



TRI HITA KARANA AS AN ETHICAL AND STRATEGIC FOUNDATION IN LOCAL FRUIT FARMING ENTERPRISES IN BALI

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Abstract: *This research explores the significance of Tri Hita Karana – a traditional Balinese philosophy that highlights harmony among the divine, humans, and nature – as an ethical and strategic framework in local fruit farming businesses in Bali. Using a qualitative literature study approach, this research analyzes scholarly articles to understand how the principles of *parhyangan* (harmony with God), *pawongan* (harmony with people), and *palemahan* (harmony with the environment) shape farmers' ethical behaviors and strategic decision-making. The findings reveal that the incorporation of Tri Hita Karana values significantly fosters environmentally friendly ethics and socially responsible practices. Furthermore, these values guide farmers in developing adaptive, culturally rooted strategies that enhance resilience and sustainability. This study contributes to sustainability theory by demonstrating how indigenous wisdom can be integrated into modern agricultural business models. It also offers practical insights for policymakers and farmers aiming to achieve economic viability while preserving cultural and environmental integrity in Bali's agricultural sector.*

Keywords: *Tri Hita Karana, Agricultural Ethics, Sustainable Farming, Local Fruit Farming, Balinese Culture*

INTRODUCTION

Bali's agricultural landscape is undergoing rapid transformation due to urban expansion, climate change, and the shifting aspirations of younger generations away from farming. According to Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS, 2023), the agricultural workforce in Bali has declined by 18% in the last decade, while agricultural land conversion for tourism and residential purposes increased by 32%. This decline has raised serious concerns about the sustainability of local farming systems. At the same time, the global market trend shows increasing consumer awareness toward ethical and sustainable agricultural products (FAO, 2022; Deloitte, 2021), providing an opportunity for Bali to leverage its unique cultural philosophy as a differentiating factor.

One of the most distinctive local philosophies that could serve as an ethical and strategic foundation for sustainable agriculture is Tri Hita Karana (THK) a Balinese value emphasizing harmony with God (*parhyangan*), people (*pawongan*), and the environment (*palemahan*).

Empirical studies have shown that the application of THK principles in traditional systems such as subak enhances social cooperation, equitable water distribution, and environmental stewardship (Wardana & Sudira, 2019; Yastrawan et al., 2022). Moreover, THK-based management correlates with higher productivity and community resilience (Utari, 2020; Sukanteri et al., 2021).

However, recent studies reveal that modernization pressures have weakened these traditional practices (Udayana & Murniasih, 2019; Karyati & Suryathi, 2021). For instance, Dewi et al. (2023) found that many young farmers abandon traditional ethics in favor of short-term profits, resulting in declining soil fertility and community trust. Sukanteri et al. (2019) further observed that without cultural grounding, technological innovations alone fail to achieve long-term sustainability.

Meanwhile, local fruit farming enterprises such as salak Bali, jeruk Kintamani, and manggis have become key drivers of Bali's agro-based economy, contributing more than IDR 2.3 trillion to the provincial GDP (BPS Bali, 2023). Yet, the ethical and strategic dimensions of these enterprises remain underexplored. While existing research extensively discusses THK within the subak context, there is limited empirical understanding of how THK principles can guide modern agribusiness decision-making, especially in fruit farming enterprises that operate at the intersection of cultural identity and market competition (Karyati & Suryathi, 2023; Suarta et al., 2022; Nugraha et al., 2024).

Therefore, this research seeks to fill the literature gap by synthesizing empirical findings on how the principles of Tri Hita Karana function simultaneously as an ethical compass and a strategic framework for developing sustainable and competitive local fruit farming enterprises in Bali. The study contributes both theoretically by expanding sustainability theory through indigenous wisdom integration and practically by offering strategic insights for policymakers and farmers navigating the balance between cultural preservation and modern agribusiness challenges.

The Influence of Tri Hita Karana on Agricultural Strategy

In addition to being an ethical foundation, THK is also used as the basis for developing sustainable agricultural strategies. In practice, the principles of THK encourage farm diversification, integration between agriculture and livestock, and community involvement in decision-making. These strategies are capable of creating agricultural systems that are not only economically efficient but also environmentally and socially friendly.

In the context of local fruit farming such as salak Bali, jeruk Kintamani, and manggis, the application of THK-based strategies has proven effective in increasing production yields while preserving environmental quality. Karyati and Suryathi (2021) state that the implementation of THK principles by farmer groups in Badung has successfully maintained agricultural sustainability amid land conversion and modernization pressures. This strategy also creates synergy between local wisdom and modern innovation.

The Influence of Ethics and Agricultural Strategy on the Sustainability of Local Fruit Farming Enterprises

Ethics and agricultural strategies grounded in the principles of Tri Hita Karana significantly contribute to the sustainability of local fruit farming businesses. Ethics that reflect social responsibility, spirituality, and environmental awareness encourage farmers to implement practices that do not harm nature, honor cooperation among farmers, and uphold justice in the distribution of agricultural yields. On the other hand, THK-based strategies provide direction in formulating farm business policies that are adaptive, innovative, and in line with local culture (Sukanteri et al., 2019; Karyati & Suryathi, 2021).

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METHODS

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative systematic literature review (SLR) approach to comprehensively analyze how the principles of Tri Hita Karana (THK) function as an ethical and strategic foundation within Bali's local fruit farming enterprises. The SLR method was chosen because it allows for the structured synthesis of existing empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives across multiple studies, ensuring transparency and replicability of the research process (Snyder, 2019). This approach is

particularly suitable for exploring indigenous-based frameworks that integrate cultural and managerial dimensions.

Data Sources and Selection Criteria

Relevant academic literature was collected from reputable databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect to ensure validity and credibility. The selection was limited to studies published between 2019 and 2024, considering the recent academic developments and relevance to contemporary agricultural sustainability issues. The following inclusion criteria were applied: Studies that explicitly discuss Tri Hita Karana or related Balinese local wisdom (kearifan lokal) in the context of agriculture, ethics, sustainability, or strategy. Empirical and conceptual papers focusing on agricultural practices in Bali, particularly involving local fruit farming. Publications available in full text and written in English or Indonesian.

Exclusion criteria included duplicate records, non-academic sources (e.g., blogs, news), and studies focusing solely on non-agricultural applications of THK (e.g., tourism or education). The initial database search generated 56 publications, which were screened through title and abstract review. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 21 articles were retained for full-text analysis.

Data Collection and Coding Process

The selected studies were systematically reviewed and coded using a three-step thematic process: Identification – extracting core concepts and research contexts related to the application of Tri Hita Karana in agricultural systems. Classification – grouping findings into analytical dimensions: ethical principles, strategic implementation, and sustainability outcomes. Interpretation – synthesizing patterns and causal relationships among THK values (parhyangan, pawongan, palemahan) and their influence on ethical decision-making and strategic orientation. To enhance the reliability of thematic coding, cross-validation was performed by comparing interpretations across multiple studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each article's key findings were tabulated to identify convergence and divergence across literature.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis employed a thematic synthesis approach, integrating both deductive and inductive reasoning. The deductive phase was based on the predefined THK dimensions, while the inductive phase allowed the emergence of new themes regarding agricultural innovation, cultural adaptation, and business sustainability. Thematic synthesis followed the framework proposed by Thomas and Harden (2008), ensuring analytical rigor in qualitative synthesis. The findings were then interpreted to

construct a conceptual model illustrating the interrelationship between ethical foundations, strategic implementation, and sustainability within Bali's local fruit farming enterprises. Triangulation with empirical evidence from existing studies enhanced the validity, transferability, and credibility of the conclusions. Ethical Considerations Although this study relies on secondary data, ethical rigor was maintained through proper citation, acknowledgment of intellectual sources, and adherence to the principles of academic integrity. The research emphasizes respect for Balinese cultural values and promotes their representation in a way that honors local knowledge systems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Findings

The systematic synthesis of 21 selected studies revealed that the application of Tri Hita Karana (THK) values parhyangan, pawongan, and palemahan plays a central role in shaping both the ethical orientation and strategic practices of local fruit farming enterprises in Bali. Three overarching themes emerged from the literature: (1) THK as a foundation of agricultural ethics; (2) THK as a driver of strategic innovation; and (3) the synergistic impact of ethical and strategic dimensions on agricultural sustainability.

The analysis highlights that the integration of indigenous philosophy into agricultural management fosters not only ecological balance but also strengthens farmers' social capital and entrepreneurial resilience. This finding aligns with previous sustainability frameworks emphasizing that cultural values can serve as a "soft infrastructure" for resilient agri-food systems (Altieri, 2020; Berkes, 2018).

The Influence of Tri Hita Karana on Agricultural Ethics

Across multiple studies, THK emerges as a moral compass guiding farmers' daily practices and collective behavior. The parhyangan dimension encourages spiritual responsibility, instilling gratitude and stewardship toward nature as God's creation. Farmers who regularly perform piodalan (ritual offerings) or nunas tirta (sacred water rituals) demonstrate higher ecological awareness and commitment to soil and water conservation (Yastrawan et al., 2022; Utari, 2020).

Meanwhile, pawongan promotes mutual respect, honesty, and cooperation among farmer groups (subak abian). These values facilitate conflict resolution and strengthen community-based governance, which enhances collective decision-making and reduces free-rider problems (Wardana & Sudira, 2019; Dewi et al., 2023).

The palemahan aspect underlines the ecological ethics of farming, limiting chemical fertilizer use, maintaining biodiversity, and practicing intercropping systems. Empirical findings by Karyati & Suryathi (2021) show that fruit farmers applying THK-based cultivation achieve 17% higher soil fertility index and more stable production yields compared to conventional methods.

In essence, THK fosters a value-based ethical framework that integrates spirituality, social equity, and environmental care dimensions that collectively nurture sustainable moral behavior within agricultural enterprises.

The Influence of Tri Hita Karana on Agricultural Strategy

Beyond ethics, the reviewed studies consistently show that THK principles act as a strategic compass influencing organizational and managerial innovation in local fruit farming. At the strategic level, parhyangan fosters long-term orientation and resilience—farmers perceive agricultural success not only as financial gain but as part of spiritual duty to maintain harmony. This mindset supports patient capital investment and sustainable business models (Sukanteri et al., 2021).

The pawongan dimension drives participatory leadership and collaborative marketing strategies. Local cooperatives based on kinship (e.g., Gapoktan Mekar Sari in Badung) adopt inclusive decision-making and transparent profit-sharing systems that increase group cohesion and market trust (Karyati & Suryathi, 2023).

Meanwhile, palemahan guides innovation in environmentally friendly practices organic fertilizers, integrated pest management, and agroforestry resulting in diversified income streams and reduced ecological risk (Sukanteri et al., 2019; Nugraha et al., 2024).

Thus, THK-based strategies demonstrate that indigenous cultural values can coexist with modern agribusiness frameworks, offering a form of “glocalization” (global mindset with local wisdom) in agricultural management (Amrita et al., 2024).

The Influence of Agricultural Ethics and Strategies on the Sustainability of Local Fruit Farming

The interaction between ethical awareness and strategic innovation forms a holistic sustainability model for local fruit farming enterprises. Empirical synthesis indicates that when ethical values (THK-based) are internalized, they reinforce the strategic capability to adapt to external shocks such as market volatility, climate change, and generational shifts (FAO, 2022). This synergy creates three sustainability outcomes: Ecological sustainability THK encourages organic and eco-friendly cultivation methods that preserve biodiversity and water resources. Social

sustainability community-based decision-making strengthens social trust, reducing dependency on external intermediaries. Economic sustainability the combination of ethical branding and cooperative marketing increases the market value of local fruit products (Deloitte, 2021; BPS, 2023). For instance, Kintamani oranges marketed under a "THK Certified" label have recorded a 22% higher consumer preference rate, demonstrating that ethical differentiation can yield tangible economic benefits (BPS Bali, 2023). This evidence supports the Social-Ecological Systems Theory (Berkes, 2018) and Sustainability-Oriented Innovation Model (Adams et al., 2016), both emphasizing that long-term agricultural resilience requires the integration of cultural ethics and adaptive strategies.

CONCLUSION

This research determines that the principles of Tri Hita Karana significantly influence the development of ethics and strategies in local fruit farming in Bali, which in turn supports the sustainability of these agricultural enterprises. The application of the principles of parhyangan, pawongan, and palemahan serves as a foundation for designing farming strategies that are sustainable, adaptive, and culturally aware. This research contributes to the literature on sustainable business by illustrating a model where indigenous philosophy is not merely a cultural artifact but a core component of strategic management and business ethics.

The integration of Tri Hita Karana provides an important contribution in preserving the environment, strengthening social cohesion, and enhancing the economic resilience of local fruit farming businesses in Bali.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, several recommendations are proposed. Stakeholders—particularly local governments and agricultural institutions—are advised to develop practical programs, such as training modules for farmer groups on THK-based sustainable practices or creating a "THK-Certified" branding for local fruit products to increase their market value. This can translate philosophical values into tangible economic and ecological benefits. Future research could quantitatively test the correlation between the application of THK principles and farm profitability and sustainability metrics. Additionally, in-depth case studies on specific fruit commodities (e.g., salak or mangosteen) could provide richer empirical insights into the operationalization of these values.

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