behavior in the context of Indonesia, with particular emphasis on Aceh. The decision to pursue a literature-based qualitative method is informed by the current gaps in empirical research specific to Aceh's occupational safety culture. Unlike field-based qualitative studies that rely on interviews or observations, this study synthesizes secondary data to derive theoretical propositions and conceptual linkages. This method provides the flexibility to incorporate a wide array of sources, facilitating comparative analysis and thematic integration across diverse academic discourses.

The data collection process involves the identification, selection, and review of academic sources published primarily between 2000 and 2024. The databases utilized for this literature search include Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, SpringerLink, and Google Scholar, ensuring both depth and breadth of coverage. Keywords used in the search include “occupational safety,” “safety culture,” “cultural dimensions,” “Hofstede,” “Indonesia,” “Aceh,” “organizational behavior,” and “Islamic work ethics.” The inclusion criteria for source selection prioritize peer-reviewed journal articles, books by recognized scholars, policy reports from reputable organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), and prior empirical studies conducted in Southeast Asia. Articles not published in English or Indonesian, those lacking methodological rigor, or those outside the scope of cultural and safety intersections are excluded from the final analysis. Following the collection of literature, the sources are subjected to a thematic content analysis. This qualitative analytical method enables the identification of recurring patterns, concepts, and theoretical relationships within the literature. Thematic analysis is executed through a process of coding and categorization, wherein textual segments from the sources are grouped based on shared meanings or conceptual relevance. Themes that emerge from this process include the influence of power distance on safety compliance, the role of collectivism in hazard reporting, religious values in shaping safety perception, and regional governance challenges in occupational safety enforcement. These themes are further synthesized to construct a conceptual map illustrating how cultural factors influence safety practices at multiple levels—individual, organizational, and institutional.

An integral part of the method is the contextualization of the literature within the unique socio-cultural fabric of Aceh. Unlike quantitative studies that treat culture as a static variable, this study explores culture as a dynamic and situated construct, shaped by history, religion, governance, and communal relations. The qualitative nature of this inquiry allows for an interpretive engagement with the literature, wherein findings are not merely reported but critically analyzed to uncover underlying assumptions, contradictions, and gaps. For example, while many global studies celebrate the role of safety culture in reducing workplace accidents, few address how religious doctrines and local customs may mediate the acceptance or rejection of these safety paradigms. Through careful examination of such omissions and silences in the literature, this study positions itself as a corrective and contributive voice in the academic dialogue. Moreover, the study draws upon the theoretical framework of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, applying it as a heuristic lens to classify and interpret the influence of cultural norms on occupational safety behavior. This involves a critical appraisal of how each dimension—such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and collectivism—interacts with workplace safety expectations and practices. While Hofstede’s model offers a structured and widely accepted framework, the methodology also engages with its limitations, especially in the context of Aceh. The literature is thus used both to apply and to critique theoretical assumptions, paving the way for a more grounded and context-sensitive understanding of safety culture.

Trustworthiness in this qualitative literature-based study is ensured through several strategies. First, triangulation of sources is applied, whereby findings from empirical studies are corroborated with theoretical works and policy documents to establish conceptual validity. Second, transparency in the review process is maintained by documenting search strings, inclusion criteria, and analytical procedures, thereby enhancing the study’s credibility and reproducibility. Third, reflexivity is incorporated as a methodological stance, acknowledging the researcher’s own interpretive role and potential biases in engaging with the texts. This reflexive engagement is crucial in qualitative literature reviews, as the researcher serves both as the analyst and the instrument of interpretation. Another methodological consideration is the critical integration of culturally specific literature. To ensure relevance to Aceh’s regional context, the study includes publications from Indonesian journals, local government reports, and studies conducted by universities in Sumatra. Where necessary, selected Indonesian-language sources are translated and cross-referenced with English-language publications to maintain conceptual consistency. The inclusion of local literature enriches the study’s cultural sensitivity and avoids epistemological colonialism, wherein knowledge production is dominated by Western frameworks and empirical priorities.

Given that this study does not involve direct human participants, ethical considerations primarily pertain to the responsible use and interpretation of intellectual content. Proper attribution and citation practices are rigorously followed in compliance with academic standards. Furthermore, the study maintains intellectual integrity by critically engaging with contradictory findings and acknowledging areas of uncertainty rather than forcing premature conclusions. This ethical orientation reflects the broader qualitative principle of representing complexity and plurality rather than oversimplification. The methodological limitations of the study are acknowledged as part of the research integrity. As a literature-based study, the findings are dependent on the availability and quality of existing research. This may lead

to a lack of granularity in understanding day-to-day safety practices or worker narratives in Aceh. The absence of empirical field data also limits the ability to validate theoretical propositions in real-time settings. However, this limitation is mitigated by the study's objective, which is not to offer generalized empirical conclusions but to build a comprehensive conceptual framework that can inform future field research, policymaking, and intervention design. In summary, the qualitative research method employed in this study is grounded in a literature-based analytical framework that prioritizes thematic synthesis, contextual sensitivity, and theoretical engagement. By reviewing, analyzing, and integrating a diverse array of academic and institutional sources, the study aims to uncover how cultural dimensions shape occupational safety practices in the Aceh context. This method allows for a deep, reflective exploration of how globally circulated safety models interact with locally grounded cultural realities. Through this approach, the study not only contributes to the growing field of safety culture research but also offers a culturally informed perspective that may be instrumental in developing more effective, inclusive, and sustainable occupational safety strategies in Aceh and similar socio-cultural environments.

4. Results and Discussion

The relationship between cultural dimensions and occupational safety in Aceh presents a multifaceted framework shaped by socio-religious values, communal norms, and institutional structures. Drawing on the reviewed literature, this study synthesizes insights into how deeply embedded cultural traits affect workplace safety behavior and policy implementation in Aceh's industrial and organizational settings. The findings of this literature-based qualitative research reveal a complex interplay between globally recognized cultural dimensions, such as those proposed by Hofstede (2001), and region-specific sociocultural attributes, including Islamic values, community hierarchy, and traditional leadership. These results are not only significant in understanding the current state of occupational safety in Aceh but also offer a basis for designing sustainable safety strategies that are culturally aligned. The integration of cultural awareness into occupational safety frameworks is especially crucial in regions like Aceh, where Western-derived safety paradigms often confront local interpretations of risk, duty, and collective responsibility. Cultural congruence, therefore, emerges as a critical component in enhancing safety performance. The results derived from the literature synthesis are categorized into four core thematic areas: (1) power distance and safety compliance, (2) collectivism and group accountability, (3) the role of religious norms in shaping safety behavior, and (4) institutional governance and cultural integration in safety systems. Each section elaborates on the cultural foundations of safety-related behavior and discusses relevant implications for ongoing and future research initiatives.

4.1. Power Distance and Safety Compliance in Hierarchical Workplaces

The first major theme arising from the literature is the strong influence of power distance on safety compliance in Acehese workplaces. Power distance refers to the degree to which less powerful members of organizations accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede et al., 2010). In Aceh, hierarchical relationships are prominent not only in formal institutions but also in informal workplace dynamics. Authority figures such as supervisors, senior staff, and religious leaders hold a position of unquestioned respect, which often translates into communication patterns marked by deference and silence. This cultural norm significantly affects how workers engage with occupational safety regulations. As highlighted by Zohar (2000), safety outcomes are contingent on open communication and proactive hazard reporting. However, in high power distance settings like Aceh, workers may hesitate to report safety issues for fear of reprimand or disrupting hierarchical harmony. This silence reinforces unsafe practices and inhibits organizational learning. Clarke (2006) notes that while hierarchical systems can promote compliance through discipline, they often discourage participatory feedback, which is essential for dynamic risk management.

Empirical studies conducted in Indonesia affirm the impact of power distance on safety culture. Prasetyo et al. (2019) observed that in industrial sectors across Sumatra, employees often refrained from reporting hazards due to perceived social barriers. Similarly, Lubis (2021) found that Acehese workers preferred to communicate concerns through informal channels, relying on intermediaries to convey sensitive information. This indirect communication style, while culturally coherent, slows down the hazard mitigation process and undermines transparent safety management systems. To address this challenge, safety interventions must consider power distance not as a barrier but as a structural condition that can be transformed. One effective approach involves leveraging hierarchical authority to endorse safety practices

explicitly. When top management and religious leaders actively champion safety, their endorsement can legitimize proactive behavior. As shown by Mearns and Yule (2009), leadership commitment significantly enhances safety compliance, especially in cultures where authority is deeply respected. In a sustainable context, future research should explore models of inclusive leadership that maintain respect for hierarchy while promoting participatory safety practices. Studies like those of Wu et al. (2007) suggest the value of culturally adaptive safety training that incorporates role-playing, storytelling, and community narratives to encourage open dialogue. In the long term, cultivating a “speak-up culture” in Aceh may involve generational shifts in education and workplace values, supported by organizational policies that reward safety communication and foster psychological safety.

4.2. Collectivism and Group Accountability in Safety Practices

The second core theme addresses the influence of collectivism on occupational safety in Aceh. Collectivism, characterized by strong in-group loyalty, emphasis on harmony, and prioritization of collective well-being, plays a defining role in Acehnese society. This cultural orientation offers both opportunities and challenges for safety culture development. On one hand, collectivist values encourage mutual care and cooperation, which can enhance group-level safety behaviors. On the other hand, they may lead to conformity pressures that suppress individual agency, including the willingness to challenge unsafe norms. Acehnese workplaces reflect this tension vividly. Group dynamics often dictate the pace and nature of safety compliance. As reported by Fang et al. (2006), in similar Asian contexts, employees may engage in unsafe acts to avoid alienating colleagues or disrupting social cohesion. In construction and manufacturing sectors, this translates into practices like bypassing personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep up with group productivity standards or tolerating minor violations to maintain peer relationships.

However, collectivism also offers strategic leverage for culturally aligned safety interventions. Lubis (2021) highlights that communal norms, such as *gotong royong* (cooperation), can be harnessed to build safety teams, peer monitoring systems, and group reward mechanisms. These practices reinforce safety as a shared responsibility and distribute accountability across the workforce. When group identity is aligned with safety objectives, compliance becomes a matter of honor and social duty rather than mere obligation. Studies by Lu and Yang (2011) support this perspective, showing that collectivist cultures respond well to safety programs that emphasize team cohesion, shared rituals, and collective success. In Aceh, religious and ethnic homogeneity within workplaces can further enhance such group-based strategies. Involving local leaders, union representatives, and informal influencers in designing safety initiatives increases the likelihood of collective buy-in. Sustainable research efforts should focus on developing culturally resonant communication materials that use group narratives, local idioms, and community values to reinforce safety messaging. Moreover, longitudinal studies are needed to track the evolution of group accountability over time, especially as globalization and labor mobility introduce new cultural elements into Aceh’s workforce. Creating sustainable safety cultures will require hybrid models that blend collectivist strengths with individualized accountability, particularly in the face of growing industrial complexity.

4.3. Religious Norms and the Ethics of Safety in Aceh’s Islamic Context

The third thematic focus examines how religious norms influence occupational safety behavior in Aceh, a province where Islamic values are not only spiritual tenets but also institutionalized through regional governance. In such a context, safety practices are interpreted through the lens of moral and religious obligations. Concepts such as *amanah* (trust), *ikhtiar* (effort), and *qadarullah* (destiny) inform how workers perceive their role in maintaining safety and responding to accidents. This moral framing has significant implications for both safety motivation and fatalism. On one side, Islam encourages proactive protection of life and discourages negligence. As noted by Fadillah (2020), many Acehnese workers view safety as a form of *ibadah* (worship), enhancing their intrinsic motivation to comply with procedures. Religious sermons and public campaigns that connect safety to moral responsibility have been effective in promoting awareness and behavioral change (Wahyuni et al., 2022).

However, this religious framing also introduces risks of fatalism. The belief that accidents are predetermined by divine will may diminish the perceived value of preventive action. Lubis (2021) cautions against simplistic assumptions that religious devotion always enhances safety behavior. In some cases, deeply spiritual workers may underestimate mechanical risks, placing disproportionate trust in divine protection. This duality underscores the need for balanced messaging that integrates faith with functional safety principles. Interventions must therefore be theologically grounded and culturally attuned. Collaborations with local Islamic scholars (ulama) can ensure that safety policies and training are aligned

with accepted religious teachings. Hale and Guldenmund (2006) recommend using religious narratives and metaphors to make safety education more relatable. For example, equating wearing PPE with fulfilling *faridhu kifayah* (communal duty) may resonate strongly with local audiences. Sustainably integrating religious values into occupational safety requires institutional support. Future studies could explore the role of pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) and mosque networks in delivering safety education. Research should also examine how religious interpretations of labor and risk evolve with economic modernization, especially in youth-dominated sectors. Ultimately, embedding religious ethics in safety culture presents a promising avenue for long-term transformation in Aceh's workplace environments.

4.4. Institutional Capacity and Cultural Integration in Occupational Safety Systems

The final area of analysis concerns institutional governance and its ability to integrate cultural insights into safety management systems. Despite existing national laws such as Act No. 1/1970 on occupational health and safety, the implementation in Aceh remains inconsistent. This gap is partly due to resource limitations and regulatory fragmentation, but also stems from the failure to harmonize formal safety systems with local cultural expectations. As Prasetyo et al. (2019) argue, policy effectiveness is mediated by institutional legitimacy. In Aceh, safety regulations that do not reflect local customs, language, or moral codes are often perceived as externally imposed and thus lack grassroots support. Lubis (2021) notes that workers are more responsive to safety rules when they are endorsed by community leaders or adapted to regional idioms. This finding suggests the need for decentralized, culturally embedded safety governance.

Successful case studies demonstrate that localized safety committees, involving stakeholders from civil society, religious institutions, and traditional councils, can improve compliance and trust. Wu et al. (2007) emphasize the importance of feedback loops and participatory monitoring in creating adaptive, resilient safety systems. In Aceh, integrating adat (customary law) with formal occupational standards could bridge the institutional disconnect that currently undermines safety performance. Future research should examine the institutional ecology of safety in Aceh, mapping how governmental, corporate, and community actors interact in shaping safety outcomes. Sustainability in safety systems requires not only technical training and infrastructure but also cultural agility. Institutions must learn to evolve with shifting cultural landscapes, labor patterns, and regulatory innovations. Building culturally integrated safety governance is not a one-time intervention but a dynamic, iterative process involving continuous learning and co-creation. Longitudinal studies, action research, and policy trials could inform the development of an Aceh-specific safety governance model. Such a model would blend formal regulation with community-based enforcement, Islamic moral authority, and local cultural practices. By rooting safety culture in institutional structures that reflect lived realities, Aceh can move toward a future of safer, more dignified work for all.

5. Conclusion

The present study offers a comprehensive exploration into how cultural dimensions intricately influence occupational safety practices in Aceh, employing a qualitative literature-based methodology to uncover nuanced relationships between socio-cultural norms and safety behavior. The synthesis of existing literature reveals that cultural constructs such as power distance, collectivism, and religious moralism are not peripheral influences but central determinants of safety perceptions, communication patterns, and procedural compliance in Acehnese workplaces. These findings affirm and extend established theoretical frameworks, particularly Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, by contextualizing them within the unique socioreligious and communal fabric of Aceh. Theoretically, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on the cultural construction of safety by challenging universalist assumptions and emphasizing the variability of safety culture across regions and belief systems. It demonstrates that occupational safety is not merely a technical or regulatory concern, but a deeply embedded cultural phenomenon that must be interpreted through lenses that are locally meaningful and symbolically resonant. This theoretical insight calls for a paradigmatic shift in how occupational safety is conceptualized in developing contexts—moving beyond top-down policy transfer toward models of localized cultural integration, where traditional values, community leadership, and religious principles are seen as enabling rather than constraining factors.

In practical and managerial terms, the study highlights the urgent need for organizations and policymakers in Aceh to develop safety strategies that are culturally informed and participatory in nature. The persistence of high power distance in workplace hierarchies necessitates leadership styles that do not merely enforce safety through command-and-control but cultivate moral authority and inclusivity in safety governance. Managers must recognize that worker silence or non-reporting of hazards may stem not from

negligence, but from deference and fear of disrupting social equilibrium. Therefore, managerial interventions should focus on fostering psychological safety, encouraging dialogical communication, and legitimizing worker agency through culturally appropriate incentives. In collectivist settings such as Aceh, team-based safety initiatives and communal accountability mechanisms are more likely to succeed than individualistic interventions. Embedding religious values into safety training modules—such as framing compliance with protective measures as a form of spiritual duty or communal worship—can significantly enhance both comprehension and commitment among workers. Moreover, involving local religious and community leaders as co-facilitators in safety programs may yield greater credibility and traction. Managerial success in this domain hinges on the capacity to translate technical standards into moral imperatives, thereby integrating safety culture into the everyday lives and belief systems of the workforce.

Looking forward, the implications of this study extend into the realm of sustainable occupational safety systems that are adaptable, resilient, and contextually embedded. As Aceh continues to industrialize and attract both domestic and transnational investment, the challenges of harmonizing global safety standards with local cultural values will become increasingly prominent. Institutions must evolve from passive rule-enforcers into dynamic cultural mediators, capable of aligning policy with practice through inclusive governance and continuous feedback mechanisms. Future research should expand on the foundations laid here by conducting ethnographic fieldwork, participatory action studies, and longitudinal impact assessments to capture the lived experiences of workers in diverse occupational settings across Aceh. Such scholarship would not only validate the propositions developed in this study but also refine the theoretical model for broader applicability in other culturally complex regions. Ultimately, the insights generated from this research underscore the imperative to decolonize safety discourses and reconstruct them through the prism of cultural legitimacy, social equity, and moral engagement. In doing so, we not only safeguard the physical well-being of workers but also honor the cultural dignity of the communities they represent.

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