

Developing a culturally responsive model of liturgical music education: a community-based approach to musical inculturation in Indonesia



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received 2025-09-23

Revised 2025-10-16

Accepted 2025-10-20

Keywords

Music Inculturation

Liturgy

Cultural Identity

Religious Music Education

Community

ABSTRACT

This research aims to develop a culturally responsive liturgical music education model through a community-based approach in Indonesia. This research is motivated by the need for religious music learning that is able to bridge universal liturgical traditions with local cultural expressions. Using a qualitative approach, data were obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and surveys of educators, congregations, and traditional musicians. The results of the study show that there are two main perceptions of the practice of inculturation of liturgical music: most educators and congregations consider inculturation to enrich faith, strengthen cultural identity, and improve social cohesion, while a small number are worried about the diminishing sacredness of the liturgy. Community involvement in repertoire selection, cross-generational collaboration, and active participation of congregations are key factors in building social legitimacy and sustainability of inculturation practices. This research contributes theoretically by affirming liturgical music as a space for identity construction and cultural dialogue, as well as practically through the development of flexible, inclusive, and contextual learning models. Thus, the inculturation of liturgical music can be a culturally responsive model of religious music education and potentially applied to other multicultural contexts in Indonesia.



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1. Introduction

The inculturation of music in the liturgy is a process of cultural adaptation in which elements of local music are integrated into the practice of worship without losing their theological meaning and spiritual value. In contrast to acculturation, which emphasizes cultural mixing, inculturation focuses on the acceptance and adjustment of local cultural elements into the existing framework of faith [1]. In the context of the church in Indonesia, which is very diverse, this practice is a form of encounter between faith and a living culture. For example, in a number of parishes in Central Java, the use of gamelan and Javanese tembang in liturgical celebrations not only beautifies the ritual but also deepens the spiritual appreciation of the congregation that grows in the local tradition. Thus, musical inculturation serves as a bridge between the expression of faith and cultural identity that allows the faithful to feel the divine presence in their own musical language [2]. Music education that is responsive to culture has an important role in maintaining the sustainability of this inculturation practice. The approach not only teaches musical skills, but also fosters cross-cultural understanding and tolerance in religious life [3]. However, studies have shown that many religious educational institutions in Indonesia still adopt a Western-oriented liturgical music teaching model that does not reflect local cultural values [4]. This condition causes a gap between the practice of formal education

and the musical experience of the congregation in the field. As a result, the liturgical music curriculum becomes less contextual, rigid and does not fully reflect the cultural diversity of the faithful.

This phenomenon is increasingly complex with changes in music preferences among the younger generation. Based on field observations and preliminary interviews with music teachers and liturgical activists in Semarang and Yogyakarta in 2024, the majority of church youth show a greater interest in popular music than traditional liturgical music. This indicates a decrease in the participation of the younger generation in choir activities and ecclesiastical music ministry. This situation shows the urgency of developing a new approach in religious music education that not only preserves the spiritual value of the liturgy but is also relevant to the cultural expression and tastes of the younger generation [5]. Although there has been previous research on music education that focuses on cultural inclusion, there are still significant research gaps related to the practical application of music inculturation in liturgical contexts. Many studies have examined multicultural music education, but lack in looking at the specific dynamics that arise when local traditions are integrated into specific liturgical practices. This research will fill these gaps by providing a clear conceptual framework for implementing better culturally responsive religious education in liturgical practice [6], [7]. The urgency of this research lies in the effort to not only update but also enrich religious music education practices to create a more inclusive and holistic experience for all participants. Given the diversity of congregational backgrounds, culturally responsive teaching needs to be examined, but also implemented so that each congregation feels the relevance of the educational content they receive. Some argue that modern education should be able to take into account the cultural background of the congregation and provide the rich environment for learning that religious music education requires. As part of the current state of the arts, the transformation of culturally responsive music education is becoming increasingly important in the face of the impact of globalization and digitalization. With the increasing availability of technological tools, music educators can now more broadly apply innovative teaching methods that incorporate cultural elements.

Researchers such as Cong (2022) have shown how multimedia technology can help teach music more effectively, thereby making music education more relevant to the cultural needs of the congregation and society [9]. The novelty of this research lies in providing a framework that is not only theoretical but also practical, with concrete steps to support the inculturation of music in religious education. This framework is expected to be discussed in the context of educational training in higher education institutions, so that graduates are ready to face challenges in a diverse and ever-changing field. The main objective of this study is to formulate and implement concrete steps that educators can take in creating a more responsive, inclusive, and culturally integrated music learning environment in their liturgical practice [10], [11]. This research will focus on the application of new theories in music education that can be directly connected to the spiritual and cultural needs of the church, while adapting existing local elements. Through this approach, a model of religious music education is formed that not only educates but also empowers communities to appreciate and maintain cultural traditions while respecting spiritual values that are integrated in their every interaction with music. This is the basis for improving the quality of music education in religious contexts, in order to provide a more immersive and enriching experience for all involved in the practice [12], [13]. The Concept of Music Inculturation in Liturgical Practice. Music inculturation in the context of liturgy involves the process of incorporating elements of local music into religious worship with the aim of enhancing the spiritual experience and deepening the congregation's relationship with their traditions. This is in accordance with the idea of Chen (2024), who discusses the importance of fostering cultural identity in music education [14]. Through inculturation, music not only functions as a filler but also as a medium for conveying religious messages, values, and traditions that are relevant to the society concerned [15].

The Connection of Cultural Identity and Music Education. The recognition of the cultural identity of the congregation in music education is essential to create an inclusive and responsive learning environment. Research by [14] shows that music education that integrates local cultural perspectives can strengthen cultural identity and encourage creativity and understanding of music literacy. By utilizing music that is relevant to the cultural context of the congregation, educators can develop a deep and touching learning experience, which can create a sense of belonging among the congregation [16]. Significance of Culturally Responsive Music Education Culturally responsive and inclusive music education plays an important role in facilitating intercultural dialogue and strengthening social cohesion in multicultural societies [17]. For example, [18] suggests that music education can support

the emotional and psychological goals of congregations, contributing to the development of social solidarity and connectedness among its members. Therefore, the application of inculturation-based music education in the context of liturgy can be an effective means of building bridges between different cultural backgrounds [15]. Innovative and Collaborative Music Education Practices Today's approach to music education increasingly emphasizes the collaboration and active participation of congregations in the learning process [19]. Music learning that prioritizes direct experience can enrich the musical identity of the congregation in a more dynamic and contextual way. This approach is in line with teaching principles that emphasize the importance of adapting methods to include musical elements that are appropriate to the local cultural context, thus strengthening the growth of the congregation's identity. Seeing the Diversity of Music and the Challenges of Cultural Hegemony. The diversity of music performances is often faced with the challenge of cultural hegemony that supports one dominant narrative. As stated in research by [20], creating a curriculum that is inclusive and responsive to the needs of different cultural communities can help foster dialogue and mutual understanding. This is especially relevant in the context of music education that integrates inculturation, so that congregations from different cultural backgrounds feel recognized and valued [21].

Building Coping With Challenges through Music Education. Music education designed to respect cultural diversity can enhance the ability of congregations to adapt and confront the challenges they face in life and learning [22]. Research by [18] notes that the existence of an element of self-control and the development of emotional resilience can be triggered by inclusive music education. It emphasizes the vital role of music education in training a strong and empathetic character of the congregation, which is especially important in complex social contexts. The development of a cooperative model in religious music education requires active collaboration between educators, congregational communities, and traditional musicians. An example can be seen in the Contextual Liturgical Music Training program such as at the Church of Christ the King of the Universe, Salatiga, where educators work with local gamelan players to adapt traditional rhythmic patterns into spiritual song arrangements. This collaboration resulted in project-based learning modules that engage participants directly in cross-cultural music practice. The evaluation showed a 32% increase in participants' musical skills as well as the birth of a contextual curriculum that placed local music as an integral part of the formation of faith and the cultural identity of the congregation. These findings are in line with a study by Li (2023) in Hong Kong, which showed that partnerships between teachers, artists, and beginners are able to create musical harmony across cultures as well as strengthen the pedagogical and spiritual dimensions of inclusive liturgical music education [23]. The recommendations and further directions of the research underscore the importance of integrating music inculturation practices in religious education to create a more meaningful and inclusive learning experience that is a training strategy for church music educators. Further research is needed to develop an effective application model of inculturation in music education, as well as to understand its impact on congregations from different cultural backgrounds [15]. By building a more solid conceptual framework, it is hoped that further research can contribute to the development of music education that is better, inclusive, and responsive to local social and cultural contexts [22], [24].

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study adopts a mixed approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the implementation of music inculturation in religious education in the liturgical environment. The design structure of this study is designed to allow for comprehensive data collection, while also providing in-depth insights through narrative and statistical analysis. The qualitative method consists of in-depth interviews with music educators or coaches, choir groups and church music accompaniment, pastors and congregations, and field observations. Meanwhile, quantitative methods were used to collect data from surveys specifically designed to assess the perception and influence of music on cultural identity and congregation satisfaction [25], [26]. In terms of participant selection, the study involved music educators and congregations involved in religious music education in various academic institutions, such as Kristen Satya Wacana University. The selection criteria are based on their experience in teaching or learning music related to the liturgical context. The recruitment process is carried out by sending invitations to educational institutions that have music programs, as well as church groups that have continuous music activities, such as the Church of Christ the King of the

Universe in Salatiga. This allows researchers to gain diverse perspectives from different cultural backgrounds and experiences [27].

2.2. Data Collection

Data collection was carried out using several tools, including semi-structured interviews, surveys, and field observations. The interviews were designed to capture qualitative feedback on the experiences and challenges that educators and congregations face in implementing local music into religious education [25]. This method allows researchers to get deeper details about the script of music education in the liturgical environment. The survey was used to collect quantitative data from congregations participating in choir music training programs. All respondents were asked to rate their experiences in terms of the application of religious music that reflects their cultural identity. The results of this survey were then analyzed to obtain graphs and statistics regarding the aspects that affect the success of music inculturation in liturgical activities. In addition, field observations are conducted to get a first-hand picture of the interaction, teaching, and application of music in a religious context. This technique provides in-depth empirical data on the attitudes and behaviors of the congregation during the teaching and learning process [28].

2.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study was carried out through various analytical methods, both qualitative and quantitative. For qualitative data, thematic analysis was used to explore the patterns that emerged from interviews and observations. This method allows researchers to identify recurring themes and provide in-depth insights into the individual experiences of educators and congregations regarding the practice of music inculturation in religious education [29]. As for quantitative data, descriptive and inferential statistical analysis will be applied to explore the survey results. This includes calculations of frequency, averages, and correlation analysis between different variables, such as congregation satisfaction with the use of music in the context of their education and cultural identity. The data will be processed using appropriate statistical software to obtain a significant summary, and can be statistically tested to support or reject the research hypothesis [30].

2.4. Research Procedure

This research procedure begins with planning, the development of research instruments, as well as the dissemination and collection of data. After obtaining ethical clearance from the relevant institutions, steps to contact the specified participants will be carried out. At this stage, information about the research objectives and participation procedures will be communicated to all prospective participants to ensure their transparency and consent. Once all participants have been recruited, interviews and observations will be scheduled. The interview will be recorded, and the transcript will then be analyzed. At the same time, the survey will be disseminated via an online platform or physically, depending on the preferences of the participants. All data collected will be carefully recorded and stored in accordance with regulations on personal data protection [26].

2.5. Data Validity Checks

To ensure the validity of the data collected, several strategies will be implemented. First, resource triangulation is done by comparing information between educators, congregations, and liturgical leaders. Second, triangulation methods compare the results of interviews, surveys, and observations. Third, researcher triangulation involves two independent researchers in the coding process to improve objectivity [27].

2.6. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis will be carried out simultaneously between qualitative and quantitative data, so that it is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the practice of music inculturation in religious education. The combination of thematic analysis and descriptive statistics can provide a well-rounded framework for understanding how elements of music can contribute to culturally responsive religious education. It will also facilitate the identification of complex interactions between music, cultural identity, and the educational experience of the congregation in the context of the liturgy [31].

2.7. Data Collection and Storage Plan

The data obtained from this study will be stored securely in a protected database and can only be accessed by researchers and the research team. All documents pertaining to data collection, analysis,

and storage will be well-archived to ensure that they can be easily referenced as needed in the future. Requests for access to data will also be considered for future research collaborations [27].

2.8. Research Ethics

Ethical recommendations in this study include obtaining clear consent from all participants before they engage in the study, *i.e.*, pastors, church music groups, and congregations. In addition, participants will be given the freedom to withdraw at any time without any consequences. The study will also follow guidelines on the protection of confidentiality and fairness in data collection, thereby ensuring that the voices of all participants are valued and recognized [23], [25]

2.9. Research Scheduling

The entire research process is divided into several stages, starting from planning to analysis and preparation of reports. Detailed scheduling will be developed to ensure that all research activities are carried out within the stipulated time, to minimise the risk of delays and support the overall success of the research [32].

2.10. Methodological Conclusions

The research methods described above aim to answer research questions regarding the inculturation of music in the liturgy while building a framework for religious music education that is responsive to cultural diversity. Through a blended approach that utilizes the integration of qualitative and quantitative data, it is hoped that this research can provide useful insights for the development of music education practices in the liturgical context and contribute to the academic literature in the field [29], [31].

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents an analysis of the results of research on the perception of educators and congregations in the practice of inculturation of liturgical music. Through in-depth interviews and observations, an overview is obtained of how local music is understood and accepted in the liturgical context, as well as how it contributes to the formation of the cultural and spiritual identity of the congregation. The analysis is carried out with a qualitative approach that emphasizes the subjective experience of the participants, so that each narrative and reflection can show the deep meaning of the use of music in religious education. The results of the study show that the practice of music inculturation not only functions as an aesthetic means, but also as a pedagogical and social medium. Local music in the liturgy is able to strengthen spiritual connections, build community solidarity, and give legitimacy to the cultural identity of the congregation. Thus, the following discussion will highlight the perceptions of educators and congregations, pedagogical challenges, innovative strategies developed, and the practical and academic implications of the application of music in religious music education. To understand in depth how the inculturation of liturgical music is carried out in the context of the Catholic Church in Indonesia, it is important to first review the perspective of educators and congregations as the main role in the practice.

In Catholic liturgy, inculturation is realized through the adaptation of local music such as Javanese, Batak, Sundanese, and East Javanese styles, both in the form of melody, rhythm, and harmony structure, which is often enriched by the use of traditional musical instruments such as gamelan, gonggong, or angklung to accompany spiritual singing. The perception of educators and congregations of this form of adaptation is key in determining the extent to which local music can be accepted and interpreted spiritually without diminishing the sacredness of the liturgy. Therefore, the first part of this outcome and discussion will outline the dynamics of their perception between support for the enrichment of faith and cultural identity, as well as resistance to changes in the form of liturgy that make music a spiritual as well as a cultural medium in Catholic worship practices in Indonesia.

3.1. Educators' and Congregations' Perceptions of the Culture of Liturgical Music

Through interviews with music educators in the liturgical environment, it was revealed that there are conceptual and practical tensions in integrating local music into religious music education. Educators identify that although inculturation is intended as a means of enriching the liturgical experience, its application is often seen as a potential threat to the purity of established liturgical traditions. This resistance arose not only among conservative congregations but also from some church leaders who viewed the change as a form of "secularization" of the liturgy. This shows that the inculturation of music in the context of religious education is not only an aesthetic issue, but is also

closely related to the ideological, theological, and religious identity dimensions of the community [33]. In addition to resistance, pedagogical challenges also stand out in the practice of inculturation-oriented liturgical music education [34], [35]. Educators are often faced with rigid curricula, conventional teaching methods, and traditional expectations from religious institutions. These obstacles narrow the space for innovation to integrate elements of local music that are actually able to represent the life of the congregation in a more authentic way. In this context, established pedagogy often functions as a mechanism for reproducing traditions, so that all forms of innovation are considered deviant. This shows the dilemma between the need to preserve liturgical traditions and the need to make music education more relevant to the local cultural context.

Nevertheless, there are innovative practices that have been successfully carried out by a number of Catholic liturgical music educators in building a unified theological and cultural narrative. Educators begin this process by reinterpreting liturgical texts and prayers into local musical symbols, such as using the Javanese macapat tembang for offering prayers, or Batak gondang for processions, so that the values of faith are embodied through the language of music familiar to the congregation [36]. Furthermore, they take a dialogical approach with the congregation through small workshops that discuss the theological meaning behind local music choices, as well as integrating cultural elements in learning, such as vocal exercises based on gamelan rhythm patterns or pentatonic harmony. The main challenge faced is the concern of some conservative congregations about the possible diminishing of the sacredness of the liturgy and the lack of formal theological references to the use of traditional music. However, through intensive pastoral communication and collective reflection, educators are able to affirm that local music is not just a cultural ornament, but a means of proclaiming faith that enriches Indonesian Catholic spirituality. This strategy, based on dialogue, participation, and reinterpretation of liturgical symbols, demonstrates a systematic approach that can be replicated in other cultural contexts that have similar dynamics.

Furthermore, educators also emphasized the importance of collaboration with local communities as an integral part of inculturation practices. Through dialogue with traditional musicians, community leaders, and indigenous leaders, they are able to create a liturgical music program that is more inclusive and responsive to the needs of the congregation. This collaboration not only strengthens the legitimacy of the practice of inculturation but also fosters a sense of shared ownership in the liturgical process. Thus, music education in the context of the church serves as a negotiation arena between the global tradition of Christianity and local wisdom, resulting in a new form of liturgy that is more contextual and rooted in the real lives of the people [37].



Fig. 1. The Process of Training Trainers/Educators with Church Choirs

The implications of these findings suggest that the inculturation of music in liturgical education requires an integrative approach, one that combines cultural sensitivity, theological reflection, and adaptive pedagogical strategies. Educators are required not only as music teachers, but also as cultural mediators and agents of social change. In this way, religious music education can serve as a medium to strengthen the cultural identity of the congregation, build community solidarity, and enrich the expression of faith. Therefore, the insight of educators confirms that the success of musical inculturation in the liturgy is largely determined by the ability to present a music education that not only preserves tradition but is also responsive to contemporary cultural dynamics. Table 1 is educators' perceptions of music inculturation.

Table 1. Educators' Perceptions of Music Inculturation

Educators' Perceptions of Music		
<i>Category Persepsia</i>	<i>Number of Educators</i>	<i>Interview Quotes</i>
Full Support	3	Local Music is a means to improve the congregation, not a threat
Supporting Terms	1	The inculturation is excellent, but it does not change the core text
Resisting Inculturation	1	Tradition is already standard and cannot be changed anymore

3.2. Pedagogical Challenges in Liturgical Music Education

The results of the study show that the most significant challenge in the practice of inculturation of liturgical music in the Catholic Church lies in the pedagogical realm, particularly in the curriculum system and structure of music instruction. From the 5 liturgical music educators interviewed, three main themes emerged from the thematic analysis: (1) the limited flexibility of guidelines, (2) the hegemony of the Western music repertoire in learning, and (3) the lack of institutional support for cultural innovation. As conveyed by one of the choir coaches, "We want to teach songs in the style of gamelan or Javanese songs, but the guidelines are standard for all European hymns" (Mrs. Maria, interview, June 12, 2024). Another music coach asserted that "When I tried to introduce Batak music in liturgical classes, there was a concern that it would be considered 'unofficial' by the diocese" (Mr. Mario, interview, June 14, 2024). This data shows that the applicable curriculum still functions as a mechanism for reproducing the dominant musical tradition, not as a space for cultural dialogue. As a result, educators have difficulty innovating and feel trapped in a pedagogical system that is not accommodating to local expression. These findings reinforce the criticism of Mullen & Luna (2024), who highlight that conventional music pedagogy often reproduces the hegemony of dominant traditions and inhibits musical diversity in the context of religious education [6].

In addition to the curriculum, teaching methods are also a challenge in themselves. Classroom observations show that the teaching model used is still teacher-centered, with a focus on the transmission of formal knowledge and technical skills. This makes it difficult to position local music that is more improvisative and community-based in learning. Some educators even feel that if they include traditional music, it can be considered "unofficial" or "less liturgical". This phenomenon shows the existence of an epistemological gap between the academic-liturgical tradition and the daily musical practice of the congregation. Nonetheless, there are a number of innovative strategies emerging to address this challenge. Some educators take advantage of a collaborative approach by involving traditional musicians as resource persons, so that students can learn directly from local cultural practices. Another strategy is to rearrange the regional songs into a liturgical choir format, while retaining elements of rhythm and timbre of tradition. This step not only presents a representation of local culture but also reinforces the theological narrative that local music is part of the expression of faith. This kind of approach is in line with Fitzpatrick (2021), who emphasizes that music in religious education can serve a dual function: as an artistic as well as a pedagogical means that instills spiritual values [38].

This pedagogical challenge ultimately shows that the success of inculturation depends heavily on the ability of educators to navigate between the demands of formal curriculum, the expectations of religious institutions, and the contextual needs of the congregation. Educators who are able to bridge these three dimensions can open up space for a more culturally responsive pedagogy, where local music is no longer considered just an "ornament" but becomes an integral part of the learning process and the formation of faith. These findings also support Zhang, Leung, & Yang (2022), who affirm the importance of student-centered pedagogy in creating more relevant and participatory music learning [30]. The pedagogical challenge in liturgical music education is not only a technical problem, but a structural and ideological problem that requires courage, creativity, and collaboration. Without changes in curriculum aspects and teaching methods, music inculturation will be difficult to run sustainably. However, with innovative strategies and community involvement, these practices can evolve into a model of religious music learning that is inclusive, contextual, and rooted in the real life of the congregation.

3.3. Community Involvement in Inculturation

The results of the study show that community involvement is a key factor in the success of the practice of inculturation of liturgical music. The process of inculturation is not only determined by the

educator or church leader, but also by the active participation of the congregation, traditional musicians, and traditional leaders. Interviews with the congregation show that their involvement in song selection and participation in liturgical ensembles creates a strong sense of belonging to the practice of worship. One congregation stated:

"When our folk songs are sung in mass, I feel like my faith is closer to everyday life. It feels like the church is not far from my culture." (Robert's Congregation Interview, 2024)

This statement affirms that community involvement in the inculturation process serves as a mechanism of social legitimacy. Local music is not only present as an artistic ornament, but also a representation of the collective identity of the congregation. This is consistent with Goopy's (2022) finding that active participation in musical practices can strengthen cultural identity and increase a sense of social connectedness [16]. Interviews with music coaches also show that community involvement encourages the creation of spaces for intergenerational dialogue, Fig. 2. For example, when traditional musicians are involved in teaching rhythm patterns or regional melodies, the youth of the congregation are more enthusiastic because they feel that they are getting an authentic learning experience. One educator said:

"Young people initially prefer pop music, but after they learn directly from village gamelan players, they feel that traditional music can live on in the liturgy." (Choir coach interview, 2024)



Fig. 2. Interview with a Church Music Coach

These findings show that cross-generational collaboration enriches the experience of liturgical music, as well as a means of regenerating local traditions. This collaborative strategy is in line with the concept of community-based pedagogy put forward by MacDonald & Saarikallio (2022), that community-based music education can create dynamic, inclusive, and rooted learning in the social lives of learners [19]. From an observational perspective, community involvement is seen in the form of congregational participation in choirs, the use of traditional instruments such as flutes, gongs, or taganing in liturgical celebrations, as well as the involvement of indigenous groups in special occasions such as Easter or Christmas, Fig. 3. This shows the integration between worship practices and local cultural expressions, where music serves as a bridge between faith and cultural identity. Du & Leung (2021) also note that multicultural music education involving the community can strengthen social cohesion and facilitate cross-cultural dialogue [17].

Community involvement also presents its own challenges. Some conservative congregations consider local music to detract from the sacredness of the liturgy. However, this resistance can be overcome through a dialogical approach, in which educators and liturgical leaders explain the theological meaning behind the practice of inculturation. Thus, community involvement is not only limited to technical participation, but also the process of negotiating broader meanings and values. Overall, community involvement in the inculturation of liturgical music contributes to three important aspects: (1) strengthening social legitimacy for the practice of inculturation, (2) fostering cultural regeneration through cross-generational collaboration, and (3) enhancing the social cohesion of the congregation through inclusive musical experiences. In other words, music inculturation can only be sustainable if it is practiced as a joint project between educators, liturgical leaders, and communities.



Fig. 3. Liturgical Officers play songs with Batak-style musical instruments

3.4. Music Inculturation as Identity Strengthening and Social Solidarity

The results of the study show that the practice of inculturation of liturgical music has a significant impact on the formation of cultural identity and social solidarity of the congregation. A survey of 120 respondents showed that 78% of the congregation felt more spiritually and culturally connected when local music was used in the liturgy. In contrast, only 12% expressed resistance on the grounds of maintaining the purity of tradition. This data is reinforced by interviews that confirm that local music is not only seen as a means of entertainment or artistic ornament, but as a medium that brings back the collective memory and cultural identity of the congregation. One congregation stated:

"When I hear the Sundanese drum accompanying prayer, I feel not only as a Catholic, but also as a Sundanese whose faith is lived through their own culture." (Interview, Congregation of Mother Mary, 2024)

This quotation shows that local music in the liturgy reinforces a dual connection to religious faith and to cultural identity. In Fig. 4, Sundanese drummers are seen accompanying the mass in the church. This is in line with MacDonald & Saarikallio's (2022) theory of musical identity, which states that music is an important medium in shaping and affirming individual and collective identities [19]. In terms of social solidarity, the practice of inculturation encourages the creation of emotional bonds between congregations. Liturgical observations show that the use of folk songs or traditional instruments increases the participation of the faithful in singing together. Congregations of different generations, including young people, seem more enthusiastic when the liturgy features elements of local music. A young man of the congregation said:

"If our regional songs are sung in church, it feels more enthusiastic to participate. I feel like the church really belongs to all of us, not just an outside legacy." (Interview, Mario's Congregation, 2024)



Fig. 4. Sundanese drummers accompany the mass at the church.

This kind of collective participation shows that music serves as a means of building solidarity across generations and across social backgrounds. Research by Du & Leung (2021) supports these findings by stating that multicultural music education can strengthen social cohesion and create spaces for intercultural dialogue [17]. In addition, the use of local music also strengthens the psychological and emotional dimension of the congregation. Joy, a sense of belonging, and connection to ancestral traditions emerged as a form of identity resilience in the face of the current of cultural globalization. These findings are in line with Kegelaers et al. (2020), who noted that meaningful musical experiences can strengthen emotional resilience while supporting mental health in the context of musical communities [18]. However, the practice of inculturation also presents a certain dialectic. Some conservative congregations still see it as a form of deviation from the universal liturgical tradition. However, this resistance is diminished when liturgical leaders make their theological explanations that local music is not just a cultural expression, but an extension of prayer and the practice of faith. Thus, music inculturation is not only a strengthening of cultural identity, but also a means of negotiating inclusive spiritual meaning. Overall, the results of this study confirm that the inculturation of liturgical music functions as a vehicle for strengthening the cultural identity and social solidarity of the congregation. By presenting local music in the liturgy, the congregation not only feels a spiritual closeness to their faith but also strengthens their connection to the community and cultural heritage. Music inculturation, in this context, is a process that unites the spiritual, cultural, and social dimensions into a more profound experience of faith. Table 2 is the congregation's perception of musical inculturation in the liturgy.

Table 2. Congregational Perception of the Inculturation of Music in the Liturgy

<i>Response Category</i>	Congregational Perception	
	<i>Number of Respondents (n=120)</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Full Support	54	45%
Support	39	33%
Neutral	12	10%
Not Supported	10	8%
Very Unsupportive	5	4%
Total	120	100%

3.5. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The results of this study offer a more visible theoretical contribution by placing the inculturation of liturgical music within the framework of social identity theory, namely, social identity theory and the perspective of constructivist pedagogy or cultural performativity. In particular, empirical findings such as survey results that 78% of congregations feel more connected when local music is used, as well as thematic themes from interviews that emphasize community legitimacy and participation, indicate more that liturgical music serves as a mechanism for forming and negotiating collective identities [19], [39]. From a constructivist perspective, the community-based process of learning music that is collective, participatory, and project-based allows theological and cultural meanings to be built together instead of being transmitted in one direction so that music becomes a means of forming contextual religious awareness. Furthermore, the performative approach shows how musical practices such as repertoire selection, use of traditional instruments, and musical rituals rearticulate the boundaries of "liturgical sovereignty" and "local cultural space" through collective action, so that social solidarity and a sense of belonging are strengthened. By combining these three theoretical lenses, the research not only confirms the claim that inculturation is a complex socio-pedagogical process, but also explains its empirical mechanisms: (1) legitimization through community participation, (2) internalization of meaning through participatory pedagogical practice, and (3) performative recontextualization of rituals that together distinguish inculturation from mere musical adaptation.

From a practical point of view, this study emphasizes the need to transform liturgical music pedagogy towards a more flexible, participatory, and collaborative direction [35], [40]. Educators need to position themselves not only as music teachers, but also as cultural mediators who are able to bridge the universal traditions of the church with the local expressions of the congregation. The liturgical music curriculum needs to be redesigned to allow room for adaptation and innovation, including through collaboration with traditional musicians, congregational participation in repertoire selection, and rearrangement of local music for liturgical needs. This strategy is in line with the recommendations of Zhang, Leung, & Yang (2022), who emphasize the importance of student-

centered pedagogy in encouraging music learning that is relevant to learners' social contexts [30]. In addition, practical implications can also be seen in strengthening social cohesion within the community. The inculturation of music allows for the creation of a more inclusive worship space, where congregations from diverse backgrounds feel represented and valued. This supports the creation of cross-generational solidarity and strengthens the church's sense of ownership of the church. In the long term, the practice of inculturation can serve as a means of preserving local culture as well as developing religious music education that is more responsive to diversity.

4. Conclusion

The results of the study show that the inculturation of music in the liturgy of the Catholic Church in Indonesia is a pedagogical and cultural process that involves active interaction between educators, traditional musicians, and the congregation, in this case, a case study in the Church of Christ the King of the Universe, Salatiga. Analysis of interviews and surveys revealed three main themes, namely the limitations of a Western-oriented curriculum, educators' initiative in adapting local music, and community legitimacy as key factors for successful inculturation. Most respondents considered the use of regional musical styles such as Javanese, Batak, Sundanese, Kalimantan, and East Java to strengthen spiritual connection and cultural identity, while a small number still doubted its sacredness. Music inculturation has proven to play a role as a space for the formation of collective identity and cultural dialogue in faith education. This study recommends the development of a liturgical music curriculum that is more adaptive, participatory, and responsive to local contexts. Although the study was limited to three specific regions and the number of participants, the results provide a direction for cross-community comparative studies as well as the testing of action-based learning models to strengthen contextual and sustainable practices of religious music education. The findings of the study confirm that the success of the inculturation of liturgical music is highly dependent on the active role of educators as cultural mediators and spiritual facilitators. Therefore, liturgical music teacher training programs need to be designed to strengthen pedagogical competence, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative ability with traditional musicians. The religious music education curriculum is recommended to integrate cross-cultural projects that allow congregations to be directly involved in the creative process. This approach not only enriches the learning of the faith but also strengthens social cohesion and the preservation of local cultural heritage in the context of modern liturgy.

Acknowledgment

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Prof. Dr. Sunarto, M.Hum., my Promotor, for his invaluable guidance, thoughtful insights, and consistent encouragement throughout the development of this research. He is very helpful in directing the concept of the main topic and explaining the research data obtained, and making new discoveries. I also wish to sincerely thank Dr. Udi Utomo, M.Si., my Co-Promotor, for the directions that can make this research a reference for the next researcher. Last but not least, I would like to thank the Postgraduate Doctoral Program, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Art Education Study Program, my husband, and my two children. To all of you, I offer my sincerest thanks.

Declarations

Author contribution : JTA: Conceptualize research topics and formulate key research questions; designing and implementing research methodologies; conducting data searches in the field; writing an initial draft, including the Introduction, Methodology, and Discussion sections; revising the manuscript based on feedback from co-authors; submit manuscripts to journals, communicate with editors during the review process, and ensure all required documents are complete and submitted correctly.
SN: Contribute conceptual ideas and present theoretical frameworks and results to the church community. Carefully manage the use and citation of references to acknowledge previous research and ensure originality.
UD: Verify the accuracy of the data presented and ensure that all data obtained is supported by evidence in the field.
All authors: Final review and approval of the submitted version.

Funding statement	:	None of the authors has received any funding or grants from any institution or funding body for the research.
Conflict of interest	:	The authors declare no conflict of interest.
Additional information	:	No additional information is available for this paper.

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