



Post-Conflict Social Reconstruction in Aceh: Institutional Complementarity in Education, Customary Governance, and Religious Authority

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Abstract

Post-conflict reconstruction requires more than formal peace settlements, yet how education, customary governance, and religious authority interact within a shared institutional framework remains insufficiently explained. This study examines how the Aceh Governing Law (UUPA) structures the complementary roles of the Regional Education Council (MPD), Aceh Customary Council (MAA), and Ulema Consultative Council (MPU) in post-conflict social reconstruction. Using a qualitative case-study design, the study collected data in Aceh Tamiang Regency and Langsa City through semi-structured interviews with six key informants, field observations, and document analysis, and analyzed them using Miles et al.'s interactive model and Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and capital. The findings reveal differentiated institutional roles in education, customary governance, and religion, with identifiable points of coordination rather than sustained institutional integration. Their capacity to contribute to social reconstruction depends on how educational, cultural, social, and symbolic resources are mobilized and converted within the UUPA-structured field. Conceptually, the study advances institutional complementarity as a relational explanation of post-conflict reconstruction, showing that locally legitimate institutions can remain differentiated while establishing workable connections within a shared legal field. This perspective offers broader relevance for post-conflict societies characterized by legal pluralism, decentralized governance, and locally embedded authority.

A. Introduction

Post-conflict peace is not secured merely when armed violence ends; its durability depends on whether societies can reconstruct the institutions and social relations that conflict has fractured. Aceh illustrates this challenge sharply. Although the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) formally ended decades of armed conflict on August 15, 2005, peace initiated a more difficult socio-political transformation rather than completing it (Husni et al., 2022; Tjoetra et al., 2024). Prolonged conflict weakened socioeconomic conditions and undermined educational, customary, and religious institutions. These disruptions were particularly consequential in a society where education, *adat*, and religion historically constituted interconnected foundations of social life, including during the Aceh Sultanate under Iskandar Muda (1606–1636 CE) (Matsyah, 2013; Sulaiman et al., 2024).

Post-conflict challenges were compounded by socioeconomic vulnerability. Despite Aceh's substantial natural resources, including oil and plantation resources, poverty remained a persistent concern, with Aceh reported as poorer than other Indonesian regions (Ikhsan et al., 2023; Abubakar et al., 2023; Safaruddin et al., 2025). Reconstruction therefore required more than economic recovery or the end of violence; it demanded rebuilding institutional legitimacy and social relationships. The Aceh Governing Law (UUPA) became central to this process by granting Aceh special authority over education, religion, culture, and customary affairs. These domains matter because post-conflict recovery depends partly on restoring locally legitimate institutions that can reconnect formal governance with the socio-cultural foundations disrupted by conflict (Amin et al., 2025; Larkin & Rudolf, 2024; Ramli et al., 2024; Suryani et al., 2023; Hartoyo et al., 2020).

International post-conflict scholarship reinforces the importance of this institutional problem while revealing its contextual complexity. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rende and Rosenberg (2016) demonstrate the importance of local institutions and public-service governance in rebuilding relationships within fragmented post-war communities. Research in Mosul similarly shows that culture and religion contribute not only to physical reconstruction but also to community rehabilitation (Larkin & Rudolf, 2024). Mindanao presents a related challenge: negotiated peace does not automatically generate credible autonomous institutions, particularly when political arrangements remain insufficiently connected to local governance and community participation (Badu, M. N., Syafhendry, S.,

& Tenorio, 2023; Teehankee & Agojo, 2025). Together, these cases shift the analytical question from whether institutions matter to how post-conflict legal arrangements interact with locally embedded institutions to reconstruct social order.

Yet this question remains insufficiently resolved in the Aceh literature. Muis et al., (2021) examine UUPA implementation, while Jamaluddin and Tijani (2025) address post-conflict reintegration and special autonomy, but neither explains relationally how the MPD, MAA, and MPU operate across differentiated institutional domains. Zainal (2022) provides a socio-historical account of Aceh's special status and peacebuilding but does not examine how education, customary governance, and religious authority intersect institutionally. Similarly, Ibrahim (2020) and Ridhwan and Ibrahim (2022) illuminate the political-cultural position of *Wali Nanggroe* but leave the coordination among the MPD, MAA, and MPU largely unexplained. Recent studies further demonstrate the continuing importance of special autonomy, *gampong* governance, customary institutions, and Islamic authority in Aceh (Duhriah et al., 2024; Ali et al., 2024; Safrizal ZA et al., 2025), but they do not address this three-institution configuration. The unresolved issue, therefore, is not whether Aceh possesses post-conflict institutions, but how differentiated institutions mobilize resources, interact within a shared legal field, and establish specific points of coordination (Abubakar et al., 2023; Darmawan et al., 2025).

This study addresses that gap by shifting the analytical focus from institutional presence to institutional complementarity. Drawing on Bourdieu (2004), it conceptualizes the UUPA as part of an institutional field in which actors occupy differentiated positions and mobilize resources with unequal capacities. This relational perspective resonates with Bourdieu-informed analyses of fields of power (Harvey et al., 2020) and with Indonesian applications demonstrating how dispositions, institutional settings, and forms of capital are reproduced within locally embedded educational contexts (Habibi & Sholikha, 2025). The analytical value of this approach lies in examining not simply what the MPD, MAA, and MPU formally do, but how their positions and resources create—or constrain—the institutional capacity required for post-conflict social reconstruction. Recent research on Acehese customary conflict resolution and local governance similarly demonstrates that local institutions remain active sites where legal authority, cultural legitimacy, and institutional adaptation are negotiated (Matsyah et al., 2025; Mukhlis et al., 2026).

The study consequently advances a deliberately bounded argument. It does not assume that formal recognition under the UUPA produces sustained collaboration,

institutional synergy, or completed habitus transformation. Instead, it examines whether differentiated institutional roles generate identifiable forms of complementarity and coordination and whether reported changes in social practices can be interpreted more cautiously as habitus-related reconfiguration. Its contribution lies in connecting legal-institutional reconstruction with Bourdieu's relational account of field, capital, and habitus to explain how locally legitimate resources may be translated into post-conflict institutional capacity. This perspective is particularly relevant to post-conflict governance, where peacebuilding depends not only on formal institutional arrangements but also on institutional accountability, equitable development, and the capacity to reconstruct social relationships (Akinbi, 2025; Rasyid et al., 2023; Fahmi et al., 2024). The novelty therefore resides not in treating education, *adat*, and religion as separate recovery sectors, but in analyzing their institutional relationships within a shared legal field and the conditions under which their resources can become socially consequential.

Accordingly, this study analyzes how the Government of Aceh used the UUPA as a strategic framework to reconstruct education, customary institutions, and religious life in the post-conflict period. More specifically, it examines the policy strategies developed across these three domains, the ways in which the UUPA structures the differentiated yet complementary roles of the MPD, MAA, and MPU, and how their institutional positions, interactions, and constraints can be interpreted through Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and different forms of capital. Through this relational perspective, the study seeks to explain how locally legitimate institutions mobilize resources and establish workable linkages within a shared legal field, thereby contributing to the reconstruction of social relationships and a reconfigured post-conflict social order in Aceh.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative case-study design with an explanatory-interpretive approach to examine how the Aceh Government implemented post-conflict strategies to strengthen education, customary institutions, and religious life under Law No. 11 of 2006 on the Governance of Aceh (UUPA). Fieldwork was conducted in Aceh Tamiang Regency and Langsa City, selected to capture diverse social contexts involving Tamiang, Javanese, Batak, Gayo, and other communities and to examine the institutional roles of the MPD, MAA, and MPU. Interviews were conducted from 17 May to 7 June 2024 with six purposively selected key informants,

coded MT, ZD, HT, AR, NG, and MN. They represented the Regional Education Council (MPD), traditional and community leadership associated with the Aceh Customary Council (MAA), and the Ulema Consultative Council (MPU), and were selected because of their direct involvement in implementing, monitoring, or interpreting policies across the three institutional domains.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, field observations, and document analysis. Interviews followed an open guide addressing institutional roles, UUPA implementation, policy constraints, and interactions across education, customary governance, and religion, with follow-up questions used to clarify relevant responses. Participant and non-participant observations documented institutional practices, interactions, and policy implementation in educational, cultural, and religious settings. Documentary sources included the UUPA, regulations concerning the MPD, MAA, and MPU, research reports, and relevant news and media archives, which were used to contextualize and cross-check interview and observational evidence (Sugiyono, 2013).

Data analysis followed Miles et al.'s (2019) interactive framework, involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Interview transcripts, field notes, and documentary materials were iteratively coded according to units of meaning related to institutional roles, policy implementation, inter-institutional interactions, resource and authority constraints, and post-conflict reconstruction. Related codes were consolidated into analytical categories and organized through a claim-evidence matrix linking empirical sources, coded categories, relevant Bourdieu concepts, and interpretive inferences. Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 2004) were applied only after establishing the empirical categories. Given the cross-sectional design, reported changes in trust, hospitality, and institutional practices were interpreted as indications of habitus-related reconfiguration rather than evidence of longitudinal habitus transformation.

Credibility was strengthened through source and method triangulation by comparing interviews, observations, policies, and documentary evidence (Miles et al., 2019). Formal institutional mandates were distinguished from empirically documented practices, and inter-institutional coordination was claimed only when supported by identifiable relationships or activities; otherwise, the evidence was interpreted as

institutional complementarity rather than synergy. Table 1 operationalizes the Bourdieu concepts used to connect empirical evidence with interpretive analysis.

Table 1. Bourdieu's Concepts in Empirical Findings

Bourdieu's Concept	Empirical Findings
Field	UUPA-structured post-conflict governance as an institutional arena
Habitus	Reported changes in relational dispositions and everyday social practices after conflict; interpreted as habitus-related reconfiguration
Social capital	Reported relationships among MPD, MAA, MPU, and communities
Cultural capital	<i>Adat</i> and local knowledge mobilized through customary institutions
Symbolic capital	Legitimacy associated with ulema (religious scholars) and customary figures
Institutional power	Capacity to influence policy and implementation
Capital conversion	Opportunities to translate social, cultural, and symbolic legitimacy into institutional capacity

Ethical safeguards were applied throughout the research process. Before data collection, the researchers obtained official research permits from the relevant local government authorities in Aceh Tamiang Regency and Langsa City. All participants were informed about the study's purpose, the procedures involved, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Informed consent was obtained before the interviews were conducted. To protect participants' identities, the team anonymized interview transcripts, recordings, and field notes and excluded identifying information from analysis and reporting. All research data were treated confidentially and stored securely with access restricted to the research team. These procedures protected participants' privacy, autonomy, and confidentiality throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting.

C. Results and Discussion

Triangulation of interview, observational, and documentary evidence identified three institutional domains through which Aceh Governing Law (UUPA) No. 11 of 2006 was implemented in the post-conflict context: education through the Regional Education Council (MPD), customary governance through the Aceh Customary Council (MAA), and religious governance through the Ulema Consultative Council (MPU). The Results section presents the empirical evidence for each institution, while the subsequent Discussion interprets the relationships among these findings through Bourdieu's framework.

1. Results

Across the three domains, the data showed a common pattern. Each institution had a formal legal basis and a distinct sectoral mandate, while the reported practices also revealed points of interaction among institutions. Table 2 synthesizes the empirical functions, implementation practices, evidence sources, contributions to post-conflict social reconstruction, and limitations documented in the study.

Table 2. Empirical synthesis of MPD, MAA, and MPU functions in post-conflict social reconstruction

Institution	Policy domain, empirical function, and implementation	Empirical evidence and main finding	Challenge/limitation
MPD	Education governance. Advisory and consultative role; locally relevant curriculum development; reported programs on teacher quality, educational technology, and financial support for disadvantaged students.	UUPA Art. 220(1); Qanun No. 3/2006; Aceh Tamiang observation; interviews with MT (27 May 2024) and ZD (17 May 2024). Finding: formal participation in education governance and efforts to rebuild school-community relationships.	Recommendations depended on government decisions; funding shortages, geographic conditions, and infrastructure limitations were reported.
MAA	Customary governance. Regional and village-level customary structures; community advisory roles; reactivation of <i>adat</i> practices and their relationship with religious norms.	UUPA No. 11/2006; Figure 3; interviews with HT (7 June 2024), NG (7 June 2024), and AR (1 June 2024). Finding: reactivation of customary structures and norms, including mutual support and hospitality.	Conflict-related mistrust weakened customary hospitality; the Results did not document a separate MAA-specific operational constraint.
MPU	Religious governance. Advisory authority through fatwas and recommendations; religious-education activities in public schools, <i>madrasahs</i> , and <i>dayahs</i> ; coordination with the MPD and MAA.	UUPA Arts. 138–140; Qanun No. 2/2009; Figure 4; interview with MN (5 June 2024). Finding: The MPU interview reports coordination with the MPD on education and with the MAA on customary matters, providing the clearest	The Results did not document an MPU-specific operational constraint.

Institution	Policy domain, empirical function, and implementation	Empirical evidence and main finding	Challenge/ limitation
		direct evidence of specific inter-institutional linkages in the dataset.	

Source: Interviews, field observations, and document analysis.

Table 2 shows a differentiated evidentiary pattern. Documentary sources establish the formal mandates of all three institutions; interviews and observations show how those mandates are enacted and constrained. The MPD evidence most clearly documents an implementation gap through funding, infrastructure, and dependence on government decisions. MAA evidence documents the reactivation of *adat* structures and practices after conflict-related mistrust. The clearest direct evidence of cross-institutional coordination comes from the MPU interview, which reports coordination with the MPD on education and with the MAA on customary matters. Accordingly, the Results support complementary institutional roles and specific coordination points, but not a fully integrated or continuously coordinated system.

a. MPD: Education Governance, Institutional Authority, and Implementation Constraints

Document analysis established the MPD’s formal position within Aceh’s education governance. The Aceh Governor’s Decree No. 420/435/1990 initially established the institution. Aceh Governing Law (UUPA) No. 11 of 2006 later reinforced it, particularly Article 220(1), which recognizes the MPD as a forum for public participation in education oversight. Qanun No. 3 of 2006 further defines the MPD as an advisory body to provincial and regency/ city governments on education. These documents indicate that the MPD had a formal consultative and advisory mandate, while implementation of its recommendations remained dependent on government decision-making.

Field observation in Aceh Tamiang documented the MPD’s institutional presence at the regency level. The inauguration of the Aceh Tamiang MPD for the 2024–2029 term was held on 19 April 2024 at the Aceh Tamiang Regency Secretariat Hall, where the Acting Regent emphasized the institution’s deliberative role and its contribution to local education.



Figure 1. Inauguration of the Aceh Tamiang Regional Education Council (MPD) for the 2024–2029 term at the Aceh Tamiang Regency Secretariat Hall, 19 April 2024.

Figure Note: “The Aceh Tamiang MPD management who were appointed were Abdul Mutaqqin as Chairman, Mukhlis Deputy Chairman I, Izwardi Deputy Chairman II, and Junaidi, Kamaruddin, Muntasir, Muhammad Hanafiah, Andi Maulana Lubis, Husni Hidayat and Sri Wahyuni as members.”

Interview data showed how the MPD’s formal mandate was interpreted at the institutional level. MT, Head of the Aceh Tamiang MPD, associated the institution’s legal position with efforts to improve education, develop locally relevant curricula, and rebuild relationships among students, teachers, parents, and schools.

MT further identified student discussions, teacher collaboration, and parent participation in school committees as educational practices associated with rebuilding social networks and mutual trust, while also emphasizing the relevance of locally contextualized curricula. (Interview with MT, May 27, 2024)

Interview data from Langsa City also identified a gap between formal authority and operational implementation. ZD, Head of the Langsa City MPD, reported geographic and infrastructure constraints affecting implementation.

ZD stated that programs addressing teacher quality, educational technology, and financial support for underprivileged students had not been fully implemented because of insufficient supporting funds. (Interview with ZD, May 17, 2024)



Figure 2. Langsa City Regional Education Council (MPD), Aceh

Taken together, the Langsa City and Aceh Tamiang evidence showed that the MPD's formal mandate did not ensure full implementation of the program. ZD's account identified funding shortages, geographic conditions, and infrastructure limitations as operational constraints, while the documentary evidence showed that implementation of MPD recommendations remained dependent on government decisions. These findings indicate a gap between formal institutional recognition and the resources required for implementation.

b. MAA: Customary Institution and Post-Conflict Community Practices

Document analysis established the MAA as part of Aceh's customary institutional framework under Aceh Governing Law (UUPA) No. 11 of 2006. The MAA's institutional structure extended to the village level through customary offices such as *Imuem Mukim*, *Imum Chiek*, *Keuchik*, *Tuha Peut*, *Tuha Lapan*, *Imuem Meunasah*, *Keujruen Blang*, *Panglima Laot*, *Pawang Glee*, *Peutua Seunebok*, *Haria Peukan*, and *Syahbanda*. Documentary material also recorded the expression *Pangulee Buet Ibadat*, *Pangulee Hareukat Meugoe* ("Worship is the primary duty; farming is the primary livelihood"), which the manuscript used as evidence of the normative relationship between *adat* and religion.



Figure 3. Documentation of the Aceh Customary Council (MAA) of Aceh Tamiang Regency for the 2021–2026 term, held at the Bappeda Hall on 12 August 2021.

The institutional evidence shown in Figure 3, together with interview data from Aceh Tamiang, indicates that MAA-linked customary offices functioned as local structures for advising communities and maintaining customary practices. HT, an *Imuem Meunasah* and customary elder in Aceh Tamiang, described mutual assistance and religiously informed conduct as part of everyday village custom.

HT emphasized helping and supporting others and described religious teachings as integrated into everyday customary practice in village life. (Interview with HT, June 7, 2024)

From NG's perspective, Aceh has long upheld customary traditions (*adat*); consequently, religion and *adat* constitute integral aspects of Acehnese social life. Fundamental Islamic principles significantly shape customary practices, while religious teachings are simultaneously manifested through the application of *adat* in daily interactions and communal life. As a result, customary norms and religious values function in an interconnected manner – particularly in guiding social behavior, managing community affairs, and maintaining harmony and order within society. NG also emphasizes that customary practices should not be viewed in isolation from the accepted religious values practiced by the community. (Interview with NG, June 7, 2024)

The data further showed that conflict affected customary social practices. AR, an *Imam Mukim* and customary leader in Aceh Tamiang, described hospitality toward guests as an established local norm and reported that suspicion between Aceh Freedom Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) made receiving visitors potentially dangerous for civilians during the armed conflict.

AR reported that visitors to civilian homes could be interpreted by either conflict party as evidence that householders were assisting the opposing side. His account linked this mutual suspicion to changes in hospitality and interpersonal trust within local communities (Interview with AR, June 1, 2024).

AR's account provides evidence that conflict-related suspicion affected customary hospitality and weakened interpersonal trust in everyday community relations. The reported impact of conflict therefore extended beyond formal institutions to social practices associated with *adat*.

The post-conflict institutional response was further described by AR in relation to village-level customary structures in Sekerak District, Aceh Tamiang Regency.

AR identified the Imuem Mukim, Imum Chiek, Tuha Peut, Tuha Lapan, and Imuem Meunasah as MAA-linked structures used to revitalize village customs and reinforce their relationship with Islamic teachings (Interview with AR, June 1, 2024).

Across the documentary and interview evidence, two patterns were identified. First, conflict-related mistrust disrupted customary social practices, particularly hospitality and relations with visitors. Second, MAA-linked customary structures at regional and

village levels were used to reactivate *adat* practices and reinforce their connection with religious norms. Figure 3 provides documentary evidence of the regional institutionalization of the MAA, while the interviews with HT, NG, and AR show how these structures were interpreted and enacted at the community level.

c. MPU: Strengthening Religious Authority in Aceh's Governance

Document analysis established the MPU's formal role in religious governance under Aceh Governing Law (UUPA) No. 11 of 2006. Articles 138–140 establish the MPU at provincial and regency/city levels as an independent partner of the government and legislature.



Figure 4. Aceh Tameng Regency Ulema Consultative Council (MPU).

Figure 4 documents the institutional presence of the MPU in Aceh Tameng. Documentary evidence also identified Qanun No. 2 of 2009 as part of the regulatory basis for the institution's functions. Interview data from MN, Chairperson of the Aceh Tameng MPU, described the MPU's advisory role, involvement in religious education, and coordination with the MPD and MAA.

MN reported that the MPU provided recommendations to the Aceh government, including on the implementation of Islamic law, and described a program to strengthen religious education in public schools, madrasahs, and dayahs. He also stated that the MPU coordinated with the MPD on education and with the MAA on customary matters (Interview with MN, June 5, 2024).

MN's account provides the clearest direct evidence of inter-institutional coordination in the dataset. His description links the MPU to the MPD in educational matters and to the MAA in customary affairs, while the reported religious-education activities span public

schools, *madrasahs*, and *dayahs*. Because this evidence derives primarily from one MPU institutional account, it supports the existence of identifiable coordination points rather than sustained trilateral collaboration. This distinction is carried into the Discussion to keep the theoretical interpretation proportionate to the empirical record.

2. Discussion

The findings suggest that post-conflict social reconstruction in Aceh has developed not through a fully integrated institutional system, but through differentiated institutions whose functions become complementary within the legal space created by the UUPA. The MPD operates primarily through education, the MAA through customary governance, and the MPU through religious authority, while the empirical evidence identifies specific points at which these domains intersect. This pattern extends research on institutional resilience and adaptation in post-conflict Aceh by showing that institutional differentiation need not imply institutional isolation. Similar complexities are evident in the implementation of Aceh's special autonomy, where formal authority is mediated through local governance arrangements and uneven institutional capacities (Safaruddin et al., 2025; Safrizal ZA et al., 2025). The UUPA can therefore be understood less as an integrated governance mechanism than as a common institutional field that makes coordination possible without guaranteeing it.

This distinction becomes theoretically important when the findings are read through Bourdieu. The UUPA structures a field in which institutions occupy different positions and gain access to different forms of authority and resources. Conflict can disrupt relational networks and dispositions (Bourdieu, 1980), yet the resources mobilized after conflict acquire institutional significance only when they are recognized within a particular field. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) emphasize precisely this relational value of capital, while Edwards and Foley (1998) demonstrate its civic and relational dimensions. In Aceh, the MPD mobilizes resources embedded in educational and social relations, the MAA draws upon cultural capital rooted in *adat* and local knowledge, and the MPU carries symbolic legitimacy associated with religious authority. Their significance therefore lies not simply in possessing resources, but in whether those resources can cross institutional boundaries and acquire influence elsewhere.

Such movement across institutional boundaries is especially relevant in Aceh because state law, *adat*, and Islamic norms have historically occupied overlapping social

spaces. The integration of Islamic law into regional development illustrates how religious norms can acquire institutional form within decentralized governance (Suryani et al., 2023), while the institutionalization of Islam and *adat* demonstrates that customary legitimacy continues to operate alongside formal legal authority (Duhriah et al., 2024). Similar intersections appear in studies of legal pluralism and dispute resolution, where state, customary, and Islamic normative orders coexist rather than operate as mutually exclusive systems (Ramli et al., 2024; Abubakar et al., 2023). Seen in this context, the relationships among the MPD, MAA, and MPU are not accidental administrative overlaps. They reflect a broader institutional environment in which different forms of legitimacy coexist, negotiate boundaries, and potentially reinforce one another.

Education becomes part of this process because rebuilding social order involves more than restoring governmental structures. Educational practices can shape relationships, values, and social dispositions, which explains why the MPD's role intersects conceptually with the cultural and religious domains represented by the MAA and MPU. This interpretation is consistent with multidisciplinary approaches to Islamic studies and research showing how Islamic learning and parental support contribute to character and religious development (Adela & Ritonga, 2023; Faidah et al., 2024). The relationship is particularly salient in Aceh, where *adat* remains intertwined with Islamic legal and normative traditions, including in customary marriage practices (Aini et al., 2025). Likewise, the MPU's involvement in religious education resonates with evidence that Islamic education contributes to religious maturity and learning quality (Salamuddin et al., 2024; Badrudin et al., 2025). Reconstruction thus unfolds simultaneously across educational, cultural, legal, and religious spaces.

The same interdependence is visible at the community level. *Adat*-based conflict resolution has long demonstrated the capacity of customary institutions to mediate social relationships in Aceh (Nurdin & Kasim, 2016), while local wisdom has also been associated with inter-ethnic religious conflict resolution in Indonesia (Rasyid et al., 2023). More recent evidence from Aceh shows that customary institutions continue to resolve inheritance and land disputes (Amin et al., 2025; Darmawan et al., 2025). These findings add another dimension to the literature by showing how customary authority may operate alongside educational and religious institutions within a shared post-conflict legal field. The MPU's reported coordination with the MPD and MAA is significant in this regard, although it should not be interpreted as evidence of sustained trilateral

collaboration. Rather, it reveals concrete points at which symbolic-religious, cultural, and educational resources can encounter one another institutionally.

The significance of these locally embedded resources becomes clearer when their institutional limits are considered. Religious, customary, or educational legitimacy does not automatically translate into effective institutional power; its influence depends on the field in which it is recognized and on the organizational resources available to convert legitimacy into action. Studies of Acehese ulama demonstrate how religious authority can extend into public governance (Ali et al., 2024), while interactions between Islamic jurisprudence and local wisdom show how normative legitimacy can shape humanitarian practices (Fahmi et al., 2024). Akmal et al., (2026) similarly demonstrate that locally embedded cultural and linguistic resources can contribute to conflict resolution in Aceh and Patani. In the present study, however, limited resources within the MPD and uneven evidence of sustained coordination show that such conversion remains conditional rather than automatic.

This conditionality is inseparable from the wider configuration of power in Aceh. Political negotiations over Islamic regulation reveal how institutional arrangements remain shaped by competing interests (Makinara et al., 2025), while tensions around dual jurisdiction complicate relations between Islamic and state legal authority (Rosidin et al., 2026). The *Keuchik's* hybrid position likewise illustrates how local authority can inhabit customary and formal governance structures simultaneously (Mukhlis et al., 2026). Such complexity resonates with evidence of fragmentation between political and customary institutions after the Helsinki agreement (de Archellie et al., 2024). It also explains why the MPD's formal mandate can coexist with financial, infrastructural, and geographic constraints. As Maclean et al., (2014) suggest, capital becomes power only under particular relational conditions; recognition alone does not ensure the capacity to act.

The same tension between recognition and capacity places Aceh within a broader post-conflict problem. Research on community resilience emphasizes the importance of institutional arrangements in sustaining recovery after conflict (Rahman et al., 2021), while Hartoyo et al., (2020) show more broadly that local communities can become important actors in peacebuilding after ethnic conflict. Yet post-conflict reconstruction remains vulnerable when formal institutions are disconnected from socially legitimate resources. Aceh continues to experience context-specific forms of social and ecological injustice (Tjoetra et al., 2024), demonstrating that institutional reconstruction remains unfinished.

Cultural resources are equally ambivalent: heritage and memorialization may contribute to recovery and reconciliation but can also reproduce contestation when representations of the past remain disputed (Atabay et al., 2024; Ristic, 2018). Institutional complementarity should therefore be understood as a capacity that must continually be produced, rather than an accomplished condition created by law.

Seen in this way, institutionalization, capital conversion, and habitus-related reconfiguration describe different depths of post-conflict change rather than separate processes. Institutionalization is most clearly evidenced through the UUPA, sectoral regulations, and organizational presence of the MPD, MAA, and MPU. Capital conversion is less certain because coordination provides opportunities for educational, cultural, social, and symbolic resources to cross institutional boundaries, but does not establish that such conversion occurs continuously. Habitus-related reconfiguration is more cautious still. Conflict-related mistrust, altered hospitality, renewed *adat* practices, and attempts to rebuild school-community relations indicate changes in everyday relational practices, but the cross-sectional evidence cannot establish durable habitus transformation. Bourdieu's contribution is therefore relational: it explains why formal recognition, institutional position, and locally legitimate resources create unequal possibilities for social reconstruction rather than assuming that legal reform necessarily produces social transformation.

This relational explanation also makes the Aceh case relevant beyond its immediate regional setting. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, rebuilding fragmented multi-ethnic communities has likewise raised questions about how local institutions and public services reconnect populations after conflict (Rende & Rosenberg, 2016). In Mosul, post-conflict recovery demonstrates that cultural and religious resources can contribute to community rehabilitation alongside physical reconstruction (Larkin & Rudolf, 2024). Muslim Mindanao presents another variation of the same institutional problem: negotiated peace must translate into legitimate and workable autonomous governance, while local participation and institutional credibility remain critical to peace sustainability (Badu et al., 2023; Teehankee & Agojo, 2025). These cases are not empirically equivalent to Aceh, but together they reveal a shared international challenge: peace agreements establish political settlements, while social reconstruction depends on how those settlements connect to institutions communities recognize and use.

Aceh deepens this discussion by showing that the relationship between formal peace and local legitimacy can develop across several institutional domains at once.

Education provides a space for rebuilding social relations and dispositions, *adat* carries historically embedded cultural and social resources, and religious authority contributes normative and symbolic legitimacy (Hartoyo et al., 2020; Nurdin & Kasim, 2016; Ibrahim, 2020). Their significance lies not in institutional uniformity, but in the possibility that differentiated resources become mutually accessible within a shared legal field, consistent with Bourdieu's relational understanding of field and capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Harvey et al., 2020). This insight resonates with evidence that local communities and institutions remain consequential to peacebuilding and social recovery after conflict (Hartoyo et al., 2020; Rende & Rosenberg, 2016). Aceh therefore broadens post-conflict analysis beyond state capacity by highlighting the relational architecture connecting law, education, community institutions, culture, and religious authority.

This relational architecture has wider comparative relevance for post-conflict societies where legal pluralism, decentralized governance, customary institutions, and territorially rooted identities intersect. Aceh cannot be treated as a blueprint for other settings, yet the institutional problem it exposes is internationally recognizable. Bosnia and Herzegovina shows the importance of local institutions and public services in rebuilding fragmented multi-ethnic communities (Rende & Rosenberg, 2016), while post-conflict recovery in Mosul illustrates how cultural and religious resources can support community rehabilitation beyond physical reconstruction (Larkin & Rudolf, 2024). Muslim Mindanao similarly reveals the challenges of translating negotiated peace into legitimate and workable governance (Teehankee & Agojo, 2025). Within this broader debate, asymmetric governance further requires differentiated regional authority to balance territorial specificity with wider state structures (Indra et al., 2026). Aceh shows that legal recognition alone cannot secure this balance; locally legitimate institutions also require workable channels through which authority and resources can interact.

This perspective connects law, governance, education, religion, and culture within a relational understanding of post-conflict reconstruction, where locally grounded institutions remain important to rebuilding social relations and sustaining peace (Hartoyo et al., 2020; Ibrahim, 2020). The UUPA provides a shared legal architecture through which educational, customary, and religious institutions mobilize different forms of authority and resources (Muis et al., 2021; Zainal, 2022), as also reflected in the role of *gampong* institutions in linking community authority, governance, and religion (Safrizal ZA et al., 2025). Rather than forming a single institutional

structure, these institutions occupy different but relational positions within a shared field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Harvey et al., 2020). Institutional complementarity therefore explains how locally legitimate resources can interact across institutional boundaries, while unequal positions and capacities condition their conversion into effective post-conflict reconstruction (Maclean et al., 2014; Rahman et al., 2021).

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study is geographically limited to Aceh Tamiang and Langsa City and draws on six institutional informants, leaving broader community perspectives insufficiently represented. Its qualitative and cross-sectional design also limits claims about the long-term effects of institutional complementarity, capital conversion, and habitus-related reconfiguration. Moreover, Bourdieu's relational framework does not fully capture dimensions such as trauma, gender, and political economy. Future research should therefore employ broader comparative and longitudinal designs to examine whether these institutional relationships and changes in social practices are sustained across different communities and post-conflict settings.

D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that post-conflict social reconstruction in Aceh is shaped not by integrating education, customary governance, and religious authority into a single institutional system, but by their complementary positions within the legal field established by the UUPA. The MPD, MAA, and MPU retain distinct mandates and sources of legitimacy while creating specific points of interaction through which educational, cultural, social, and symbolic resources can help rebuild social relations. Viewed through Bourdieu's relational framework, their significance lies not simply in formal recognition or institutional presence, but in the capacity of differently positioned institutions to mobilize and convert locally legitimate resources into institutional capacity. This process remains conditional, however, because differences in resources, authority, and organizational capacity limit the extent to which formal recognition produces effective institutional power.

Conceptually, these findings advance institutional complementarity as an explanation of post-conflict reconstruction in which differentiated institutions establish workable relationships within a shared legal field. This perspective connects legal reconstruction with educational, customary, cultural, and religious dimensions of social recovery, showing that locally embedded legitimacy remains consequential beyond formal peace. Practically, effective post-conflict governance therefore depends not only on formal

mandates but also on institutional conditions that enable locally legitimate resources to operate across organizational boundaries.

These implications extend beyond Aceh to post-conflict settings shaped by decentralized governance, legal pluralism, and customary or religious authority. Rather than presenting Aceh as a transferable model, its experience shows why post-conflict reconstruction must consider how formal legal arrangements connect with institutions that communities recognize and use.

Future research should test these relationships across a wider range of Acehnese communities and post-conflict settings, incorporating community members, women, youth, and conflict-affected groups alongside institutional actors. Comparative and longitudinal studies are particularly needed to determine whether institutional complementarity, capital conversion, and changes in social dispositions persist over time. Integrating Bourdieu's relational perspective with analyses of trauma, gender, and political economy would also provide a more comprehensive explanation of unequal post-conflict recovery. Ultimately, sustainable social reconstruction depends not only on the institutions created or recognized after peace, but on whether differentiated forms of authority and legitimacy can develop durable relationships that transform formal peace into socially grounded reconstruction.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Declaration of Generative AI

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Grammarly and QuillBot solely to improve grammar, clarity, readability, and linguistic consistency. These tools were not used for conceptualization, data generation or analysis, interpretation of findings, or development of the study's arguments and conclusions. All AI-assisted suggestions were critically reviewed and revised by the authors, who retain full responsibility for the originality, integrity, accuracy, and academic content of the manuscript.

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