

## Melody of Faith and Culture: The Use of *Kolintang* in Worship at the Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa (GMIM) Nazaret Matani, North Sulawesi

Timothy Gibran Liuw<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Ambon, Indonesia; Liuw@gmail.com

\* Corresponding author

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of *kolintang*, a traditional Minahasan musical instrument, in Christian worship—specifically at the *Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa* (GMIM) Nazaret Matani congregation—and to identify the challenges and opportunities involved in its preservation amid the ongoing modernization of liturgy. This research is significant in light of shifting preferences in church music, which increasingly favor modern instruments, potentially threatening the continuity of local musical practices within worship spaces. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, using data collection methods such as participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and applies the interactive analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman. The main findings show that *kolintang* plays a significant role as a medium of spiritual expression, a reinforcer of local cultural identity, and a unifying force across generations within the congregation. However, its sustainability faces challenges, including declining interest among youth, a shortage of professional instructors, and limited theological support. The study emphasizes the importance of *contextual* liturgical approaches, continuous training, and the integration of local culture into church ministry. The uniqueness of this research lies in its in-depth exploration of *kolintang* as a tool of both spiritual and cultural transformation in Protestant Christian worship in Indonesia—an area that remains underexplored in liturgical and ethnomusicological scholarship.

**Keywords:** *Kolintang*, GMIM, Christian Worship, Minahasan Culture, Contextual Liturgy, Traditional Music.

### Introduction

*Kolintang* is one of the traditional musical heritage instruments of Minahasan culture, rich in both historical and symbolic value. With its melodious tones and unique wooden-key construction, this instrument has long played an important role in the cultural expression of the people of North Sulawesi. In contemporary social contexts, *kolintang* is not only performed at art festivals but also used in religious practices, including Christian worship in the *Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa* (GMIM). The use of *kolintang* in worship reflects both an effort to preserve local culture and an attempt to integrate traditional values into the spiritual life of the community. However, globalization and cultural

modernization have introduced new challenges. In various churches—including GMIM Nazaret Matani—there is a growing tendency to adopt modern musical instruments such as keyboards, guitars, and drums, which are often seen as more appealing to younger generations and better suited to contemporary worship settings (Loho, 2015). This shift raises critical questions regarding the status of *kolintang* in modern liturgy: does it still hold an authentic place, or has it been reduced to a mere symbolic element? In many cases, *kolintang* continues to be used during Sunday morning services at GMIM Nazaret Matani, indicating a liturgical dialectic between innovation and conservation.

Another challenge lies in the areas of cultural transmission and regeneration. Young people, especially those raised in urban environments, are increasingly unfamiliar with the techniques and symbolic meanings of *kolintang*. This disinterest is exacerbated by the lack of traditional music training in church programs, threatening the continuity of *kolintang* practices in the future. Yet music in worship possesses strong social and emotional power, fostering deep spiritual experiences and strengthening the bonds among congregants. This concern is reflected in a statement by Djemmy Sumakud, the initiator of a 2013 MURI world record, who lamented the waning interest among Minahasan youth in traditional music. Nonetheless, a group of 15 youth from North Minahasa once succeeded in breaking the Indonesian World Records Museum (MURI) record by playing *kolintang* nonstop for 12 hours, 12 minutes, and 12 seconds—demonstrating that hope remains for the younger generation to preserve this unique instrument (Hayati, 2013).

Existing research on *kolintang* music reveals several key trends that have drawn academic attention. First, a number of studies focus on the preservation of *kolintang* within local community contexts. For example, Hendrik et al. (2016) describe how *kolintang* music groups in Maumbi Village have managed to sustain their existence through routine training, player development, and youth engagement in musical activities. Similarly, Wikarsa et al. (2016) examine *kolintang* as a potential cultural tourism attraction in Minahasa in the post-COVID-19 era. These studies underscore the importance of active traditional music preservation but do not yet explore the liturgical or spiritual dimensions of *kolintang*, particularly within Christian religious practice.

Second, several studies explore the symbolic meaning and social construction of *kolintang* in Minahasan society. Latuni et al. (2023) show that *kolintang* functions not merely as a musical instrument but also carries strong social symbolism—especially relating to the unifying principle of the number three in local cultural structures. This research enhances understanding of the representational role of *kolintang* in community life, yet does not directly link it to church worship or religious ritual, leaving the theological and liturgical dimensions underexplored.

Third, some studies analyze the role of traditional music in Christian liturgy more generally. For instance, Daulay (2020) discusses the challenges and opportunities involved in using traditional music in Christian worship and finds that local music contributes significantly to the authenticity and spiritual depth of congregational life. However, this study does not focus specifically on *kolintang* as a distinctive Minahasan instrument, nor does it offer a contextualized account of how traditional Minahasan music is integrated into GMIM liturgy.

Thus, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the specific use of *kolintang* in GMIM worship—particularly in relation to its role, the challenges and opportunities of its integration, and the spiritual and cultural implications of its reception by the congregation. This research aims to address that gap.

Accordingly, this study seeks to analyze the role of *kolintang* in the worship practices of GMIM Nazaret Matani and to describe the challenges and opportunities surrounding its use in church worship. More broadly, the research also aims to contribute conceptually to the discourse on *contextual* liturgy in Indonesia—specifically, how Christian religious practice can authentically and functionally integrate local cultural expressions. By conducting an in-depth exploration of musical practices at GMIM Nazaret Matani, this study intends to enhance understanding of the dynamic relationship between culture, religion, and community within local churches in North Sulawesi.

This study is grounded in the argument that the use of *kolintang* in worship at GMIM Nazaret Matani is not merely a form of cultural preservation, but a spiritual and liturgical expression that strengthens the identity of the Minahasan church community. In the midst of modernization, *kolintang* can continue to serve as a relevant spiritual medium—provided it is supported through educational, dialogical, and cross-generational approaches. In this way, *kolintang* may function as a vehicle for reconciling tradition and innovation in the practice of Christian worship in North Sulawesi.

## Methods

The unit of analysis in this study is the practice of using the traditional *kolintang* musical instrument in the worship services of the *Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa (GMIM)*, specifically at the GMIM Nazaret Matani congregation, located in the Tomohon I District of North Sulawesi. The study focuses on how *kolintang* is utilized within the liturgical context, how congregants and church leaders perceive its use, and what challenges and opportunities exist in preserving it as a form of faith expression and local cultural identity. The research observes this phenomenon through the perspectives of direct participants—both individuals and groups—involved in worship activities.

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive-analytical design (Jamalus, 1988). The qualitative method is chosen because it aligns with

the research goal of deeply understanding social and cultural phenomena in their natural context. The descriptive design enables the researcher to portray the phenomenon as it occurs, without manipulating variables, while the analytical approach allows for the exploration of meanings, perceptions, and experiences of participants in using *kolintang* in worship. This method is particularly effective in revealing symbolic meanings, subtle nuances, and social relations embedded in traditional music-based worship practices (Djohan, 2001).

The data in this study consist of both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected from purposively selected informants, including church leaders (pastors and elders), *kolintang* musicians actively involved in worship, congregants with firsthand experience of *kolintang* music, and local cultural observers. Secondary data were obtained from worship documents, church bulletins, video recordings of services, and academic literature related to *kolintang*, traditional music, and liturgical practices within the GMIM context.

Data collection involved three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document study. The in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face in a semi-structured format with key informants to explore their experiences, perspectives, and interpretations regarding the use of *kolintang* in worship. Participant observation was carried out by attending worship services at GMIM Nazaret Matani, carefully documenting the dynamics of *kolintang* usage, the interaction between musicians and congregants, and the emotional responses that emerged during worship. Document study complemented the fieldwork by analyzing written, visual, and audio materials such as worship scripts, church archives, and related publications.

The data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model by Miles and Huberman (2013), which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the data reduction phase, the researcher selected relevant information and condensed it into key thematic categories. The data display phase involved organizing the results of observation, interview excerpts, and supporting documents into a descriptive narrative presented thematically. The final stage, conclusion drawing and verification, entailed testing the consistency and validity of the findings through methodological and source triangulation to ensure that the interpretations accurately reflect the realities observed in the field.

## Results and Discussion

### The Role of *Kolintang* in Worship at GMIM Nazaret Matani

The use of *kolintang* in worship at GMIM Nazaret Matani serves not merely as musical accompaniment, but as a vital element in shaping the liturgical atmosphere and reinforcing the cultural identity of the congregation (Handel,

2002). Based on direct observation during Sunday morning services and several church celebrations, the church incorporates *kolintang* to accompany hymns and praise, delivering soft yet meaningful tones. Church musicians, composed of both youth and adults, play the *kolintang* collectively, creating a distinctive worship experience that blends spirituality with local cultural expression.

In an interview, Jeppy Mantiri—*kolintang* coach and player at GMIM Nazaret Matani—explained, “*Kolintang* as an accompanying instrument helps create a deep and reverent worship atmosphere. Its gentle melodies and harmonious tones enhance the liturgy, make worship more engaging, and allow space for the congregation to reflect on the message being conveyed” (Interview, October 19, 2024). Jeppy also noted that *kolintang* has helped the church music team grow by fostering a collaborative and educational musical environment.

A similar sentiment was expressed by Rev. Junisar Watulangkow, Chair of the GMIM Synod Church Music Commission, who emphasized that *kolintang* serves as an accompaniment rather than a dominant force. He stated, “*Kolintang* must accompany congregational singing, not dictate the mood. It should blend with the liturgy, not stand above it” (Interview, November 13, 2024). His remarks reflect a liturgical awareness that *kolintang*’s role is to guide worshipful ambiance rather than become a musical centerpiece.

Fiki Anes, a local cultural observer, added, “*Kolintang* in worship is a cultural expression that remains submitted to the sacred atmosphere. It is not a performance, but a form of ministry” (Interview, October 20, 2024). Fiki stressed the importance of maintaining balance between cultural expression and the sanctity of worship, so that *kolintang* is not perceived as mere entertainment but as a vehicle for praise.

Beyond routine services, the church also features *kolintang* during key events such as Christmas, Easter, and the church’s anniversary. During such celebrations, *kolintang* often becomes a focal point, bringing a joyful and festive mood. Observations revealed that *kolintang* performances during these events typically involve the entire church community, including children, youth, and elders—fostering an inclusive and collaborative atmosphere.

The presence of *kolintang* also fosters deep spiritual experiences for congregants. Observations noted that when *kolintang* plays during moments of silence or prayer, the worship environment becomes deeply calm and contemplative. Its soft, harmonious tones help the congregation enter into reflection and meditation. In one instance, a church member was seen in tears as the entire congregation slowly sang a worship song accompanied by *kolintang*.

According to Jeppy Mantiri, *kolintang* also plays an educational role in church ministry. He remarked, “Using *kolintang* in worship encourages the development of the church music team. With the *kolintang* ensemble, congregants can practice together, build musical skills, and strengthen interpersonal

relationships” (Interview, October 19, 2024). Group rehearsals serve as opportunities to cultivate discipline and shared responsibility in ministry.

*Kolintang* also reinforces pride in local culture among GMIM members. Observations noted that *kolintang* players performed with great enthusiasm and confidence, especially during services with visitors or special celebrations. Praise songs such as “Ku Mau Cinta Yesus Selamanya” (“I Want to Love Jesus Forever”) or “Bersoraklah Bagi Tuhan” (“Shout Joyfully to the Lord”) were arranged in *kolintang* style, giving worship a fresh and uniquely local flavor.

More than a musical instrument, *kolintang* has become a medium of faith expression. Several *kolintang* players interviewed stated that worship feels more “alive” and meaningful when they play. One youth player shared, “Every time I play *kolintang* in worship, I feel like I’m offering my prayer through the notes. It feels different than just singing” (Interview, October 18, 2024).

Ultimately, the use of *kolintang* in worship at GMIM Nazaret Matani has evolved into an *inculturative* practice that reflects the identity of the community. *Kolintang* music brings unity, spirituality, and warmth. During a major worship service (on the church anniversary celebration), observations showed how the entire congregation sang with great enthusiasm, accompanied by an intergenerational *kolintang* ensemble. That moment symbolized how *kolintang* unites the congregation, turning worship into a space that celebrates both faith and culture together.

**Table 1. The Role of *Kolintang* in Worship at GMIM Nazaret Matani**

No.	Role of <i>Kolintang</i>	Brief Description
1	Accompanying Congregational Singing	<i>Kolintang</i> accompanies praise songs in worship, creating a reverent and harmonious atmosphere
2	Enhancing Liturgical Aesthetics	The tones of <i>kolintang</i> enrich the solemnity and aesthetic beauty of the liturgy
3	Medium of Faith Expression	<i>Kolintang</i> players feel worship becomes more meaningful as they play
4	Encouraging Congregational Participation	<i>Kolintang</i> invites cross-generational involvement in church music ministry
5	Educational and Ministerial Tool	<i>Kolintang</i> promotes training and development of the church music team
6	Celebration of Faith and Local Culture	<i>Kolintang</i> reinforces Minahasan cultural identity in major services like Christmas and Easter

7	Facilitating Contemplative Atmosphere	Gentle melodies of Kolintang help the congregation enter moments of prayer and reflection
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Based on observations and interviews, *kolintang* holds a vital function in the worship life of GMIM Nazaret Matani. This instrument is not merely a decorative element; it actively shapes the worship environment to be deeper and more meaningful. The melodies produced by *kolintang* enhance the beauty of the liturgy, strengthen congregational enthusiasm in singing, and foster a solemn atmosphere conducive to prayer and reflection.

Additionally, *kolintang* serves as an effective tool for encouraging congregational involvement in the church's music ministry. Through regular training and group rehearsals, *kolintang* becomes a collaborative space across generations, reinforcing solidarity within the church community. For the players, *kolintang* also serves as a deeply personal form of faith expression—a way to offer prayers and praises to God through music.



**Figure 1. Kolintang being played during worship at the church**

*Kolintang* appears not only in weekly services but also plays a central role in major liturgical celebrations such as Christmas, Easter, and the church's anniversary. In these events, *kolintang* creates a festive, warm, and joyful atmosphere, strengthening the sense of unity within the congregation. Overall, *kolintang* functions as a bridge between Minahasan cultural traditions and vibrant Christian faith expression (Bahari, 2014).

This study reveals several recurring patterns concerning the role of *kolintang* in worship at GMIM Nazaret Matani. First, *kolintang* has been successfully and organically integrated into the church's liturgy as part of an *inculturative* practice.

It is not merely treated as a cultural ornament but has become an essential part of the worship structure. Its use during praise, worship, and prayer moments shows that this traditional Minahasan music is actively accepted by the congregation as a legitimate and meaningful liturgical element.

Second, *kolintang* serves as a medium for shaping the spirituality of the congregation. Its soft, harmonious tones create an atmosphere of reverence, peace, and introspection. Many members shared that they found it easier to enter into prayer and meditate on God's word when *kolintang* was played. This indicates that *kolintang* is not just a musical instrument, but an effective spiritual aid in facilitating intimacy with God during worship.

Third, *kolintang* encourages active congregational participation and strengthens the church community. Group rehearsals become regular activities involving people of all ages—children, youth, adults, and elders—who together form the church's music ensemble. These rehearsals not only enhance musicality but also foster solidarity and cooperation among church members. Participation in the *kolintang* group deepens one's sense of belonging to both the church and its cultural heritage.

Fourth, *kolintang* acts as a distinct and *contextual* form of faith expression. For its players, it becomes a ministry tool that allows them to express praise and prayer through the language of music. Many believe that every note played conveys heartfelt faith. Thus, *kolintang* offers a model of non-verbal, musical, and symbolic expression of belief—what may be called a unique Minahasan form of *musical theology*.

Taken as a whole, the data show that *kolintang* not only enriches the aesthetic dimension of worship but also deepens its spiritual and social dimensions. Its presence in worship at GMIM Nazaret Matani reflects a successful integration of local cultural identity into a living, dynamic, and contextual ecclesial practice.

### **Challenges in the Use of *Kolintang* in Worship**

The use of *kolintang* in worship at GMIM Nazaret Matani faces several challenges related to technical readiness, consistency in implementation, and congregational involvement—particularly among the younger generation. In an interview, Jeppy Mantiri, the church's music coach, identified a key obstacle: the limited number of players and the lack of technical skill among young musicians. He stated, "We don't have enough players, and people have different levels of artistic inclination. The beginners are still in training. Some elementary, junior high, and high school students are being trained now—hopefully they'll learn and be able to play in the future" (Interview, October 19, 2024). This indicates that the regeneration of *kolintang* players remains in an early developmental stage.

Another significant challenge lies in time management and rehearsal



discipline. Jola Mantiri added that while young players are available, rehearsals often fall short due to poor coordination and difficulty gathering everyone. She explained, “There are youth *kolintang* players, but because of limited coordination and scheduling issues, it’s hard to prepare them to perform” (Interview, October 19, 2024). As a result, *kolintang* performances during worship become inconsistent and less than optimal.

Beyond technical issues, internal factors such as personality differences among music team members also pose obstacles. The team consists of individuals from various backgrounds and temperaments. In practice, differences in opinion or working styles can hinder collaboration—especially if not addressed openly and constructively. These issues negatively impact the atmosphere during rehearsals and reduce the team’s readiness to perform in worship services.

Another recurring issue is the lack of consistency in scheduling the use of *kolintang* in worship. In many cases, *kolintang* is only used during special events or major services—not as a regular part of the weekly liturgy. This irregularity prevents *kolintang* from becoming fully integrated into the congregation’s spiritual experience and affects how its importance is perceived by church members.

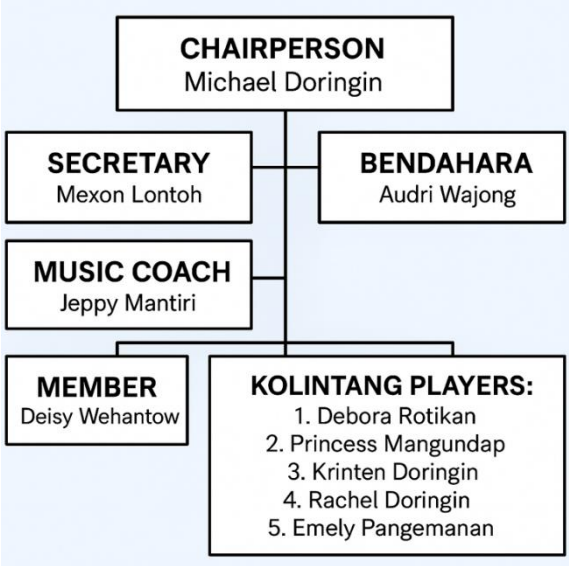
These challenges are further exacerbated by the low level of musical literacy among congregants, particularly among youth. A limited understanding of musical notation and *kolintang* technique slows down the training process. This directly impacts the musical quality and readiness of performances during worship. The lack of professional instructors or *kolintang* facilitators also slows the development of beginner players’ skills.

Despite these obstacles, GMIM Nazaret Matani also holds great potential to develop and preserve *kolintang* as part of its worship expression. The church’s music commission has prepared several strategic programs to support the preservation and integration of *kolintang*. According to Audri Wajong, the commission’s treasurer, one of the main initiatives is to conduct regular training—both monthly and weekly—for beginners and advanced players, as well as to “compile a repertoire of praise songs that can be accompanied by *kolintang*” (Interview, October 19, 2024).

In addition to routine training, the commission has planned other programs, including internal and external *kolintang* concerts. These concerts not only showcase the church’s own *kolintang* ensemble but also invite local *kolintang* groups, creating space for cultural dialogue and expanding appreciation for traditional music. The team also leverages digital platforms by recording and sharing their performances on social media and the church’s YouTube channel as part of their cultural education and promotional strategy.

Structural support is also evident in the church’s well-organized music commission. The structure includes a chairperson, secretary, treasurer, music

coach, and active *kolintang* players. Names such as Michael Doringin (Chair), Mexon Lontoh (Secretary), Audri Wajong (Treasurer), and five active *kolintang* musicians are listed as core members who lead and drive the church’s music development program at GMIM Nazaret Matani.



**Figure 2. Structure of the Music Commission of GMIM Nazaret Matani**

In terms of participation, congregational involvement in music ministry plays a crucial supporting role. The commitment of church members—both youth and adults—demonstrates broad social support for the preservation of *kolintang*. Several members actively serve as music ministers during Sunday worship, showing that *kolintang* is appreciated not only as a form of cultural entertainment but also as a genuine expression of spiritual service.

Musically, another promising aspect lies in the flexibility of *kolintang* to accompany a wide range of sacred songs. According to Jeppy Mantiri, *kolintang* is used to accompany hymns from several official church songbooks, such as *Kidung Jemaat*, *Pelengkap Kidung Jemaat* (PKJ), *Nyanyikanlah Kidung Baru* (NKB), and *Nyanyikanlah Nyanyian Baru bagi Tuhan* (NNBT), which are standard hymnals in GMIM. This diversity of song sources enables *kolintang* to be featured in various worship settings—from reflective to celebratory—reinforcing its potential as an integral component of GMIM liturgy.

Research findings indicate that the use of *kolintang* in worship at GMIM Nazaret Matani is not without technical and cultural challenges. These challenges primarily relate to the limited number of active players, low technical proficiency among beginners, and inconsistency in rehearsal schedules and performances.

Most *kolintang* players are youth who are still developing their skills, which makes the training process intensive and demands patience and institutional support. Furthermore, long-standing issues such as time constraints, differences in personality among team members, and a lack of professional instructors also present serious obstacles to developing *kolintang* as a consistent liturgical element.

Nevertheless, GMIM Nazaret Matani has demonstrated strong initiative in addressing these challenges. Through the programs of its Church Music Commission, the church has designed several strategies to strengthen the role of *kolintang*, including regular training sessions, the development of worship song repertoires, and digital documentation via social media platforms. The commission's well-structured organization and the active participation of cross-generational congregants in music ministry serve as a solid foundation for sustaining the *kolintang* tradition. Moreover, the musical versatility of *kolintang*—being able to accompany various types of hymns in GMIM—enhances its relevance as a cultural symbol within modern worship contexts. Broad community support further solidifies *kolintang*'s position as a meaningful spiritual and cultural asset.

From the collected data, several key patterns emerge that reflect the dynamics of both the challenges and opportunities surrounding the use of *kolintang* at GMIM Nazaret Matani. First, a tension exists between the desire to preserve tradition and the limitations of available human resources, particularly skilled players. Most *kolintang* players remain in the learning phase, and the lack of professional instructors slows the transfer of skills. This highlights an urgent need for a structured and continuous training system to ensure the long-term regeneration of *kolintang* musicians.

Second, scheduling and coordination present serious challenges to building a solid *kolintang* music team. Irregular rehearsal times and members' competing commitments hinder preparation for performances. Personality differences within the music team often disrupt collaboration, pointing to the need for the church's training programs to emphasize collective values and team ethics in ministry.

Third, although *kolintang* is not yet used consistently in all worship services, the efforts of GMIM Nazaret Matani's Music Commission show progressive momentum. Regular training sessions, internal concerts, and the use of social media to publish *kolintang* performances indicate that the church recognizes the instrument's potential—not only as a tool for worship but also as a medium for cultural education and preservation. These initiatives suggest that the church is moving toward a more *contextual* and inclusive liturgical model.

Fourth, congregational support and *kolintang*'s musical flexibility present valuable opportunities. The instrument's ability to accompany various types of

hymns demonstrates its high adaptability. Additionally, the enthusiasm of the congregation—especially among children and youth—creates space for sustainable cross-generational development. This strengthens *kolintang*'s position not just as cultural heritage, but as a spiritual and social medium capable of fostering communal unity within the church. These patterns position GMIM Nazaret Matani strategically to develop a model of *contextual* liturgy that not only preserves the richness of local culture but also keeps it alive and relevant in contemporary worship practice.

### **Opportunities and Strategies for the Preservation of *Kolintang* in Worship at GMIM Nazaret Matani**

The use of *kolintang* in worship at GMIM Nazaret Matani presents significant opportunities to enrich the liturgy while strengthening the preservation of Minahasan culture within the spiritual space of the church. The melodic and distinctive tones of *kolintang* create a more reverent worship atmosphere, touch the congregation emotionally, and deepen their spiritual experience. Congregants do not merely listen to the music; they encounter a worship setting that is fused with their cultural identity. In several worship moments, *kolintang* becomes a highly anticipated element, offering a musical color that modern instruments like keyboards or guitars cannot replicate.

The church has followed up on this liturgical opportunity with a preservation strategy developed by the Music Commission of GMIM Nazaret Matani. Audri Wajong, the commission's treasurer, stated that the team has designed a series of programs to reinforce the use of *kolintang* in church: "We conduct regular training sessions, either monthly or weekly, for beginners and advanced players. We also compile repertoires of praise songs that can be accompanied by *kolintang*" (Interview, October 19, 2024). This strategy seeks to integrate *kolintang* into various worship formats and church celebrations—not merely as a complement, but as a vital part of a living and dynamic liturgical structure.

*Kolintang* also serves as a strategic medium for educating the younger generation about cultural heritage. The involvement of children and youth in *kolintang* training and performance not only instills musical skills but also promotes collective values such as discipline, cooperation, and a sense of responsibility in ministry. Jeppy Mantiri, music coach at GMIM Nazaret Matani, explained, "We've started training the kids from elementary, middle, and high school. The hope is that they'll be able to play in the future and become the next generation of *kolintang* musicians in the church" (Interview, October 19, 2024). This effort forms part of a long-term and sustainable strategy for regenerating *kolintang* players.

In addition, the church implements educational approaches through

cultural and public-facing activities such as internal concerts, artistic performances during church celebrations, and discussions about the origins and meaning of *kolintang*. These initiatives show that GMIM Nazaret Matani views *kolintang* not just as a musical element, but as a vibrant cultural education tool. Through such methods, the church introduces *kolintang* not only to its own members but also to the broader community—demonstrating the church's contribution to the preservation of Minahasan cultural heritage.

Active congregational participation in the *kolintang* music team has become a strategic strength in sustaining the tradition. *Kolintang* rehearsals serve as moments of warm social interaction, strengthening relationships among church members and forming a cohesive music ministry community. Church members of all ages gather to learn and play together, creating an inclusive and familiar atmosphere. "Through *kolintang* practice and performances, we get to know each other better and grow closer—not just in ministry but also in fellowship," said Jola Mantiri (Interview, October 19, 2024).

Another strategy the church has begun to adopt is the documentation and publication of *kolintang* performances via social media and the church's YouTube channel. These efforts serve not only as archival documentation but also as cultural promotion and a form of digital ministry. Recorded *kolintang* performances shared online reach wider audiences and offer accessible educational content for younger generations. Thus, the preservation of *kolintang* no longer depends solely on oral transmission or local stage performances, but also extends into the digital space, relevant to today's context.

Another key opportunity lies in *kolintang*'s ability to attract youth interest in church life. Its unique, dynamic, and culturally distinctive sound provides young people with a more engaging and approachable worship experience. When they participate in song arrangements, regular rehearsals, and worship performances, they develop a sense of responsibility and pride that deepens their involvement in church activities. For many, *kolintang* becomes a new way to express their faith and to belong to a spiritual community that values tradition.

By combining intergenerational engagement, cultural education, the digitalization of liturgical practice, and the formation of a church music community, GMIM Nazaret Matani has taken concrete steps to make *kolintang* an inseparable part of worship ministry. *Kolintang* is no longer merely a passive cultural inheritance, but has become an active instrument in shaping *contextual* spirituality, strengthening congregational fellowship, and preserving local cultural wealth in transformative ways.

**Table 2. Opportunities and Strategies for the Preservation of *Kolintang* in Worship at GMIM Nazaret Matani**

No.	Aspect	Opportunity / Strategy
1	Worship Liturgy	<i>Kolintang</i> enriches the worship atmosphere with a sacred and culturally distinct tone
2	Training Programs	Regular training for beginners and advanced players, with church songs arranged for <i>kolintang</i>
3	Player Regeneration	Involving children and youth in early training to regenerate the <i>kolintang</i> ensemble
4	Cultural Education	Cultural education through discussions, <i>kolintang</i> concerts, and the introduction of Minahasan music history
5	Congregational Involvement	<i>Kolintang</i> practice strengthens fellowship and builds a solid church music community
6	Digital Promotion	Documenting and publishing <i>kolintang</i> performances via social media and the church's YouTube channel
7	Youth Engagement	<i>Kolintang</i> attracts young people to participate in worship and ministry

The findings of this study indicate that the use of *kolintang* in worship at GMIM Nazaret Matani not only offers liturgical opportunities but also paves the way for strategic and *contextual* cultural preservation. *Kolintang* introduces a unique musical dimension that enhances the worship experience, making it more reflective, sacred, and intimate. Its distinct sound fosters a spiritual encounter that resonates deeply with congregants across generations.

These opportunities have been translated into preservation strategies through various programs designed by the Music Commission of GMIM Nazaret Matani. From regular training for children and youth, to the arrangement of spiritual songs for *kolintang*, and the strengthening of church music ensembles—these are concrete steps to ensure that *kolintang* does not merely survive, but thrives. These strategies extend beyond the sanctuary, encompassing educational and communal aspects by involving the congregation in concerts, cultural discussions, and intergenerational activities.

Another notable strategy is the digitalization of *kolintang* practice. The church has begun recording and disseminating *kolintang* performances through social media and its official YouTube channel, opening new avenues for cultural outreach and active promotion. This approach broadens the audience and serves as an educational resource, especially for younger generations. As a result, the preservation of *kolintang* has moved beyond oral tradition and local performance

spaces into the digital realm, adapting to contemporary contexts.

Another key opportunity lies in *kolintang*'s ability to capture the interest of young people in church life. Its unique, dynamic, and culturally rooted sound creates a worship experience that is both engaging and meaningful for youth. When involved in song arrangements, regular rehearsals, and worship performances, young members develop a sense of ownership and pride that encourages deeper involvement in church activities. For them, *kolintang* becomes a new way to express their faith and feel part of a spiritual community that values tradition.

By combining intergenerational involvement, cultural education, digital liturgical innovation, and the development of a church-based music community, GMIM Nazaret Matani has taken tangible steps to make *kolintang* an integral part of worship ministry. It is no longer a passive cultural artifact, but an active instrument in shaping *contextual* spirituality, strengthening congregational fellowship, and preserving Minahasan cultural heritage in transformative ways.

The data reveal several key patterns that illustrate how the opportunity to use *kolintang* has evolved into a well-planned and sustainable preservation strategy at GMIM Nazaret Matani. First, *kolintang* has successfully been positioned as a meaningful enhancer of *contextual* worship. Congregants report deeper and more impactful spiritual experiences when *kolintang* is played, as its traditional tones evoke emotional and cultural resonance. It is not merely an accompanying instrument but a reflective one that draws the congregation closer to God.

Second, regeneration strategies are central to preservation efforts. Children and youth are actively involved in training and performing with the *kolintang* ensemble. This approach not only cultivates musical skills but also instills a sense of ministry responsibility, cultural affinity, and intergenerational collaboration. These activities create an interactive learning environment and strengthen social bonds within the church.

Third, preservation strategies go beyond the church walls and extend into public and digital spaces. Documentation and media sharing have turned *kolintang* into a dynamic tool for cultural promotion and ministry. This initiative strengthens the perception that *kolintang* is not a relic of the past, but a living tradition capable of evolving and flourishing in the era of technology and media. It demonstrates the church's awareness in responding to modern challenges through creative adaptation.

Fourth, *kolintang* has become a vital instrument for cultural education within the church. Through *kolintang*, congregants—especially the youth—are introduced to the history, philosophy, and sociocultural meaning of Minahasa. It is no longer viewed as entertainment or a worship accessory, but as a vehicle for *contextual* education that integrates art, tradition, and faith into a holistic church

practice.

Fifth, congregational involvement in *kolintang* activities significantly contributes to the formation of a cohesive and inclusive community. Music ministry not only strengthens relationships among members but also creates a participatory and meaningful worship environment. The sense of ownership that grows from this involvement reinforces a spiritually active, open, and supportive faith community.

Taken together, these patterns demonstrate that GMIM Nazaret Matani has not only embraced the musical potential of *kolintang*, but also built a layered preservation system—one that engages liturgical, educational, social, and digital dimensions. This affirms that cultural preservation does not require passive conservation alone, but can coexist with progressive ministry innovation grounded in the local community.

## Discussion

This study shows that *kolintang* plays a significant role in worship at GMIM Nazaret Matani, not only as a musical accompaniment but also as a medium of faith expression, a unifying force within the community, and a symbol of Minahasan culture. The use of *kolintang* enriches the liturgical atmosphere, strengthens congregational participation, and opens strategic opportunities for preserving local cultural heritage through a *contextual* approach to Christian worship. Despite facing several challenges—such as a shortage of skilled players, limited technical training, and inconsistent usage—the church has responded actively with intergenerational engagement strategies, cultural education programs, and digital integration. These findings suggest that *kolintang* is not merely a cultural artifact but a tool of liturgical and social transformation that remains highly relevant to contemporary church life.

These outcomes did not emerge in a vacuum. The integration of *kolintang* into worship at GMIM Nazaret Matani reflects two key driving forces: the need to preserve local cultural identity and the desire to express a living, *contextual*, and participatory faith. The church has chosen *kolintang* not only for its aesthetic value but for its capacity to create a spiritual experience that resonates deeply with the congregation's cultural roots. The presence of *kolintang* in worship harmoniously merges spiritual and traditional elements into a shared symbolic space. This practice also addresses the longing—especially among younger generations—for forms of worship that are authentic, grounded in their heritage, and spiritually meaningful.

Compared to previous research, this study broadens the understanding of *kolintang*'s function in the church context. Hendrik et al. (2016) focused on the preservation of *kolintang* within the Maumbi community, but did not explicitly relate it to worship practices. Meanwhile, Daulay (2020) emphasized the



importance of traditional music in enhancing spiritual experience in Christian worship, yet did not examine *kolintang* specifically as a distinctive Minahasan instrument. This study differs in that it not only investigates the cultural preservation aspect, but also explores the deeper functions of *kolintang* in shaping spirituality, building community, and bridging generations within church ministry. These findings offer a novel contribution that enriches the study of *contextual liturgy* in Indonesia, particularly within the Protestant churches of the eastern region.

Historically, traditional music has played an important role in church worship, including in Indonesia. This role reflects a broader process of localization and cultural adaptation within Christian communities across the archipelago. In many churches, music serves not merely as a liturgical complement but as a central medium for deepening spiritual experiences and building collective congregational identity. For instance, in the Indonesian Bethel Church River of Life Pamulang, praise and worship music forms a core part of the worship system aimed at strengthening faith and enhancing spiritual engagement among the congregation (Betakore et al., 2023).

The process of *inculturation* is clearly evident in Indonesian church music practices, where local elements are creatively integrated into liturgy. The Liturgical Music Center in Yogyakarta has pioneered the development and dissemination of congregational repertoires rooted in local traditions, reflecting a blend of ethnic, regional, and national influences (Poplawska, 2018). In addition, local songwriters have played a vital role in composing hymns based on translated scripture, resulting in forms of faith expression that are both distinctive and *contextual*. This process highlights the importance of local agency and creativity in shaping uniquely Indonesian expressions of Christianity (Connor & Menger, 2021).

Moreover, local hymnals function as cultural artifacts that reflect the values, history, and dynamics of Indonesian Christian communities. These hymnals not only reinforce theological understanding but also serve as vibrant and *contextual* expressions of culture (Menger, 2024). From a historical perspective, the development of worship music in Indonesia demonstrates a continuing effort to balance the legacy of Western missionary influence with indigenous cultural practices. This balance has become a key element in the maturation of Asian Christian spirituality and in the advancement of *contextual* liturgical and theological scholarship (Hong, 2017).

Ideologically and socially, the findings of this study suggest that traditional music such as *kolintang* possesses the capacity to reshape how believers express their relationship with God, with one another, and with their cultural origins. *Kolintang* serves as a form of *musical theology* that not only enhances the beauty of worship but also creates a spiritual space that resonates emotionally and

culturally. These findings align with broader research on the role of traditional music in Indonesia as a medium of religious and social expression. For example, *gamelan* is used in various religious rituals in Java and Bali to convey spiritual values and foster collective experiences of faith (Spiller, 2008). Ritual music among the Toraja people in Sulawesi symbolizes relationships between life, death, and the divine (Rappoport, 2004), while in Balinese Hinduism, music remains inseparable from spiritual ritual, fostering connection between humans and the sacred (Heimarck, 2022).

Socially and culturally, traditional music also functions as a force of communal cohesion. *Polymusic* practices in various Indonesian regions illustrate how diverse musical groups interact in shared sonic spaces (Rappoport, 2013). In Kampung Naga, West Java, elders informally transmit Islamic values and Sundanese cultural heritage through music to younger generations (Gunara et al., 2019). In Balinese performance art, the concept of *taksu*—a divine energy believed to enliven artistic expression—imbues music with spiritual power (Dibia, 2024). The cyclical nature of many Indonesian musical compositions reflects social and spiritual rhythms embedded in local life (Goldsworthy, 2005). Traditional music also plays a vital role in sustaining cultural identity through heritage-based tourism (Jaskari, 2023). In this light, *kolintang* in GMIM worship serves not only as a musical instrument but as a medium that bridges tradition and faith, reinforcing integration between the spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions of the congregation.

Additionally, *kolintang* reinforces the church's function as an inclusive community space, where intergenerational collaboration and shared cultural ownership are cultivated in a warm and supportive environment. This aligns with various studies showing that traditional music in worship contexts plays a central role in building faith communities and strengthening social bonds among congregants. Church music—such as congregational singing and traditional ensembles—has proven to foster fellowship, reinforce communal identity, and facilitate *koinonia*, or deep spiritual communion (Kloppers, 2015; Wald-Fuhrmann et al., 2020). Church musical traditions frequently serve as intergenerational platforms where children, youth, and elders rehearse and perform together, creating emotional engagement and social cohesion (Riley, 2024; Sutherland, 2018).

In many cases, traditional music such as *kolintang* also creates space for inclusive participation across diverse backgrounds. Musical involvement does not demand high levels of professionalism but instead values diverse skill sets and shared enthusiasm (Bentley, 2009). This approach is similar to genre-based community music, which embraces openness and collaboration, and has been shown to enhance psychosocial well-being and belonging (Bartleet, 2023; Tapson et al., 2018). Studies in both Africa and Indonesia reveal that traditional music in

worship not only enriches spiritual experiences but also boosts congregational participation and draws greater attendance to religious activities (Lebaka, 2015; Mkallyah, 2016; Perszon, 2023).

Thus, the use of *kolintang* in GMIM worship represents not merely a cultural preservation effort, but a deliberate strategy to shape the church as an inclusive, dynamic, and spiritually and socially empowered space—where intergenerational collaboration and cultural solidarity are inseparable from the ministry of the church.

However, these findings also invite reflection on the potential dysfunctions within church music ministry. The reliance on a limited number of music instructors, irregular rehearsal schedules, and differing levels of motivation among kolintang team members can lead to both structural and emotional fatigue in ministry. If not properly managed, the participatory spirit that should serve as a strength may instead become an administrative burden or merely a symbolic formality devoid of spiritual substance. This aligns with Schröder's (2021) findings, which highlight that many church music leaders lack sufficient theological and musical training to meet the demands of contemporary ministry. Moreover, Obelkevich (2013) notes that throughout church history, attitudes toward music have been ambivalent—viewed at times as enriching to worship and at other times as a distraction from reverence.

Dysfunction may also arise from tensions between individual musical preferences and collective congregational taste. Efforts to incorporate traditional or popular music styles sometimes result in dis-identification among congregants who feel alienated by unfamiliar musical forms (Eyerly, 2013). In this context, Myrick (2021) emphasizes the importance of ethical relationships and justice in music ministry, warning against emotional disconnects between music leaders and the congregation. Rolfe (2006) further shows that the absence or burnout of a music minister can trigger internal conflict and imbalance within the church community. These challenges have been exacerbated in the post-pandemic context. Magezi (2022) and Mikoski (2025) report declining participation and weakened spiritual connection due to disrupted worship routines and ministry structures.

In the specific case of regenerating traditional music such as kolintang, dysfunction is also rooted in intergenerational tension. As Whittaker (2018) and Roberts (2013) explain, churches often face dilemmas when accommodating both traditional and contemporary musical preferences across age groups, which can lead to feelings of loss and compromise. Addressing this tension requires pastoral sensitivity and dialogical approaches in designing an inclusive and contextual repertoire. Otherwise, as Nyamuame (2021) and Said (2021) caution, the incorporation of local music may become merely symbolic or even be rejected as inconsistent with ecclesial values.

In addition, churches must remain vigilant against the dangers of commercialization and aestheticization of *kolintang*. When not grounded in a holistic framework of spiritual ministry, traditional music risks being reduced to a cultural performance stripped of its sacred meaning. As Devalve (2019) suggests, renewing church music requires integrating lyrics and sound through the logophonic principle so that music functions as a theological instrument rather than aesthetic consumption.

Therefore, dysfunction in traditional music ministry such as *kolintang* is not merely a technical or resource-based issue—it reflects deeper imbalances between preservation efforts, spiritual demands, and the socio-cultural dynamics of the congregation. The solution lies not only in training but in structural renewal, cross-generational support, and contextual theological reflection.

In response to these potential dysfunctions in *kolintang* ministry within GMIM, the findings of this study provide a strong foundation for formulating strategic and sustainable liturgical and cultural policies. Local churches need to develop training programs in traditional music that go beyond technical skills and also integrate theological and relational dimensions into music ministry. These training efforts should occur regularly and involve all generations, ensuring the continuity of *kolintang* player regeneration while minimizing overdependence on a single instructor. Additionally, churches should build support structures that care for the emotional and spiritual well-being of music ministers, preventing long-term burnout.

Liturgical spaces must also be consistently designed to accommodate culturally rooted musical expressions like *kolintang*, not merely as ceremonial elements but as integral parts of the worship structure. Therefore, the GMIM Synod is encouraged to draft a contextual liturgical guide that officially recognizes *kolintang* as one of its approved liturgical instruments, grounded in theological frameworks that support inclusivity and spiritual authenticity.

Furthermore, churches should facilitate collaboration among local artists, pastors, music educators, and worship leaders through creative forums that encourage the exchange of ideas and best practices. Regional governments and cultural institutions should also be actively involved through funding schemes, arts preservation programs, and church-based public education initiatives. These efforts ensure that *kolintang* is not reduced to a passive cultural symbol, but becomes an active instrument for nurturing faith, fostering community solidarity, and strengthening the cultural identity of Christian society in North Sulawesi.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *kolintang*, as a traditional Minahasan musical instrument, plays a significant and multidimensional role in worship at GMIM Nazaret Matani. More than just a musical accompaniment, *kolintang* has become an instrument that enriches the congregation's spiritual experience, strengthens

local cultural identity, and fosters social cohesion among church members. Through its distinctive sound, *kolintang* creates a worship atmosphere that is reflective, joyful, and intimate, while also opening space for intergenerational participation in church ministry. In response to ongoing challenges—such as a limited number of players, inconsistent rehearsal schedules, and low levels of musical literacy—the church has taken progressive steps toward preservation, including regular training sessions, strengthening of the church music community, digital documentation, and cultural education initiatives.

The primary contribution of this research lies in positioning *kolintang* not merely as a cultural heritage that requires preservation, but as an integral component of contemporary liturgical practice within the context of Protestant churches in Indonesia. This study enriches the literature on *contextual liturgy* and culturally grounded ministry, offering a qualitative approach that emphasizes the lived experiences, perceptions, and social dynamics of congregants in shaping worship practices that resonate with their context. Furthermore, the study opens space for the formulation of a locally grounded *musical theology* that integrates traditional art as a legitimate and meaningful expression of Christian faith.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. Its focus on a single congregation (GMIM Nazaret Matani) limits the generalizability of the findings to other GMIM churches or Christian communities in Indonesia. In addition, constraints in time and resources restricted deeper exploration into theological and musical dimensions from a technical perspective. Future research should therefore expand the geographical scope of study, involve a wider range of participants across congregations, and incorporate interdisciplinary approaches from musicology and liturgical theology. Such efforts would allow a more comprehensive understanding of the role of traditional music in Christian worship and offer greater contributions to the ongoing transformation of church ministry in Indonesia.

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