

SUPERSTITION MITIGATION OF PREGNANT WOMEN IN MALAY RIAU

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Abstract

This study examines the taxonomy of meaning and typology of functions in superstitions under to birth, infancy, and childhood within the Malay Muslim in Riau. The paper talks denotative and connotative meanings in superstitious faith, while sees under education of kindness act and Tradition cultur saving. Denotative meanings provide factual advice, particularly concerning maternal and child health, while connotative meanings carry emotional, moral, and significance spiritual act. The typology of functions reveals that superstitions is reinforcing religious emotions, projecting societal desires, educating children, explaining natural phenomena, and offering comfort during crises. These faith functions are not only as intangible treasure cultural but also as informal edification process of social control and education. The article sees the importance of understanding local faith in culturally sensitive under early health interventions. With the traditional knowledge and modern practices, this study talks to telling folklore, to saving cultural heritage, and to serving community-based healthcare in Malay society.

Keyword: Taxonomic Of Meaning, Typology Of Functions, Superstition

Abstrak

Tulisan ini membahas klasifikasi makna dan tipologi fungsi dalam superstisi yang berkaitan dengan kelahiran, masa bayi, dan masa kanak-kanak di kalangan masyarakat Melayu Muslim di Riau. Paper ini mengidentifikasi makna denotatif dan konotatif yang terkandung dalam kepercayaan-kepercayaan tradisional tersebut, sekaligus menyoroti peran dalam bimbingan perilaku serta pelestarian nilai-nilai budaya. Makna denotatif memberikan informasi faktual, terutama terkait kesehatan ibu dan anak, sementara makna konotatif membawa unsur emosional, moral, dan spiritual. Tipologi fungsi dalam superstisi bertujuan memperkuat keyakinan religius, merefleksikan harapan kolektif, mendidik anak-anak, menjelaskan fenomena alam, dan memberikan hiburan pada masa-masa sulit. Superstisi tidak hanya merupakan warisan budaya, tetapi juga mekanisme informal untuk pengendalian sosial dan pendidikan. Artikel ini menekankan hal penting memahami kepercayaan lokal dalam rancangan intervensi kesehatan yang sensitif terhadap budaya. Dengan mempertemukan pengetahuan tradisional dan praktik modern, tulisan ini turut memberikan kontribusi pada wacana tentang folklore, pelestarian budaya, dan pelayanan kesehatan berbasis komunitas dalam konteks masyarakat Melayu kontemporer.

Kata kunci: Taksonomi Makna, Tipologi Fungsi, Superstisi

INTRODUCTION

Superstition is a form of oral folklore that continues to exist and evolve within Indonesian society.¹ The term refers to traditional beliefs passed down through generations, often difficult to rationalize by modern standards.² These beliefs typically associate certain objects, actions, or intentions with supernatural outcomes. According to Ulya, in the context of the Minangkabau community, superstition reflects the social order and serves as a cultural mechanism for regulating behavior.³

Superstitions are statements containing supernatural meanings or unconventional information. They are part of a broader cultural framework that includes ethical guidelines and behavioral norms. In essence, superstitions serve as messages promoting socially acceptable conduct. The Minangkabau community, for instance, is guided by local wisdom embedded in moral values known as *sumbang duo baleh*, which emphasizes proper etiquette and respect.⁴

The theoretical foundation of superstition encompasses various aspects of life, including the human life cycle, beliefs about the supernatural, and interpretations of cosmic creation. Danandjaja further classifies superstitions into seven major categories: postnatal (birth, infancy, and childhood), adult

(the human body and folk medicine), mature (domestic affairs), human (livelihood and social relations), activities (travel and transportation), relationships (love, courtship, marriage), and old age (death and funeral customs).⁵

Although related to concepts such as taboos, prohibitions, and irrational beliefs, the term "superstition" is preferred due to its strong connection with oral tradition. While these terms overlap in their function of shaping social norms, "superstition" specifically highlights the role of verbal transmission across generations. Superstition functions as an educational tool throughout the human life cycle.⁶ It originates from cultural contributions and serves to instill manners and ethical behavior. Its practice should be preserved as a form of advice, reminding individuals that human life is intertwined with the spiritual world. Maintaining proper conduct is essential to prevent imbalances within both individual and collective societies.⁷

According to Danandjaja, superstitions can have two parts—cause and effect—as seen in examples like "If we bathe a cat (cause), it will rain soon (effect)".⁸ Some also contain three components: sign, conversion, and effect. For

¹Ulya, Ridha Hasnul, et al. "Cultural manifestation in superstition of Minangkabau society." (2018): 422-429.

²Michalopoulos, Stelios, and Melanie Meng Xue. "Folklore." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 136.4 (2021): 1993-2046.

³Ulya, Ridha Hasnul. "Intervensi Superstisi terhadap Perspektif Adab bagi Masyarakat Minangkabau." *GERAM* 10.2 (2022): 141-148.

⁴Ulya, Ridha Hasnul. "Reinterpretation of Ethical Value in Minangkabau's Superstition." *TELL-US Journal* 4.1 (2018): 47-57.

⁵ Ulya, R. H. (2022). Social Order Dimension in Superstition Pregnant Woman for Kubuang Tigo Baleh Society. *TELL-US Journal*, 8(1), 38-49.

⁶ Hand, W. D. (Ed.). Popular beliefs and superstitions from North Carolina. Duke University Press, 1964.

⁷ Erni, Erni, and Ridha Hasnul Ulya. "The Softskill and Hardskill forms of Tunjuk Ajar Melayu in Nyanyi Panjang Bujang Si Undang Palalawan Society of Riau Province." *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan* 13.3 (2021): 1688-1695.

⁸ Ulya, Ridha Hasnul. "Dimensi Keteraturan Sosial Wanita Hamil dalam Gamitan Superstisi Kubuang Tigo Baleh." *Kafaah: Journal of Gender Studies* 8.2 (2019): 183-196.

example, "If you see a falling star (sign), pat your pocket while saying 'full-full!' (conversion), and you will receive money later (effect)." The conversion element often resembles magical or occult practices, implying a transformation brought about by symbolic action.⁹

For a superstition to be effective, certain prerequisites must be met. Suggestive events often trigger belief in superstition, particularly during moments of imbalance, such as pregnancy, birth, or early childhood.¹⁰ In Malay society, parents frequently warn children against specific behaviors based on such events, such as observing a pregnant woman tying cloth around her neck or acting improperly.¹¹

The presence of a violator—usually a child—is crucial for the activation of a superstition. If the violator does not hear or heed the superstitious warning, the belief becomes ineffective.¹² Superstitious expressions often take the form of prohibitions ("no," "don't," "must not") followed by descriptions of causes

and consequences. Timing and presentation—including tone, gestures, and facial expressions—are also vital to ensuring the message is accepted.

In the Malay community of Riau, superstitions are primarily conveyed through language. These expressions explain phenomena in terms of signs or causes and expected outcomes. Superstitions may consist of two parts—cause and effect—or three parts—sign, transformation, and result. Many focus on stages of human development, especially prenatal and postnatal phases, guiding the behavior of pregnant women, infants, and young children.¹³

Superstitions surrounding childbirth aim to protect the unborn child by embedding cultural values that ensure physical and spiritual well-being.¹⁴ Malays believe every child is born pure and has the potential to become virtuous, depending on parental guidance. This study focuses on specific superstitions, such as "Tak bulih melilitkan anduk maupun barang lainnya ke lehi (S) beko anak yang lahir telilit tali pusat (A)", which warns against tying anything around the neck to avoid complications during childbirth. Understanding these beliefs contributes to literature on cultural studies and folklore, offering insights into how traditional knowledge can coexist with scientific understanding.

⁹ Mega Selviana, Andika, and Erni Erni. "Rekonstruksi Struktur Superstisi Kategori Tubuh Manusia dan Obat-Obatan Rakyat pada Masyarakat Melayu Rumbai." *Jurnal Onoma: Pendidikan, Bahasa dan Sastra*, 9.1 (2023).

¹⁰ Ulya, Ridha Hasnul. "Mustika Adab Masyarakat Kubuang Tigo Baleh dalam Bingkai Superstisi dan Sumbang Duo Baleh. International Seminar on Education." *Language, Literature, and Art (ISELLA) Proceeding, Universitas Islam Riau, Halaman* (2017): 476-490.

¹¹ Erni, Erni, Supriyadi Supriyadi, and Jusliani Jusliani. "Analisis Nilai Moral Pada Pantun Adat Perkawinan Masyarakat Melayu Kabupaten Karimun Provinsi Kepulauan Riau." *Perspektif Pendidikan dan Keguruan* 5.9 (2014).

¹² Setiarti, Sri, and Erni Erni. "Analisis Makna Superstisi Kategori Mata Pencarian dan Hubungan Sosial pada Masyarakat Melayu Rumbai." *Literasi: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Bahasa, Sastra Indonesia dan Daerah* 13.2 (2023).

¹³ Siregar, Robiatul Husna, and Erni Erni. "Bentuk dan Struktur Superstisi Kategori Kematian dan Adat Pemakaman pada Masyarakat Melayu Rumbai Timur." *Literasi: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Bahasa, Sastra Indonesia dan Daerah* 13.2 (2023).

¹⁴ Brenner, Reeve Robert. *The folklore of capitalism*. Routledge, 2017.

Superstitions under Taxonomy Meaning in Birth, Infancy, and Childhood.

Delivery of superstitions through verbal expressions (language) generates meanings within them. Meaning is an element of a word, or more precisely, a phenomenon in speech.¹⁵ Meaning encompasses messages, morals, values, lessons, significance, substance, and interpretation.¹⁶ In semantic studies, meaning is divided into several types based on various criteria and perspectives on The word *superstition* in Malay community in Tebing Tinggi Okura Subdistrict, East Rumbai District, Pekanbaru City tell two types of meanings through semantic core.¹⁷

Denotative word's completed with sets of components meaning in factual and objective, devoid of multiple interpretations or emotional nuances. Therefore, denotative meaning can be summarised as the factual information inherent in understanding the word itself. Connotative meaning, on the other hand, involves emotional or cultural values, representing something subtle or coarse. It is subjective and carries additional meanings beyond the basic, literal interpretation.¹⁸

Denotative and connotative meanings differ primarily in the presence or absence of emotional value in a given word.¹⁹ Denotative meaning lacks emotional value, while connotative meaning carries emotional nuances. The emotional value of a word is highly influenced by the experiences, habits, and worldviews adopted by the language community.²⁰ The analysis of superstition meanings among the Malay community in the categories of birth, infancy, and childhood in Riau can be seen in the following analysis:

Data 1:

"Wanita hamil tidak boleh duduk di tanah nanti lekat plasenta."

The superstition meaning in Data 1 has a denotative meaning, signifying that pregnant women should not sit on the ground to avoid the placenta sticking. The denotative meaning adheres to the conventions of the Malay Muslim community in Riau. This superstition belongs to the denotative meaning, providing factual and objective information. The connotative meaning lies in the phrase "lekat plasenta," which implies the placenta sticking. This superstition is interpreted as a precaution to prevent bleeding or complications during childbirth. The connotative meaning suggests that pregnant women should be cautious about their sitting

¹⁵ Pawi, Awang Azman Awang. "Ritual Tolak Bala Pada Masyarakat Melayu (Kajian Pada Masyarakat Petalangan Kecamatan Pangkalan Kuras Kabupaten Pelalawan)." *Jurnal ushuluddin* 25.1 (2017): 83-100.

¹⁶ Milda, Yanti. Nilai Didaktis Takhyul Tentang Wanita Hamil di Minangkabau Dokumentasi dan Analisis. Diss. Universitas Andalas, 2021.

¹⁷ Yaacob, Mohd Firdaus Che, and Normaliza Abd Rahim. "Nilai baik hati menerusi cerita rakyat Melayu terhadap masyarakat Melayu suatu aplikasi Teori Pengkaedahan Melayu." *Journal of Business and Social Development* 4.2 (2016): 48-57.

¹⁸ Rachman, A., Putri, N., Ulya, R. H., Sari, H. Y., Putri, D. S., & Putri, S. M. Alih dan Campur Kode Pada Konten Podcast Pandeka di Noice dalam Perspektif Kajian

Sosiolinguistik. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Scholastic*, 8.3 (2024): 37-47.

¹⁹ Tudjuka, Nina Selviana. "Makna denotasi dan konotasi pada ungkapan tradisional dalam konteks pernikahan adat suku Pamona." *Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra* 4.1 (2019): 1-15.

²⁰ Emelia, T. Winona, and Halimah Tussa Diah. "Kearifan Lokal dalam Syair Bordah Masyarakat Melayu Panai Labuhan Batu." *Kumpulan Penelitian dan Pengabdian Dosen* 1.1 (2018).

habits to avoid health risks, supporting ethical behaviour.

Data 2:

"Suami dari wanita hamil tidak boleh membunuh binatang nanti anak yang lahir akan cacat sebagaimana yang dialami binatang yang dianiaya."

The superstition meaning in Data 2 has a denotative meaning, stating that the husband of a pregnant woman should refrain from killing animals to prevent the newborn from being handicapped, similar to abused animals. This denotative meaning aligns with the conventions of the Malay Muslim community in Riau. The connotative meaning is expressed in the phrase "cacat macam yang diaso binatang yang dianiayo," which implies the handicapped condition resembling the abused animals. This superstition conveys a hidden message, urging pregnant women and their husbands to avoid cruel actions to ensure the child's well-being and humane characteristics.

Data 3:

"Wanita hamil tidak boleh keluar magrib, nanti akan diikuti hantu."

The superstition meaning in Data 3 has a denotative meaning, advising pregnant women not to go out after sunset to avoid being followed by ghosts. The denotative meaning corresponds to the conventions of the Malay Muslim community in Riau. The connotative meaning is evident in the phrase "diikuti hantu," suggesting being followed by ghosts. This superstition implies that pregnant women, who may emit a sweet scent, should stay indoors during the vulnerable time of sunset when supernatural entities may roam. The connotative meaning emphasises the importance of

maintaining proper behaviour during specific times.

Data 4:

"Wanita yang sudah melahirkan tidak boleh keluar rumah sebelum 40 hari karena nanti diganggu makhluk halus."

The superstition meaning in Data 4 has a denotative meaning, instructing women who have given birth not to leave the house for 40 days to avoid being disturbed by invisible beings. The denotative meaning aligns with the conventions of the Malay Muslim community in Riau. The connotative meaning is conveyed through the phrase "diganggu makhluk halus," indicating disturbance by invisible beings. This superstition implies that women who have recently given birth emit a distinctive scent that attracts supernatural entities. Therefore, staying at home during this period is recommended to protect both the mother and the newborn. The connotative meaning emphasises the importance of adhering to traditional practices for the well-being of the mother and child.

Data 5:

"Suami wanita hamil maupun wanita hamil tidak boleh melilitkan handuk maupun benda lainnya ke leher nanti anak yang lahir terlilit tali pusat."

The superstition meaning in Data 5 has a denotative meaning, stating that the husband of a pregnant woman and the pregnant woman herself should refrain from wrapping a towel or other objects around the neck to prevent the newborn from being born with the umbilical cord wrapped around its neck. This denotative meaning is consistent with the conventions of the Malay Muslim community in Riau.

The connotative meaning is expressed through the phrase "terlilit tali pusat," indicating

the umbilical cord wrapped around the neck. This superstition suggests that wrapping objects around the neck may complicate the birthing process, potentially resulting in respiratory issues for the newborn. The connotative meaning emphasises the need for pregnant women to maintain ethical conduct. The act of wrapping items around the neck may pose risks to the pregnant woman's health and the safety of the baby. This superstition, with its connotative meaning, encourages pregnant women to be cautious about their actions.

The taxonomy of meanings in superstitions within the Malay Muslim community in Riau reveals the cultural depth and richness embedded in traditional practices. The primary meanings discussed here are denotative and connotative, each serving distinct communicative functions within the Malay Muslim community. Denotative meaning refers to the literal interpretation of a superstition, providing factual and culturally accepted guidance. In contrast, connotative meaning adds emotional, symbolic, or cultural layers that convey values or cautionary advice. For instance, phrases such as "diikuti hantu" (followed by ghosts) and "diganggu makhluk halus" (disturbed by supernatural beings) go beyond literal meaning to imply behavioural caution and spiritual respect. By distinguishing between denotative and connotative meanings, we understand how superstitions function as social instruments, guiding behaviour and fostering an ethical worldview.²¹ These

seemingly simple superstitions have profound implications for understanding communal identity, spirituality, and the social structure of the Malay community. Through this taxonomy, researchers can better appreciate the role of linguistic and cultural heritage in shaping the ethical framework within which these communities live and thrive.

In linguistic studies, particularly within the domain of semantics, meaning is not only examined as a literal interpretation of words but also as how it is understood and interpreted by language speakers.²² The theory of componential analysis can be applied to dissect the structure of meaning in superstitions. Using this approach, each superstition is analyzed based on its semantic components—both objective and subjective. For instance, in the superstition "wanita hamil tidak boleh keluar magrib, nanti akan diikuti hantu" ("pregnant women should not go out at sunset, or they will be followed by ghosts"), semantic elements such as 'pregnant woman,' 'not allowed,' 'to go out,' 'sunset,' 'ghost,' and 'being followed' play distinct roles in constructing the overall conveyed meaning. These components are then categorized into denotative meaning as factual information and connotative meaning as symbolic or spiritual value.

Superstition serves not only to convey practical information but also to fulfill a symbolic function that reflects collective beliefs and values. According to Clifford Geertz's symbolic theory, culture is a system of symbols

²¹ Naini, I., & Ulya, R. H. Reasoning Patterns and Sentence Construction Errors in Students' Scholarly Articles: A Content Analysis of Academic Writing in Padang City. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 17.2 (2025)

²² Aditiawarman, M., Dewirahmadanirwati, D., & Ulya, R. H. Sociolinguistic insights into youth language phenomena: Patterns and influences in South Jakarta through the lens of# BeritaAkhirPekan podcast. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 17.1 (2025): 707-719.

through which human beings construct, preserve, and communicate their experiences and worldviews. In this context, superstition functions as a symbolic representation of moral norms and ways of life that must be maintained.²³ Phrases such as "diganggu makhluk halus" ("disturbed by supernatural beings") or "terlilit tali pusar" ("neck entangled by the umbilical cord") do more than issue prohibitions—they reinforce awareness of an unseen world that must be respected. Through these symbols, the Malay community of Riau maintains a balance between the physical and metaphysical realms.²⁴

Beyond its communicative function, language also serves as a medium of social control in traditional societies. As argued by Dell Hymes, one of the key functions of oral folklore—including superstition—is to shape collective behavior. In Malay society, superstitions are often expressed in imperative sentences ("jangan...", "tidak boleh...") that act as direct instructions. The use of firm and clear language strengthens the message and increases its likelihood of being obeyed. Furthermore, the use of connotative phrases such as "akan cacat seperti binatang yang dianiaya" ("will be disabled like an abused animal") creates a psychological effect that makes violations feel heavier in both emotional and moral terms.

The life of the Malay community in Riau is deeply influenced by Islamic teachings.²⁵ Therefore, interpretations of superstition are not entirely animistic or irrational but are often integrated with religious values. This creates a dynamic meaning in which a superstition may be accepted if it aligns with Islamic principles. For example, the prohibition against a husband killing animals during his wife's pregnancy can be understood not only as a belief about the child's fate but also as an invitation to practice gentleness and compassion—values highly emphasized in Islamic teachings. This perspective illustrates that superstition in the Malay-Islamic context is not merely a remnant of the past but can be developed into an educational message relevant to contemporary society.

A deeper understanding of denotative and connotative meanings in superstition opens opportunities for utilizing them as informal educational tools.²⁶ As noted by Danandjaja in his study of Indonesian folklore, superstitions hold significant potential as media for transmitting ethical and moral values to younger generations. With appropriate pedagogical approaches, superstitions can be taught not merely as irrational beliefs but as reflections of local wisdom that remain relevant today.²⁷

²³ Antika, Tamia Rindi, Nurmada Ningsih, and Insi Sastika. "Analisis Makna Denotasi, Konotasi, Mitos pada Lagu "Lathi" Karya Weird Genius." *Asas: Jurnal Sastra* 9.2 (2020).

²⁴ Ismail, Mohd Fahmi, Salmah Jan Noor Muhammad, and Mohd Sharifudin Yusop. "Cerita rakyat Melayu: Suatu analisis pancaran jati diri masyarakat Melayu sebagai cerminan kebudayaan Melayu." *International Journal of Language Education and Applied Linguistics* (2015).

²⁵ Zain, Zawiyah Mohd. "Budaya politik masyarakat Melayu: Satu analisis." *Geografia-Malaysian Journal of Society and Space* 17.1 (2021): 297-311.

²⁶ Efrianto, E., Afrita, A., & Ulya, R. H. The Differences of Students' Ability in Writing Poetry through the Use of Constructivism Learning Method and Modeling Strategy. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 16.4 (2024): 4748-4761.

²⁷ Ramadhan, S., Dewirahmadanirwati, D., Ulya, R. H., & Jamaluddin, N. B. The Coagulation of Politeness and Character in Indonesian Language Learning in the Digital Era. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 17.2 (2025).

Moreover, integrating superstitions into cultural education can contribute to the preservation of local identity, which is increasingly threatened by globalization. Research on superstitions among the Malay community in Riau—particularly those related to childbirth and child development—is crucial for bridging the gap between oral traditions and modern scientific knowledge.

Superstition Typology through functions in the birth, infancy, and childhood.

The function describes a perfect role in doing something according to a certain rule or order. The function referred to in this study is the function related to the expression of spoken beliefs. The function of beliefs in society is to convey the speaker's thoughts, feelings, instructions, and desires in a language that is not rude. The speaker expresses this so that other speakers can catch and understand what is being conveyed.²⁸

Functional analysis is based on functionalism theory, which explains that the elements that form society have a reciprocal relationship and influence each other so that each component functions for society. Folklor scholars, including William R. Bascom, Alan Dundes, and Ruth Finnegan, pioneered functional theory. Each expert has a different view because of their philosophical foundations, powers of observation, and powers of imagination. Some other experts who may still be apart from this statement include those often mentioned by Leach. Folklore has a function for

its collective society in social life. The general function of folklore is a child education, a solidarity, a social sanctions, a social criticism, and an entertainment.²⁹

In various views, the more efficient function in Indonesian society that tends to emerge is the function of folk beliefs, which has five main functions.³⁰ Thickening religious or belief emotions, namely a function caused by humans having a belief in the existence of supernatural beings that occupy the natural world around their place of residence and tend to occur when seeing the events of the human life cycle from birth to death or humans are afraid of the existence of crises in their lives or humans are sure that there are symptoms that cannot be explained by rationality because humans believe in the existence of magical powers from nature.

As a projection system, namely a function that refers to the existence of desires within a collective by considering the good and bad of imagination. A tool for educating children and adolescents, namely, a valuable function for educating children's behaviour. Explanation of natural phenomena, namely a function that can be accepted even though it is very difficult to understand and frightening to folk against natural phenomena. Entertainer for people facing disasters, namely, the function of entertaining people who are experiencing

²⁸ Rahayu, Dessy Indah. Kategori dan Fungsi Sosial Ungkapan Larangan Masa Lahir, Bayi, dan Kanak-kanak di Desa Gunung Labu Kecamatan Kayu Aro Kabupaten Kerinci. Diss. Universitas Negeri Padang, 2014.

²⁹ Susiati, Susiati. "Semantik: Teori Semantik, Relasi Makna, Marked, dan Unmarked." (2020).

³⁰ Juprinedi, Juprinedi, Arta Uly Siahaan, and Cahya Miranto. "Analisis makna denotatif dan konotatif dalam film upin & ipin episode kenangan mengusik jiwa." *Journal of Digital Education, Communication, and Arts (Deca)* 3.01 (2020): 1-17.

disasters. The analysis of the typology of these functions can be seen from the following data.

Data 6

"Kakak budak harus dikubu dalam, biar anak tak sakit-sakitan atau diikut dek roh jaat"

In data 6, it has the function of thickening religious and belief emotions because of the belief of avoiding the baby from getting sick or being disturbed by supernatural beings by burying the baby's placenta.

Data 7

"Betino mengandung tak bulih menaan seleo beko ai liu anak bebuih"

In data 7, it has the function of a projection system of imagination because pregnant women tend to crave or desire something, and that should be met because in the local community's imagination, if it is not found, the baby's saliva will foam. For example, the imagination is a good picture when craving nutritious food.

Data 8

"Tak bulih meniukan uang gagap beko bisa pindah ke anak"

In data 8, it has the function of a tool for educating children because parents will educate pregnant women through superstitions so that they are careful not to do evil deeds during pregnancy, because in the Malay Okura community, there is the term Konan (imitating).

Data 9

"Betino mengandung tak bulih makan koak nasi karna beko lengket kakaknyo"

Data 9 is a tool for educating children because parents will educate pregnant women through superstitions to be careful when choosing food during pregnancy. This needs to be heeded because if not, actions such as eating

rice crust can disrupt the pregnant woman's digestion due to the hard processing.

Data 10

"Betino hamil tak bulih minum dengan goleh yang otak beko sumbing bibi anak"

In data 10, it has the function of educating children because parents will educate pregnant women through this superstition to not drink from a broken glass because it is feared that it could injure the pregnant woman's lips. The superstition that pregnant women should not drink from a broken glass is a way for parents to educate their children about the dangers of broken glass. The superstition is based on the belief that a broken glass can be sharp enough to cut a pregnant woman's lips, which could lead to a cleft lip in her child. This superstition is an effective way to teach children about the importance of safety and to avoid putting themselves or others at risk.

Data 11

"Betino mengandung tak bulih ujan-ujanan beko kemasun setan"

Data 11 has the function of explaining natural phenomena in a way that is acceptable to the folk's logic. This is because pregnant women are still vulnerable to being disturbed by supernatural beings during pregnancy, so when it rains, the pregnant woman who gets caught in the rain is more likely to become ill, such as with a fever, and more easily possessed by supernatural beings around her. Therefore, this natural phenomenon is acceptable to logic and is frightening. The superstition that pregnant women should not get caught in the rain is a way for the folk to explain the natural phenomenon of rain. The superstition is based on the belief that rain is a sign of the presence of supernatural beings. Pregnant women are

believed to be more vulnerable to these supernatural beings, so they need to avoid getting caught in the rain. This superstition serves to protect pregnant women and their unborn children from harm.

The functional analysis of superstitions in this community offers insights into the symbolic, social, and educational roles that these beliefs play in everyday life. Here, superstition is a vehicle for communicating community values, protective advice, and cultural practices within the birth, infancy, and childhood stages. The typology presented here demonstrates that superstitions among the Malay Muslim community are not mere beliefs but serve layered social functions. They offer a structured means for the community to communicate important messages, manage anxieties, and establish behavioural norms through indirect, culturally resonant expressions.³¹ By categorising these functions, researchers can gain deeper insights into how the community conceptualises safety, moral integrity, and social responsibility. The typology of superstition functions within the Malay Muslim community of Riau, revealing how collective beliefs support social harmony, reinforce cultural values, and provide a means of addressing human vulnerability. This study highlights the richness of superstition as a cultural phenomenon, with each function contributing to the community's ethical and spiritual framework, particularly during the formative stages of birth, infancy, and

childhood. The analysis also emphasises the importance of preserving these cultural elements, as they reflect the community's values, fears, and aspirations, and support a resilient and interconnected social structure.³²

Functionalism, as a theoretical framework, provides a robust foundation for analyzing the role of superstitions in society. Rooted in the works of scholars such as Émile Durkheim and Bronisław Malinowski, functionalism posits that all aspects of a culture—be it beliefs, rituals, or social structures—serve specific purposes in maintaining societal stability and cohesion. In this view, superstitions are not merely irrational beliefs but cultural tools that fulfill particular psychological, moral, and social functions. For instance, Malinowski's theory of "psychological functionalism" emphasizes how superstitions offer individuals a sense of control over uncertain and unpredictable events, particularly during life transitions such as pregnancy and childbirth.³³ This aligns with the Malay community's use of superstitions to manage anxiety around maternal and infant health, reinforcing their continued relevance in daily life.

Beyond individual psychological comfort, superstitions also function as mechanisms of social integration. According to Durkheimian perspectives, shared beliefs and practices

³¹ Sari, H. Y., Rachman, A., Putri, D. S., Ulya, R. H., & Widhyah, D. Y. The Narrative of Crime in Andrea Hirata's Novel 'Orang-Orang Biasa': A Formulaic Study. *Lensa: Kajian Kebahasaan, Kesusastaan, dan Budaya*, 14.2 (2024): 258-270.

³² Putri, D. S., Aryana, S., Rachman, A., Sari, H. Y., & Ulya, R. H. Symbols of Abuse of Power in Muhammad Ramadhan Batubara's Short Story "Pesan dari Seorang yang Bernama Presiden". *JLER (Journal of Language Education Research)*, 8.2 (2025): 82-92.

³³ Marlina, L., Wahyuni, D., Aufa, F., & Ulya, R. H. Female Agency in Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* (2008). *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research of Higher Education (IJMURHICA)*, 7.4 (2024): 226-242.

reinforce collective consciousness—the shared norms, values, and understandings that bind a society together. In the context of the Malay Muslim community in Riau, superstitions serve as oral traditions that transmit cultural knowledge across generations, strengthening communal identity and continuity. When elders warn pregnant women against certain behaviors using superstitious expressions, they do more than convey warnings—they reaffirm belonging to a cultural and religious group that upholds specific values. These beliefs act as informal institutions that regulate behavior, maintain order, and foster solidarity within the community, especially during vulnerable life stages such as pregnancy and early childhood.

One of the key functions of superstition is its role in moral education. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, superstitions operate as narrative devices that encode ethical lessons within culturally resonant symbols and metaphors.³⁴ For example, the belief that improper behavior by a pregnant woman might result in a child being born with a cleft lip (*sumbing bibir*) serves not only as a cautionary tale but also as an indirect means of teaching respect, responsibility, and care. Parents use these beliefs to instill discipline in younger generations without overtly authoritarian methods. The connotative meanings embedded in superstitions often carry moral weight, encouraging adherence to social norms under the guise of supernatural consequences.³⁵ Thus,

superstitions become pedagogical tools that subtly guide behavior and reinforce ethical expectations.

Superstitions also function as cultural mediators between rational understanding and spiritual belief systems. As discussed by Clifford Geertz in his interpretive anthropology, religion and folklore provide frameworks through which people make sense of the world, particularly when empirical explanations fall short.³⁶ In the Malay context, many superstitions blend Islamic teachings with indigenous animistic elements, creating hybrid belief systems that address both physical and metaphysical concerns. For instance, the warning that a pregnant woman caught in the rain may be possessed by spirits (*kemasun setan*) reflects an attempt to explain illness and vulnerability through a spiritual lens while also offering practical advice about avoiding exposure to disease. Such beliefs illustrate how superstitions bridge scientific reasoning and cultural spirituality, allowing communities to navigate uncertainty in ways that feel meaningful and coherent.

Finally, superstitions can be understood as forms of non-institutionalized social control. Unlike formal laws or religious doctrines, superstitions operate informally through everyday language and practice, yet they exert significant influence on individual behavior.

³⁴ Ulya, R. H. Transformasi makrolinguistik Bahasa Indonesia dalam gamitan media digital: Analisis wacana kritis pada platform media sosial. *Jurnal Ilmiah Langue and Parole*, 8.1 (2024): 91-99.

³⁵ Septiana, Rina, Leika MV Kalangi, and Donna Retty Timboeleng. "Makna Denotasi, Konotasi dan Mitos

dalam Film *Who Am I* Kein System Ist Sicher (Suatu Analisis Semiotik)." *Jurnal Elektronik Fakultas Sastra Universitas Sam Ratulangi* 1.2 (2019).

³⁶ Asmawati, Asmawati, Ridha Hasnul Ulya, and Jasril Jasril. "A Sociological and Mimesis Studies on the Forms of Social Issues and Critique in Indonesian Novels." *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 15.3 (2023): 2674-2689.

According to sociologist Kai Erikson, deviance and its regulation are not solely managed by legal systems but also through subtle, culturally embedded mechanisms like gossip, shame, and fear of supernatural retribution. In the Malay community, superstitions serve precisely this function: they discourage actions deemed harmful or inappropriate by associating them with negative outcomes, often involving harm to children or disruptions in family harmony. By framing undesirable behaviors as potentially catastrophic—not just physically but spiritually—superstitions reinforce normative conduct without requiring direct confrontation or punishment, making them powerful tools for shaping social behavior.

Bridging identity of Malay Riau in Pregnancy Superstitions for well Mitigation

The analysis of superstitions surrounding pregnant women in the Malay Riau community, as explored through their denotative and connotative meanings and typological functions, reveals a complex interplay between traditional beliefs and their practical implications in contemporary society. While seemingly rooted in anachronistic thought, these superstitions serve profound social, psychological, and educational roles, particularly within the context of gender and Islamic values. The findings underscore that these oral traditions are not merely relics of the past but dynamic cultural mechanisms that continue to influence behavior and uphold communal values, albeit often requiring modern mitigation strategies for optimal well-being.

The denotative meanings of these superstitions (e.g., "Wanita hamil tidak boleh duduk di tanah nanti lekat plasenta"—pregnant women should not sit on the ground to avoid the placenta sticking) provide direct, factual-sounding instructions, often linking an action to a tangible, albeit supernaturally explained, consequence. This literal interpretation serves as a clear guideline for pregnant women and their families. However, it is the connotative meanings that reveal the deeper societal and moral underpinnings. Phrases like "diikuti hantu" (followed by ghosts) or "cacat macam yang diaso binatang yang dianiayo" (disabled like an abused animal) transcend simple warnings, embedding layers of emotional, ethical, and spiritual significance. These connotations function as potent social control mechanisms, subtly discouraging actions deemed harmful or morally reprehensible within the community.³⁷ This aligns with Dell Hymes's perspective on oral folklore shaping collective behavior, where imperative language and evocative imagery reinforce adherence to norms.³⁸

Furthermore, the functional typology of these superstitions highlights their versatile utility beyond simple prohibitions. Functions such as thickening religious and belief emotions (Data 6), acting as a projection system for collective desires and anxieties (Data 7), and serving as a tool for educating children and adolescents (Data 8, 9, 10) demonstrate their

³⁷ Kiepek, N. (2025). Discursively embedded institutionalized stigma in Canadian judicial decisions. *Contemporary Drug Problems*, 52(1), 82-103.

³⁸ Shukla, S. S. D. S. (2025). Page A Comparative Study of Folklore and Oral Traditions Across Cultures. *Scholar'Digest: Journal of Arts & Humanities*, 1(1), 55-74.

comprehensive integration into the Malay Riau worldview. For instance, the superstition about a pregnant woman's husband not killing animals (Data 2) not only plays a role in fostering the belief in spiritual consequences but also subtly reinforces Islamic values of compassion and gentleness. This indicates a syncretic relationship between indigenous beliefs and Islamic teachings, where traditional practices are reinterpreted or reinforced through a religious lens, providing a culturally resonant ethical framework.³⁹

Despite their enduring cultural significance, the scientific mitigation of potentially harmful or limiting aspects of these superstitions is paramount in modern healthcare contexts. While the underlying intent of many superstitions is protective (e.g., preventing illness or harm to the child), some denotative interpretations may lead to practices that are not medically sound or can cause unnecessary anxiety. For instance, the belief that "Wanita yang sudah melahirkan tidak boleh keluar rumah sebelum 40 hari karena nanti diganggu makhluk halus" (Data 4) while connoting protection, may restrict access to essential postnatal care or social support. Therefore, mitigation strategies should focus on interpreting the connotative moral and social guidance while scientifically addressing the denotative concerns. This involves health education that acknowledges the cultural context of the belief but offers evidence-based alternatives or clarifications. For example, rather than dismissing the "40-day confinement"

entirely, healthcare providers can emphasize the importance of rest and recovery while facilitating safe outdoor activities or necessary medical appointments.

Ultimately, the study of Malay Riau pregnancy superstitions underscores the need for a nuanced approach to cultural competency in healthcare and public health initiatives. Rather than viewing superstitions as obstacles to modern medical practice, they can be understood as cultural narratives that encode community values, fears, and wisdom. By identifying the underlying protective intents and moral lessons within these beliefs, interventions can be designed that respect cultural heritage while ensuring optimal maternal and child health outcomes. This involves engaging community leaders, traditional healers, and women themselves in dialogues that bridge traditional knowledge with modern scientific understanding, allowing for a culturally sensitive and effective superstition mitigation that benefits the well-being of pregnant women in Malay Riau.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the taxonomic meaning and typology functions in superstitions related to birth, infancy, and childhood within the Malay Muslim community in Riau, focusing on superstition mitigation among pregnant women. The paper reveals that superstitions within this community are deeply embedded in cultural practices, providing a framework for behaviour and serving as a means of safeguarding both the physical and spiritual well-being of mothers and their children. The

39 Fuadi, A. I. (2024). Reconfiguring Religious Authority and Ethical Governance in Islamic Political Thought: A Comparative Literature Review. *Sinergi International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2(3), 136-148.

taxonomy of meaning in these superstitions can be classified into denotative and connotative meanings. Denotative meanings refer to the literal, objective interpretations of the superstitions, offering clear and direct advice, such as the importance of avoiding certain behaviours for the health and safety of the mother and child. For example, the superstition about not sitting on the ground to prevent the placenta from sticking represents a factual precautionary measure. On the other hand, connotative meanings bring emotional, spiritual, and cultural layers to the interpretation. These meanings often serve as moral guidance, emphasising ethical behaviour and cautionary teachings related to spiritual well-being, such as prohibitions against specific actions based on the belief that they might invite harmful supernatural consequences.

The typology of functions in these superstitions reveals their broader social and educational roles. The identified function talk strengthening religious or belief emotions, which involve reinforcing belief in supernatural entities, such as protecting the newborn from evil spirits. It shows projection system, which expresses societal expectations and desires, such as superstitions about cravings during pregnancy. It sees a tool for educating children, which encourages ethical behavior and teaches lessons on safety, morality, and responsibility, such as advising against drinking from broken glass to prevent harm to the baby. It tells the explanation of natural phenomena, which offers an acceptable rationale for natural events, such as avoiding rain during pregnancy to prevent interference from supernatural beings. These functions illustrate the multifaceted role of superstitions, as they provide direct protection

and guidance and help maintain social cohesion and community values. Superstitions function as a means of communication within the community, transmitting important cultural knowledge and values from one generation to the next.

The findings of this study highlight the ongoing importance of superstitions in the Malay Muslim community in Riau, particularly as a way to mitigate risks during pregnancy and childbirth. While the belief in supernatural causes may be questioned in modern contexts, the superstitions themselves serve as a cultural artefact that bridges traditional knowledge and modern healthcare practices. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the roles and meanings embedded in these beliefs to create sensitive interventions that respect cultural traditions while promoting healthier practices among pregnant women. This research provides valuable insights into how cultural beliefs and practices can inform efforts to mitigate superstitions and improve maternal and child health within this community.

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