



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Visual & Performing Arts***Social resonance and the transformation of meaning of Gondang Sabangunan through arts education at SMK Negeri 11 Medan**Ezra Susilawaty P.<sup>1</sup>, Widodo Widodo<sup>1\*</sup>, Muh. Iban Syarif<sup>1</sup> & Junita Batubara<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia<sup>2</sup>Universitas HKBP Nommensen, Indonesia\*Correspondence: [widodo\\_bsejati@mail.unnes.ac.id](mailto:widodo_bsejati@mail.unnes.ac.id)**ABSTRACT**

Gondang Sabangunan, a traditional musical ensemble of the Toba Batak community, plays an important role in preserving cultural identity, social solidarity, and the philosophy of Dalihan Na Tolu. However, within the urban context of Medan City, the practice of gondang has experienced a shift in meaning from a sacred ritual domain to spaces of entertainment, cultural festivals, and digital media. This transformation creates a dilemma between maintaining authenticity and adapting to modernity, while also revealing a generational gap in cultural understanding. Younger generations tend to be more familiar with global popular culture than with traditional arts, leading to a decline in appreciation for gondang. This study aims to examine the social resonance and transformation of the meaning of Gondang Sabangunan in an urban context and to analyze the role of arts education at SMK Negeri 11 Medan as a strategy for cultural preservation. The research employs a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design, utilizing in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation of gondang practices in the school environment. Data were analyzed thematically using semiotic and sociological approaches, while validity was ensured through triangulation and member checking. The findings reveal that arts education functions as a space for cultural revitalization, a medium for intergenerational value transmission, and an instrument for strengthening local identity resilience. The integration of Gondang Sabangunan into the curriculum not only enhances students' understanding of cultural heritage but also makes traditional arts relevant to contemporary urban life.

**KEYWORDS:** Gondang Sabangunan, Toba Batak, intangible cultural heritage, ethnomusicology, cultural identity

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## Introduction

Urbanization and globalization have brought significant changes to the socio-cultural dynamics of society in Medan, a multicultural urban center in North Sumatra. This condition presents challenges for the Toba Batak community in maintaining their cultural identity amid the homogenizing forces of global popular culture. Gondang Sabangunan, a traditional musical ensemble of the Toba Batak people, represents the philosophy of *Dalihan Na Tolu* as a symbol of social harmony and communal solidarity (Purba et al., 2023). Within the urban context, however, gondang has undergone a shift in meaning—from a sacred ritual domain to cultural festivals, entertainment venues, and digital media. This transformation creates a dilemma between preserving authenticity and adapting to modernity, while also revealing a generational gap in cultural understanding.

Previous studies on Gondang Sabangunan have predominantly focused on musical, ritualistic, or historical aspects. Research that examines the social resonance and transformation of gondang's meaning within the contexts of urbanization and globalization remains limited. This study offers a new perspective by situating Gondang Sabangunan within the frameworks of urban ethnomusicology and formal arts education—an area that has rarely been explored in international literature. The research aims to examine the social resonance and transformation of the meaning of Gondang Sabangunan in an urban context and to analyze the role of arts education at SMK Negeri 11 Medan as a strategy for cultural preservation. To strengthen the analysis, this study refers to theories of globalization, tradition and collective identity, intangible cultural heritage, musical hybridity, and urban anthropology.

Based on this theoretical foundation, the study investigates how Gondang Sabangunan resonates socially, how its meaning transforms within an urban context, and how arts education at SMK Negeri 11 Medan can function as a strategy for cultural preservation. Therefore, this section reviews several key theoretical perspectives, including: (1) globalization and cultural transformation, (2) tradition and collective identity, (3) intangible cultural heritage, (4) globalization and musical hybridity, and (5) urbanization and cultural identity. In global scholarship, similar phenomena have also been widely discussed. Urbaite (2024) emphasizes that globalization has two faces: on the one hand, it opens opportunities for the revitalization of traditions through technology and cross-cultural interaction; on the other hand, it poses a threat of cultural homogenization that may erode local identities. Kakembo (2024) adds that cultural identity in the era of globalization often confronts commodification and the hegemony of dominant cultures, requiring local traditions to negotiate their relevance (Rafiloza et al., 2025; Mahameru et al., 2025). These perspectives reinforce the argument that Gondang Sabangunan, as a Toba Batak tradition, cannot be separated from broader global dynamics.

One tradition experiencing both pressures and opportunities within this context is Gondang Sabangunan, a traditional musical ensemble that plays a significant role in Toba Batak customary life. Gondang Sabangunan functions not merely as entertainment but also as a medium for expressing values, norms, and local wisdom. Within the Toba Batak social system, gondang represents the philosophy of *Dalihan Na Tolu*, which emphasizes social harmony, communal solidarity, and balanced relationships among *hula-hula*, *dongan tubu*, and *boru* (Sihombing, 2015; 2016). *Dalihan Na Tolu* is regarded as a life philosophy that maintains social cohesion and teaches mutual respect within the Batak kinship structure. Therefore, gondang is not merely music but also a symbol of collective identity that sustains social cohesion within the Toba Batak community. In the context of urbanization, Gondang Sabangunan has experienced a shift in meaning. From its sacred association with traditional rituals such as *mangokal holi* or *saurmatua*, gondang is now frequently performed in cultural festivals, entertainment stages, and even digital content on social media (Sirait, Ginting, & Wiflihani, 2021). This shift reflects a process of cultural commodification in which traditional symbols are presented as public spectacles. Sumutland.id (2024) notes that while this phenomenon risks reducing the philosophical and spiritual values of gondang, it simultaneously opens opportunities for new meanings that are more relevant to urban society. Within multicultural and dynamic urban spaces, gondang functions both as a fortress of identity and as a form of resistance to global cultural homogenization (Kompas.id, 2022). Younger generations of the Toba Batak community growing up in urban environments face a dilemma in interpreting the meaning of gondang. Simbolon (2025) observes a gap in understanding between older and younger generations, where youth are generally more familiar with global popular culture than with traditional arts (Purba et al., 2024). This condition contributes to a decline in appreciation for Gondang Sabangunan.

Interviews with students of SMK Negeri 11 Medan reinforce this finding. Gabriel Carlitos Sijabat

emphasized that gondang is an ancestral heritage that can now be learned by younger generations and even combined with modern music to make it more appealing. He also viewed digital media as an effective platform for self-learning and cultural preservation. Meanwhile, Amsal Sibarani stressed that gondang is not merely traditional music but also an identity that connects younger generations with their parents and ancestors. Jonathan Damanik described gondang as a symbol of identity and pride that helps young people maintain a strong sense of identity despite living in a multicultural environment. These interview findings indicate that younger generations possess an interest in preserving gondang but require approaches that align with urban lifestyles. Collaboration with modern music, the use of social media, and the integration of gondang into arts education in schools are considered effective strategies to ensure the continued relevance of this tradition.

Within the educational context, Gondang Sabangunan presents significant opportunities for revitalization. Arts education can function as a medium for intergenerational value transmission, a space for cultural reflection, and an instrument for strengthening local identity resilience. The UMSU Journal (2023) highlights the importance of cultural and local spiritual education in fostering collective identity awareness among younger generations. Hutagalung (2023) further emphasizes that cultural revitalization cannot be separated from the role of local communities and the support of formal educational institutions. Mahesa Institute (2021) argues that the transformation of traditional arts into public spaces must maintain their symbolic context to avoid losing philosophical meaning. Therefore, integrating Gondang Sabangunan into arts curricula in schools—particularly at SMK Negeri 11 Medan—represents an important strategy to ensure its continued relevance.

The research gap further underscores the importance of this study. Previous research has largely focused on the musical, historical, or ritual dimensions of Gondang Sabangunan. Few studies emphasize its social resonance and the transformation of its meaning within urban contexts. In urban society, however, gondang functions not only as traditional music but also as a symbol of collective identity, a means of cultural resistance, and a medium for intergenerational communication. Therefore, this study investigates how Gondang Sabangunan resonates socially, how its meaning transforms within an urban context, and how arts education can function as a strategy for cultural preservation.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the fields of urban ethnomusicology, cultural transformation, and collective identity. Practically, it proposes a model for cultural preservation through arts education that can be implemented in schools. In terms of policy implications, the study encourages the integration of traditional arts into educational curricula as a strategy for strengthening local identity resilience in the face of globalization. Furthermore, the global dimension of local cultural preservation must also be considered. UNESCO (2003), through the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, emphasizes that musical traditions such as Gondang Sabangunan constitute part of the world's cultural heritage that must be sustained. In this framework, preserving gondang is not only relevant for the Toba Batak community but also holds universal value as part of global cultural diversity. Globalization has created complex cultural flows and interactions. Arjun Appadurai (1996), in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, explains that globalization is not homogeneous but consists of multiple “scapes,” including ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes that shape global cultural dynamics. This perspective is relevant for understanding how Gondang Sabangunan negotiates with global popular culture and digital technology in the urban context of Medan.

Kerubo (2024) emphasizes that globalization may lead to cultural erosion when local traditions cannot adapt rapidly. However, digital media may also serve as a tool for revitalizing traditions, expanding audiences, and strengthening local identities. Urbaite (2024) similarly notes that globalization simultaneously opens opportunities for cultural revitalization and creates risks of homogenization. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), in *The Invention of Tradition*, argue that tradition is not a static entity but a social construction that can be reconstructed according to contemporary needs. Gondang Sabangunan in urban spaces can thus be viewed as a “reinvented tradition,” where the form of presentation evolves while maintaining the core values of *Dalihan Na Tolu*. In ethnomusicological studies, Ingrid Monson (1999) highlights how globalization influences musical practices through “riffs, repetition, and hybridity.” Grace Ogechukwu Echezona (2024) further explains that globalization creates tension between the preservation of traditional music and musical hybridity. Gondang Sabangunan collaborations with modern music among younger Toba Batak musicians represent a clear example of this dynamic.

Thomas Schmitt (2022) also emphasizes that the commodification of cultural heritage can generate alienation while simultaneously opening opportunities for economic development and global visibility. Gondang Sabangunan performances in tourism festivals or digital media can therefore be interpreted as forms of cultural commodification that present both risks and opportunities. Urban anthropology perspectives also provide relevant insights. Studies on the impact of urbanization on cultural identity suggest that urban environments function as cultural “melting pots,” where local traditions must negotiate with other cultural influences. Within the urban context of Medan, Gondang Sabangunan faces similar challenges: adapting to multicultural urban life while preserving its Toba Batak identity.

By integrating these international theoretical perspectives, this introduction situates Gondang Sabangunan not only within the local context of Medan but also within broader global cultural dynamics. Gondang Sabangunan thus represents an example of how traditional music negotiates with urbanization, globalization, commodification, and hybridity. Arts education at SMK Negeri 11 Medan serves as a contextual strategy for cultural preservation, connecting younger generations with ancestral traditions while ensuring that gondang remains relevant in contemporary urban life.

## **Research Methods**

This study employs a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design to explore the meanings and practices of Gondang Sabangunan within an urban context and to examine the role of arts education as a strategy for cultural preservation. The research was conducted at SMK Negeri 11 Medan, involving two arts and culture teachers and five students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. The data were analyzed thematically using the framework proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2019), complemented by semiotic analysis (Barthes, 2016; Batubara, 2020; Galingging et al., 2023) and sociological analysis (Bourdieu, 2018; Batubara, 2021; Andayani et al., 2023; Panggabean et al., 2023). The validity of the data was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing in accordance with the principles proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

## **Results and Discussion**

### **1. Young Generation Perceptions of Gondang Sabangunan**

The younger generation of Toba Batak in Medan perceives Gondang Sabangunan not merely as traditional music, but also as a symbol of cultural identity and pride. Interviews with students of SMK Negeri 11 Medan show that gondang functions as a reminder of cultural roots in the midst of multicultural urban life. Jonathan Damanik emphasized that gondang is “a symbol of identity and pride as a Toba Batak person,” which helps the younger generation maintain a strong sense of identity despite living in a modern and fast-paced urban environment. This indicates that gondang still possesses deep emotional resonance, while at the same time serving as a marker of the collective identity of the young Toba Batak generation. In addition to being a cultural identity, gondang is also considered relevant to the lives of young people when it is presented creatively and in accordance with contemporary developments. Gabriel Carlitos Sijabat stated that gondang becomes more interesting when it is combined with modern music, because “traditional music combined with modern music becomes more attractive and has a distinctive character.” He also emphasized the role of digital media as an effective means for self-learning and preserving gondang. Amsal Sibarani added that gondang connects the younger generation with their parents and ancestors, and therefore remains relevant as long as it is presented in ways that are close to the world of young people, for example through cultural festivals, art studios, or digital content.

However, the younger generation also faces several challenges in preserving gondang. Some students believe that gondang is often perceived as outdated and is not introduced early enough, so not all young people understand its meaning and function. Rizky Saragi highlighted that the dominance of modern music and digital entertainment has caused gondang to receive less attention, while Horas Sagala emphasized that gondang is rarely introduced in schools, making it seem irrelevant to the lifestyle of young people. These obstacles indicate a gap in understanding between generations, where the older generation still perceives gondang as a sacred tradition, whereas the younger generation tends to see it as an artistic expression that needs to be repackaged in order to become more appealing.

Overall, the perceptions of the younger generation toward Gondang Sabangunan reveal a sense of ambivalence: on the one hand, gondang continues to be viewed as a source of cultural pride and identity, while on the other hand innovation is required so that the tradition does not merely become a customary artifact. These findings are consistent with the concept of cultural hybridity, which emphasizes that traditions can remain alive through cross-cultural collaboration and the use of digital technology. Therefore, the younger generation has great potential to become agents of gondang preservation, provided that they are given creative spaces that correspond to urban dynamics and contemporary lifestyles.



Figure 1. Students of SMK Negeri 11 Medan

## 2. The Role of Arts Education and Teachers in Preserving Gondang Sabangunan

Arts education in schools and art studios plays a strategic role in maintaining the sustainability of Gondang Sabangunan as a cultural heritage of the Toba Batak people. Arts teachers at SMK Negeri 11 Medan emphasized that the integration of gondang into the curriculum is not merely the teaching of musical skills, but also a means of internalizing customary values and the philosophy of Dalihan Na Tolu. Sannur Sinaga, one of the arts teachers, stated that the inclusion of gondang in the learning curriculum demonstrates that arts education plays an important role in the preservation of traditional music. The learning process is carried out gradually, beginning with the introduction of cultural values and the functions of gondang in customary life, followed by musical practice through the learning by doing method. In this way, gondang is not only taught as a technical skill, but also as a medium for character formation, togetherness, and respect for tradition.

In addition, teachers act as a bridge between tradition and the needs of modern learning. Daniel Tambun emphasized that arts education can foster appreciation, a sense of belonging, and awareness among the younger generation to preserve the cultural heritage of Gondang Sabangunan. Arts teachers attempt to present gondang material through creative and contextual approaches, for example by collaborating with modern music or utilizing digital media. This strategy aims to ensure that gondang remains relevant and attractive to students who in their daily lives are more familiar with global popular culture. In this way, teachers function not only as instructors but also as facilitators who bridge tradition with the urban lifestyle of the younger generation.

However, several challenges exist in the implementation of gondang learning. Teachers highlighted the dominance of popular music, limited instructional time, and the lack of written teaching materials as major obstacles. Gondang Sabangunan instruments are also not always easy to obtain and require relatively high maintenance costs. Nevertheless, support from schools, communities, and local governments has begun to emerge through the provision of instruments and creative spaces for students to express themselves. Teachers believe that the involvement of parents and customary leaders is also important in strengthening gondang learning, so that students not only learn in the classroom but also receive support from their social and cultural environment.

Overall, the role of arts education and teachers in the preservation of Gondang Sabangunan shows that schools and art studios can become effective spaces for cultural revitalization. Formal education functions as a medium for the transfer of values between generations, as well as an arena for the formation of cultural identity that is relevant to urban life. These findings reinforce Hutagalung's (2023) view that cultural revitalization cannot be separated from the support of educational institutions, and they are also consistent with the UNESCO (2003) framework regarding the importance of education in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Thus, arts teachers act as agents of preservation who ensure that Gondang Sabangunan remains alive, meaningful, and relevant for the younger generation of Toba Batak in Medan.



Figure 2. Arts Teacher of SMK Negeri 11 Medan (Sannur Sinaga)

### 3. Perspectives of Gondang Musicians

Gondang musicians occupy a unique position as guardians of tradition as well as agents of innovation in the preservation of Gondang Sabangunan. Interviews with gondang musicians such as Hardoni Sitohang show that gondang is not only understood as ensemble music, but also as a ritual medium and repertoire rich in spiritual meaning. Hardoni emphasized that gondang strengthens the relationship between humans, ancestors, and the universe, so that every gondang performance carries profound social and religious dimensions. This perspective shows that for gondang musicians, tradition is not merely a musical skill but also a cultural responsibility that must be preserved with full awareness.

However, in urban contexts such as Medan, gondang musicians face significant challenges in maintaining the authenticity of the tradition. Hardoni highlighted the shift in meaning caused by the influence of religion and modernization, where gondang, which was once sacred, is now often performed in church events, festivals, or concerts. Ali Wardana Simbolon added that although gondang is now more flexible and frequently combined with modern music, musicians still attempt to preserve the traditional rules, the sequence of gondang repertoires, and customary values. This indicates a negotiation between the demands of urbanization and the commitment to maintain the authenticity of tradition.

In addition to preserving traditional rules, gondang musicians also act as innovators who adapt the tradition to the tastes of younger generations. Ali Wardana believes that collaboration between gondang and modern music is a positive development because it makes gondang more easily accepted by young people without losing its distinctive characteristics. Hardoni has even conducted musical experiments since the early 2000s by combining Gondang Sabangunan with Western instruments such as the flute and saxophone, which received positive appreciation from both local and international audiences. This innovation demonstrates that gondang can adapt to contemporary developments while also expanding its audience beyond the Toba Batak customary community.

Nevertheless, the regeneration of gondang musicians remains a major challenge. Ali Wardana pointed out that the number of young musicians is still not proportional to that of senior musicians, and therefore strategies are needed to make gondang feel “cool” and relevant to young people. Hardoni emphasized the importance of learning that includes not only technical aspects but also the ethics and philosophy of gondang, because this tradition is considered sacred and cannot be learned carelessly. Thus, regeneration involves not only musical skills but also a deep understanding of the customary meaning and spirituality embedded in gondang. Overall, the perspectives of gondang musicians reveal a dilemma between maintaining the sacredness of tradition and adapting to the demands of urbanization. They strive to preserve customary values while opening space for innovation so that gondang remains relevant for younger generations. These findings are consistent with the concept of invented tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983), in which traditions are reconstructed according to the needs of the times, and they support Monson’s (1999) perspective on the hybridity of traditional music in the context of globalization. Thus, gondang musicians act as both guardians and developers of tradition, ensuring that Gondang Sabangunan continues to live as a dynamic cultural heritage.

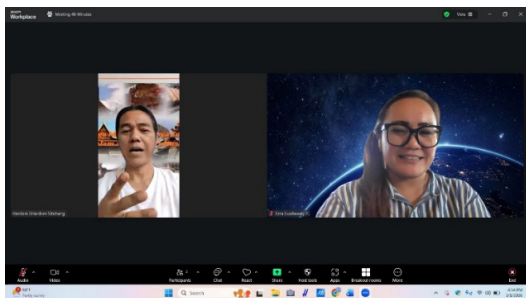


Figure 3. Interview with a Toba Batak Traditional Musician (Hardoni Sitohang)

#### 4. Perspectives of Customary Leaders on Gondang Sabangunan

Customary leaders view Gondang Sabangunan as a central element within the structure of Toba Batak customary life, functioning not only as accompanying music but also as a medium of symbolic communication and a means of social unity. Dr. Panigoran Siburian emphasized that the social resonance of gondang remains very strong in the life of the Toba Batak community in Medan, because gondang continues to be present in various customary events such as weddings, *saurmatua* ceremonies, and thanksgiving celebrations. The presence of gondang in these events serves as an identity marker that reminds the community of their ancestral cultural roots, while also strengthening the sense of togetherness in the midst of urban life.

However, customary leaders also acknowledge the shift in the meaning of gondang when it is performed in urban areas compared to its original context in the villages. In villages, gondang is still understood as a sacred ritual medium rich in spiritual meaning and cosmological connections with ancestors. In contrast, in urban areas gondang tends to undergo a transformation of function into entertainment or a symbol of cultural identity. Ir. Tua Pangaribuan emphasized that although the sacred elements of gondang have undergone adjustments due to urbanization and multiculturalism, gondang continues to function as a marker of Toba Batak identity and as a unifying medium for diaspora communities. This shows that gondang undergoes contextual adaptation while still maintaining the core values of Dalihan Na Tolu as a social philosophy.

Customary leaders also highlighted the role of gondang in building social relations among clans. Gondang accompanies every stage of traditional marriage ceremonies, where each group—*hula-hula*, *dongan tubu*, and *boru*—performs its function according to customary order. Gondang therefore acts as a bond of solidarity, strengthening social networks and reaffirming the customary legitimacy of an event. In addition, gondang reflects the value of collective cooperation (*marsiadapari*) through the performance process that involves collaboration among many parties, including *pargonsi* musicians, *tortor* dancers, and customary leaders. Thus, gondang is not merely an artistic expression but also a social instrument that maintains order and cohesion within Toba Batak society.

In the context of value education, customary leaders emphasized that gondang contains moral and ethical messages that are important for younger generations. Gondang teaches respect, discipline, responsibility, and togetherness, thereby functioning as a medium of cultural education that transmits the noble values of the Toba Batak tradition. Customary leaders also see the involvement of younger generations in gondang activities as having great potential for the sustainability of the tradition, although guidance is still needed so that the understanding of customary meaning is not lost. Therefore, customary leaders act as guardians of sacred values while also serving as facilitators who ensure that gondang continues to be performed according to the rules of Dalihan Na Tolu while allowing space for younger generations to innovate.

Overall, the perspectives of customary leaders show that Gondang Sabangunan continues to be regarded as a fundamental element of Toba Batak tradition, even though it has undergone transformations of meaning in urban contexts. Customary leaders function as guardians of tradition who maintain the sacredness of gondang while also adapting to modernization so that it remains relevant. These findings are consistent with Appadurai's (1996) concept of *mediascapes* and *ideoscapes*, in which traditions negotiate with the flows of globalization and urbanization, and they also support UNESCO's (2003) framework concerning the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Thus, customary leaders ensure that Gondang Sabangunan continues to live as a symbol of identity, solidarity, and value education for the Toba Batak community in Medan.

## 5. Synthesis of Findings

The results of interviews with students, teachers, gondang musicians, and customary leaders indicate that Gondang Sabangunan occupies a complex yet dynamic position in the lives of the Toba Batak community in Medan. Although there are differences in perspectives among these groups, all informants agree that gondang is a cultural identity that must be maintained and preserved. This shared understanding confirms that gondang is not merely traditional music, but also a symbol of togetherness, pride, and identity that connects the younger generation with their ancestors and the customary community.

The younger generation emphasizes the importance of innovation and digitalization in order to ensure that gondang remains relevant to urban lifestyles. They view collaboration with modern music and the use of social media as effective strategies to introduce gondang to a broader audience. In contrast, arts teachers emphasize the role of formal education as a medium for transferring values across generations by integrating gondang into school and art studio curricula. Teachers function as facilitators who bridge tradition with the needs of modern learning, so that gondang is not only taught as a musical skill but also as a means of character formation and cultural identity development.

Gondang musicians are positioned in a dilemma: on the one hand they are committed to preserving the traditional rules and sacredness of the tradition, while on the other hand they also carry out musical innovations in order to make gondang more attractive to the younger generation. This perspective illustrates the negotiation between authenticity and adaptation, in which gondang is reconstructed according to contemporary needs without losing the core values of Dalihan Na Tolu. Customary leaders, in turn, emphasize the importance of maintaining customary rules and the sacred nature of gondang while remaining adaptive to modernization. They view gondang as a medium of symbolic communication that strengthens solidarity among clans, as well as a medium for transmitting customary values to younger generations.

The synthesis of these four perspectives demonstrates that Gondang Sabangunan has experienced a transformation of meaning from a sacred domain into a space of entertainment and urban cultural identity, while still maintaining its primary function as a symbol of togetherness and cultural resilience. Arts education emerges as a meeting point that bridges these differing perspectives and serves as a contextual strategy for cultural revitalization. By involving younger generations, teachers, gondang musicians, and customary leaders, the preservation of gondang can be carried out in a sustainable, relevant, and adaptive manner in response to the dynamics of urbanization and globalization.

These findings are consistent with Appadurai's (1996) framework of mediascapes and ideoscapes, which emphasizes that traditions negotiate with the flows of globalization through media and ideology. They also support the concept of invented tradition proposed by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), which suggests that traditions may be reconstructed according to the needs of the times. Therefore, Gondang Sabangunan not only survives as a cultural heritage of the Toba Batak people but also develops as a dynamic social practice that remains relevant and meaningful within contemporary urban society.

**Table 1. Comparative Table of Perspectives on Gondang Sabangunan**

Informant Group	Main Perception	Emphasized Values	Challenges Faced	Preservation Strategies
Students (Younger Generation)	Gondang as a symbol of cultural identity and pride; relevant when presented creatively	Pride, identity, connection with ancestors	Gondang is perceived as outdated, insufficient early introduction, dominance of popular and digital music	Collaboration with modern music, utilization of social media, integration into school learning
Arts Teachers	Gondang as part of the curriculum and a medium for character development	Values of togetherness, discipline, respect for tradition	Dominance of popular music, limited instructional time, lack of written teaching materials	Curriculum integration, practical learning ( <i>learning by doing</i> ), collaboration with modern music, utilization of digital media

Informant Group	Main Perception	Emphasized Values	Challenges Faced	Preservation Strategies
Gondang Musicians	Gondang as a sacred heritage as well as a space for musical innovation	Spiritual meaning, customary ethics, cultural responsibility	Challenges in maintaining authenticity amid urbanization, weak regeneration of musicians	Maintaining the traditional structure ( <i>pakem</i> ) of gondang, musical innovation (collaboration with modern instruments), learning the ethics and philosophy of gondang
Customary Leaders	Gondang as a structural element of customary tradition and a medium of symbolic communication	Sacredness, social solidarity, <b>Dalihan Na Tolu</b>	Shifts in meaning in urban contexts, limited space and time, declining understanding among younger generations	Maintaining the traditional sequence of gondang according to customary rules, involving families and clan communities, educating younger generations about customary values

The research findings reveal a shared perspective among all groups of informants—students, teachers, gondang musicians, and customary leaders—that Gondang Sabangunan represents the cultural identity of the Toba Batak people and must therefore be preserved. This consensus emphasizes that gondang is not only understood as traditional music but also as a symbol of togetherness, pride, and identity that connects younger generations with their ancestors and the customary community. Thus, gondang serves a dual function: as an artistic expression and as a medium for strengthening the collective identity of the Toba Batak community amid the currents of urbanization and globalization.

Although there is agreement regarding the importance of preserving gondang, the interview results show differences in emphasis among the groups of informants. The younger generation focuses more on aspects of innovation and digitalization, viewing collaboration between gondang and modern music as well as the use of social media as effective strategies to make gondang relevant to urban lifestyles. Arts teachers, on the other hand, emphasize the role of formal education as a medium for transferring values across generations and shaping students' character. Gondang musicians highlight the importance of preserving traditional rules while also encouraging the regeneration of musicians in order to ensure the continuity and authenticity of the tradition. Meanwhile, customary leaders emphasize the sacred nature of gondang and the customary rules of Dalihan Na Tolu as fundamental principles that must not be abandoned, even though the tradition undergoes transformations of meaning in urban contexts.

These differing perspectives demonstrate that each group contributes in its own distinctive way to the preservation of gondang. The younger generation acts as an agent of innovation, teachers serve as educational facilitators, gondang musicians function as both guardians and developers of tradition, and customary leaders act as protectors of sacred values. The implication of these findings is that arts education can function as a meeting point that bridges these perspectives. Schools and art studios become spaces of cultural revitalization that enable the gondang tradition to remain alive, relevant, and meaningful for younger generations, while still respecting the customary values upheld by customary leaders and gondang musicians.

Thus, the synthesis of these findings demonstrates that Gondang Sabangunan has undergone a transformation of meaning from the sacred sphere into spaces of entertainment and urban cultural identity, while still maintaining its core function as a symbol of togetherness and cultural resilience. Arts education emerges as a contextual preservation strategy that connects younger generations with ancestral traditions while making gondang relevant in contemporary urban life. These findings are consistent with the concept of *invented tradition* (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) and Appadurai's (1996) framework of *mediascapes*, which emphasize that traditions may be reconstructed according to the needs of the times and negotiate with the forces of globalization.

## Conclusion

This study confirms that Gondang Sabangunan continues to play a fundamental role as a symbol of Toba Batak cultural identity amid the currents of urbanization and globalization. Although it has undergone

a transformation of meaning from the sacred realm to spaces of entertainment and urban cultural identity, *gondang* still functions as a medium of togetherness, social solidarity, and an intergenerational bridge. The perspectives of students, teachers, *gondang* musicians, and customary leaders reveal a shared understanding that *gondang* must be preserved, even though each group emphasizes different aspects: students highlight innovation and digitalization; teachers emphasize formal education and character formation; *gondang* musicians stress the importance of maintaining traditional rules and ensuring regeneration; while customary leaders emphasize the sacredness of the tradition and the customary principles of *Dalihan Na Tolu*.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the field of urban ethnomusicology by demonstrating how traditional music negotiates with modernity, commodification, and cultural hybridity. The findings reinforce the concept of invented tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983), which argues that traditions can be reconstructed according to the needs of the time, and they also support Appadurai's (1996) framework of mediascapes and ideoscapes in the context of cultural globalization. This research further enriches the literature on collective identity and intangible cultural heritage by emphasizing that *gondang* is not merely an artifact but a dynamic and contextual social practice.

From a practical perspective, this study offers a model for cultural preservation through arts education that can be implemented in schools and art studios. The integration of *gondang* into the curriculum proves to be an effective strategy for transmitting customary values to younger generations while simultaneously making the tradition relevant to contemporary urban life. The use of digital media and collaboration with modern music provide opportunities for the revitalization of *gondang* without diminishing the philosophical values of *Dalihan Na Tolu*. By involving students, teachers, *gondang* musicians, and customary leaders, arts education functions as a meeting point that bridges different perspectives while also serving as a sustainable space for cultural revitalization.

## **Policy Implications**

Regional governments and educational institutions need to ensure that *Gondang Sabangunan* is incorporated into arts and cultural curricula in schools, so that younger generations can learn and understand this tradition systematically.

### **1. Strengthening Cultural Studios and Communities**

Support for art studios and customary cultural communities should be strengthened through funding, the provision of instruments, and training programs for teachers and *gondang* practitioners. Cultural studios can function as active and sustainable spaces for cultural transmission.

### **2. Utilization of Digital Media**

Cultural policies should encourage the use of social media and digital platforms as tools for the promotion and education of *gondang*. Through digital media, this tradition can reach a broader audience, particularly urban youth.

### **3. Collaboration among Stakeholders**

The preservation of *gondang* requires cooperation among schools, customary leaders, *gondang* musicians, and government institutions. Such collaboration ensures that sacred cultural values are maintained while also allowing space for innovation so that *gondang* remains relevant to contemporary developments.

### **4. Legal Recognition and Protection of Cultural Heritage**

Local governments need to establish regulations or formal policies that protect *Gondang Sabangunan* as an intangible cultural heritage, in line with Indonesia's commitment to the UNESCO (2003) framework for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

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