

Literature Review: Elements of Place Attachment in Supporting the Preservation of Traditional Houses

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ABSTRACT

Traditional houses are significant cultural symbols embodying a community's identity, history, and values. However, their preservation is increasingly threatened by modernization, shifting societal values, and a preference for contemporary housing, risking the loss of important cultural heritage. This study aims to create a conceptual framework by reviewing literature on place attachment and its essential role in the preservation of traditional houses. Employing a systematic literature review method, this research analyzes empirical studies, primarily from Indonesia, that explore the relationship between people and their living environments. The approach involves identifying and synthesizing relevant research articles to trace the evolution of place attachment concepts. The review identifies that the preservation of traditional houses is driven by four key elements of place attachment: place identity (connection to history and culture), place affect (emotional attachment), place dependence (support for daily life and culture), and place social bonding (strengthening community ties). The findings highlight that effective preservation strategies must extend beyond physical restoration to reinforce the emotional and social bonds communities share with their traditional homes. This conceptual framework underscores the need for holistic approaches that integrate these attachment elements to ensure the continuity of cultural heritage.

KEYWORDS

Place Attachment, Preservation, Traditional House, Cultural Heritage



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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a vast archipelagic nation, holds rich and highly valuable cultural and traditional heritage that reflects the identity and diversity of its people across various regions. Spanning thousands of islands and multiple ethnic groups, Indonesia reveals unique cultural practices, identities, and indigenous knowledge throughout its regions (Polhaupessy, Soesanto, & Maharani, 2025). Serving as a powerful symbol of social values, ancestral traditions, and communal identity, the traditional house is one of the most tangible expressions of this cultural wealth, going beyond just being a living space (Aristana et al., 2024). These traditional buildings embody ancestral knowledge inherited through generations and play a vital role in preserving cultural stories and local wisdom (Sari et al., 2024).

Despite their cultural significance, traditional houses are increasingly being abandoned in favor of modern housing, which is often perceived as more practical and aligned with contemporary lifestyles (Putri et al., 2022). This transition has led to a decline in the recognition and understanding of traditional houses, putting their preservation at risk. As these dwellings

disappear, so too does the cultural knowledge, symbolism, and meanings embedded within them.

Comparative analysis reveals significant variations in traditional house preservation approaches globally. European heritage conservation has traditionally emphasized legal frameworks and institutional preservation mechanisms, as demonstrated by UNESCO World Heritage Site management strategies across countries like Germany and France. In contrast, Asian approaches, particularly in Japan and China, have focused more heavily on intergenerational transmission of traditional building techniques and community-based preservation practices. Indonesian traditional house preservation faces unique challenges that differ from both European institutional models and East Asian community-centered approaches, creating a distinct research context that requires localized theoretical frameworks.

International studies on place attachment in heritage conservation provide important comparative insights. Research from rural communities in Ireland (O'Neill & Hubbard, 2021) demonstrates how emotional connections to traditional cottages drive preservation efforts, while studies from traditional villages in Greece (Papadopoulos & Kizos, 2018) reveal how social bonding maintains vernacular architecture. However, these European contexts operate within different regulatory environments and cultural frameworks compared to Indonesian traditional houses. Similarly, research from traditional housing preservation in Thailand (Charoensuk, 2019) and Malaysia (Rahman et al., 2020) shows some parallels to Indonesian contexts but differs in terms of governmental support mechanisms and community structure. This comparative analysis reveals a significant research gap: while international studies provide valuable theoretical foundations, limited research has examined how place attachment theory specifically applies to Indonesian traditional house preservation contexts, which operate within unique cultural, economic, and regulatory frameworks.

This condition underscores the pressing need for preservation approaches that not only focus on physical maintenance but also address the emotional, intellectual, and symbolic aspects of cultural heritage. One such strategy involves the application of the concept of place attachment, which offers a comprehensive lens through which to understand the human-place relationship, particularly in the context of heritage conservation (Athia et al., 2024).

Place attachment refers to the emotional and psychological bonds that individuals develop with specific places. First developed through attachment theory, which focused on the emotional connections formed between a child and their primary caregiver (Bowlby, 1969), the concept was later expanded to include the emotional bonds people form with meaningful places. This relationship develops over time and is influenced by social, cultural, and emotional factors. Place attachment consists of three key elements: emotions (affect), behavioral intentions (conation), and beliefs or meanings (cognition) (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Findings reveal that place attachment is a multifaceted concept comprising individual characteristics, psychological processes, and spatial dimensions (Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Darmawan et al., 2025).

In this context, traditional houses should not be seen merely as physical spaces but as places filled with cultural memory, emotional resonance, and symbolic value. The relationships established with such places generate a sense of pride, responsibility, and connection, which are key to successful, enduring preservation efforts. A deep connection to these places may foster attitudes and behaviors that contribute positively to their sustainability.

Therefore, examining place attachment in relation to traditional houses is crucial for identifying the key elements that play a role in their preservation. Through a literature-based approach, this study aims to provide insights into how place attachment can serve as a strategic framework for cultural conservation. This research explicitly addresses the gap between international place attachment theory and Indonesian traditional house preservation practices, providing a novel theoretical framework specifically adapted to Indonesian cultural contexts. Ultimately, by reinforcing the connection between people and place, it is possible to ensure that the values, identity, and continuity of traditional architectural heritage endure amid the dynamics of modernization and cultural change.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a narrative literature review methodology with systematic analytical components to ensure methodological rigor and comprehensive coverage of relevant research. The review process was conducted through systematic database searches including Scopus, Web of Science, and Indonesian academic databases (*SINTA*, *GARUDA*) covering publications from 2008-2024. Key search terms included combinations of "place attachment," "traditional houses," "heritage preservation," "Indonesian architecture," and "cultural conservation" in both English and Indonesian languages. Selection criteria included peer-reviewed articles, empirical studies, and theoretical papers specifically addressing place attachment in residential or heritage contexts within Indonesia and comparable developing nations.

This study's literature review is designed to create a conceptual framework that bridges both past and current research on place attachment, underscoring its essential role in the preservation of traditional houses. Adopting a systematic approach, this review seeks to explore the evolution of concepts, dimensions, and indicators of place attachment by carefully analyzing a range of relevant sources. According to Randolph (2009), the literature review method uses a structured approach to analyze the data. The process involves searching for and analyzing original empirical research articles that present the results of actual observations or experiments and typically include an abstract, introduction, methodology, results, and discussion.

The analysis employed thematic synthesis methodology, where studies were categorized by research methodology (qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods), geographical focus, and theoretical framework applied. Each selected study was critically evaluated for its contribution to understanding place attachment in Indonesian contexts, with particular attention to methodological quality, theoretical depth, and practical implications for traditional house preservation. The synthesis process involved identifying recurring themes, methodological patterns, and theoretical tensions across the literature to develop an integrated conceptual framework.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The notion of place attachment has been widely analyzed in numerous studies, especially those investigating the emotional ties between individuals and places that carry substantial significance in their lives. In the context of traditional houses, place attachment not only reflects physical attachment to the building but also represents identity, cultural values, and the

social connections embedded within. To gain a deeper understanding of the existing perspectives, the following table presents a literature review summarizing previous studies on place attachment in Indonesian residential settings.

Table 1. Literature Review on Place Attachment in Residential Areas in Indonesia

Title	Methods	Research Findings
Community Attachment: A Review of Local Sentiment in the Settlement Process (Pramono, 2008)	Qualitative	Social traditions within a community shape a well-rounded lifestyle, deepening the emotional connection between residents and their homes. Feelings of satisfaction with housing, emotional connections (place attachment), and a strong sense of identity with the space reflect one's attachment to their environment. These factors collectively nurture social cohesion and contribute to the enduring sustainability of the community's environment.
Community Attachment in the Transformation of Residential Building Design Around the Chinatown Area (Tutuko, 2010)	Qualitative	Modifications to building facades, interior space arrangements, and exterior layouts were carried out as forms of adaptation. These changes represent preparation for supporting future business activities, in which the house is perceived as part of an economic system. In this context, Chinese culture serves as a reference in assessing favorable factors for the residential environment, becoming a key consideration in decision-making processes.
Study of Place Attachment in the Tambak Bayan Tengah Chinatown Settlement, Surabaya City (Putra, 2016)	Qualitative	Place attachment is influenced by kinship factors, such as strong family ties, as well as the strategic location of the settlement, which is close to the centers of activity like markets and workplaces.
Development of Residential Areas on Riverbanks in Kampung Melayu Based on Place Attachment Theory (Lugan & Santoni, 2018)	Qualitative	The development of the riverside residential area commences with the establishment of landmarks, progressing to enhancements in accessibility, the addition of amenities, and the creation of transportation routes leading to the riverbank. Furthermore, the orientation of the buildings was adjusted to face the river. Commercial elements are integrated with residential areas, with street furniture provided around the commercial zones and along the riverbank. Green corridors and lighting are incorporated along the

Title	Methods	Research Findings
		circulation paths, while the riverbank area is equipped with an interplay pad. The physical form of this concept adopts local cultural elements such as linear public spaces, the use of gabled roofs, and a two-story building composition.
The Influence of Place Attachment Factors on the Habitat Adaptation Process in Petemon Settlement, Surabaya (Tribhuwaneswari et al., 2019)	Qualitative	The identified place attachment factors in the study area include physical, social, cultural, individual, experiential, social facilities, and satisfaction with a place.
<i>The Dwellers' Attachment to Joglo Houses in Kotagede</i> (Candra et al., 2020)	Quantitative	The individual and place dimensions have a positive impact on each aspect of the psychological process dimension; however, not all dimensions show a significant influence, and the impact of each dimension varies. The evaluation of this model indicates that it has a high capacity to explain the empirical conditions of residents' attachment to their Joglo houses.
Place attachment in supporting the preservation of religious historical built environment (Wahyudie et al. 2021)	Qualitative	The findings reveal an opportunity to apply place attachment theory toward the conservation of historic religious architecture. A comprehensive outcome can be achieved by integrating its four dimensions: place identity, place dependence, place affect, and social bonding.
Characteristics of Housing Environment Based on Adaptive and Responsive Space Attachment in Mandailing. (Nuraini & Suprayitno, 2021)	Mix Methods	The characteristics of the housing design based on the space attachment, which are adaptive and responsive, are reflected in: 1. Readability Aspect (ease of recognizing a place), 2. Diversity Element (variation and differences in spaces for activities), 3. Temporal Aspect (temporal spaces), and 4. Setting of Place (aligned with the environmental conditions or contours). These four attributes underscore the distinctive qualities of a space attached housing environment, illustrating how Mandailing's rural homes are anchored not just to a physical location but also to a

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		deeper, intangible and abstract notion of space.
Place Attachment in the Urban Village of Semarang: A Case Study of Kampung Batik Semarang Timur (Sonaesti et al., 2022)	Qualitative	The process of place formation occurs through physical elements, activities, and functions, which are influenced by the development of latent activities. The identity of a place is built from both its physical and non-physical aspects. Dependence on a place is reflected in feelings of ownership, safety, pride, memories, a sense of being at home, and the desire to preserve the place. Several factors that influence this include the fulfillment of public space needs, cultural, historical, and strategic location, economic factors, available facilities, and physical conditions.
Place Attachment in Kampung Heritage Kajoetangan (Laoli et al., 2022)	Quantitative	The place attachment of the residents of the Kampung Heritage Kajoetangan is influenced by 12 factors, namely: memories/nostalgia about the place, the history of the place, birthplace and continuity (length of residence), the place providing facilities for activities and meeting the needs of those activities, daily activities with others, seasonal activities with others, the availability of natural surroundings, and satisfaction with the natural environment. Moreover, the inhabitants of Kampung Heritage Kajoetangan demonstrate a moderate degree of place attachment, indicating that they maintain a notable affinity for their heritage village.
Factors Influencing Place Attachment of Residents in the Slum Settlement of RW 04, Kebon Manggis Village, East Jakarta (Ananta et al., 2023)	Quantitative	Analyses revealed that both proximity and affordability significantly influenced place attachment among residents of RW 04, Kebon Manggis Village, with affordability emerging as the predominant determinant. These findings suggest that, in relocation planning, local authorities should rigorously account for housing cost affordability as well as access to essential services.
Identifying Habitat Selection Concept as Results of Place Attachment Phenomenon in Kampung Keputran , Surabaya	Qualitative	The degree of place attachment in Kampung Keputran is demonstrated by its swift development, which nonetheless preserves the area's unique character. There are six factors of place attachment that influence

Title	Methods	Research Findings
(Tribhuwaneswari & Darmadi, 2024)		settlement patterns, covering cultural, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of the community. This impact can be observed in the design of the residences as well as their broader environmental context.

The table summarizes various studies examining community and place attachment, particularly within residential settings across different regions in Indonesia. These studies employ qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches, depending on the research objectives and the ways in which they aim to understand people's emotional and social connections to their living spaces.

Critical synthesis of these studies reveals several important methodological and theoretical tensions that warrant discussion. First, there exists a notable divide between qualitative and quantitative approaches in place attachment research. Qualitative studies (Tutuko, 2010; Lugan & Santoni, 2018) provide rich contextual understanding of how cultural practices and social traditions shape emotional connections to place, but often lack the statistical validation needed for broader generalizability. Conversely, quantitative studies (Candra et al., 2020; Laoli et al., 2022; Ananta et al., 2023) offer measurable factors and statistical relationships but may oversimplify the complex, culturally embedded nature of place attachment in Indonesian contexts.

Second, urban versus rural contexts present different dynamics in place attachment formation. Studies focusing on urban heritage villages (Sonaesti et al., 2022; Tribhuwaneswari & Darmadi, 2024) emphasize adaptation and resilience in face of development pressures, while rural studies (Nuraini & Suprayitno, 2021) highlight stronger connections to natural environments and traditional practices. This urban-rural divide suggests that place attachment mechanisms may operate differently across settlement types, with implications for developing context-specific preservation strategies.

Third, there remains an unresolved theoretical issue regarding the relative importance of the four place attachment dimensions. While most studies identify place identity, place affect, place dependence, and social bonding as key elements, their relative influence and interaction patterns vary significantly across different studies and contexts. This inconsistency suggests either methodological limitations in current research or genuine contextual variations that require more nuanced theoretical frameworks.

The majority of research adopts a qualitative methodology, concentrating on delving into personal experiences, cultural practices, and the emotional connections that individuals and communities establish with their living environments. For example, Pramono (2008) highlighted that social traditions within a community foster a balanced lifestyle, strengthening emotional bonds between residents and their homes, which in turn enhances housing satisfaction, place attachment, and social cohesion, contributing to environmental sustainability. Other studies, such as those by Tutuko (2010) and Putra (2016), reveal that place attachment is influenced by building adaptations, economic activities, and strong kinship ties. Lugan & Santoni (2018) further emphasized the role of physical design elements such as

accessibility, landmarks, and the integration of local culture in shaping riverbank residential areas.

Studies that use a quantitative approach aim to measure and analyze the specific factors that influence place attachment statistically. For instance, Candra et al. (2020) found that the individual and place dimensions positively impact each aspect of the psychological process dimension. Wahyudie et al. (2021) the results indicate that place attachment theory, through its components of identity, dependence, affect, and social bonding. Ananta et al. (2023) identified that proximity and affordability significantly influence attachment in a slum settlement in East Jakarta, underlining the importance of economic considerations in housing policies and relocation efforts.

Nuraini & Suprayitno (2021), using a mixed methods approach, highlighted that attachment to space goes beyond physical aspects. It includes abstract and intangible factors such as the readability of the environment, spatial diversity, temporality, and alignment with the natural surroundings.

Despite these methodological advances, several theoretical advancements remain underexplored. Current research predominantly treats the four dimensions of place attachment as independent variables rather than examining their synergistic interactions. For traditional house preservation specifically, understanding how place identity reinforces place affect, or how social bonding influences place dependence, could provide more effective preservation strategies. Additionally, most studies focus on existing attachments rather than examining how place attachment can be cultivated or strengthened through targeted intervention strategies.

Traditional homes go beyond simple shelters to stand as potent emblems of a place's identity. They embody the community's heritage, customs, and values, serving as both visual and symbolic embodiments of ancestral traditions. Their architectural design and orientation often align with the natural environment, reinforcing their cultural significance and deepening the community's identification with these spaces.

In addition to their symbolic importance, traditional houses nurture deep emotional connections, often referred to as place affect. These attachments arise from shared memories, family interactions, and communal gatherings that unfold within the home. As central locations for family gatherings and cultural rituals, they become embedded in the emotional lives of residents, inspiring efforts to preserve them for future generations.

Regarding place dependence, traditional houses are crucial for sustaining the daily routines of community members. Beyond serving as residences, they support local customs, lifestyles, and economic pursuits. By fulfilling both practical and cultural functions, these homes are indispensable to preserving the community's way of life and reinforcing the desire to protect them.

Finally, traditional houses encourage place social bonding by serving as spaces where relationships are built, maintained, and celebrated. By hosting communal gatherings and family celebrations, these homes cultivate feelings of belonging and shared responsibility. This social cohesion further motivates residents to protect and sustain their traditional homes as important cultural assets.

CONCLUSION

This narrative literature review systematically builds a conceptual framework that

integrates historical and contemporary research on place attachment by examining its evolving concepts, dimensions, and indicators to highlight its vital role in the preservation of traditional houses.

The preservation of traditional houses is shaped by four key elements of place attachment: place identity (connection to history and culture), place affect (emotional attachment), place dependence (supporting daily life and culture), and place social bonding (strengthening community ties), making them vital to sustaining communal identity and continuity. However, the critical synthesis reveals important tensions between qualitative and quantitative research approaches, variations between urban and rural contexts, and unresolved questions about the interaction patterns among the four place attachment dimensions. Acknowledging these factors informs more comprehensive preservation approaches, which must extend beyond mere physical restoration to also reinforce the emotional and social bonds that communities share with their homes.

Future research should address these methodological and theoretical gaps by developing mixed-method studies that can capture both the statistical relationships and cultural nuances of place attachment in Indonesian contexts. Additionally, intervention studies examining how place attachment can be strengthened through specific preservation strategies would provide valuable practical guidance for heritage conservation practitioners and policymakers seeking to develop culturally sensitive and effective traditional house preservation programs.

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