

Humor, Relational Bonds, And Cultural Sustainability: Interpersonal Communication in the Bagesa Tradition of Sumbawa

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ABSTRAKSI

Abstrak : Penelitian ini bertujuan mensintesis kajian mengenai fungsi humor dalam komunikasi interpersonal dan relevansinya bagi Bagesa Sumbawa. Kajian literatur kualitatif ini menghubungkan penelitian humor dengan kajian tradisi lisan. Delapan studi yang tercantum dalam tabel literatur dipetakan menurut konteks, metode, temuan, dan batas penerapannya; jumlah tersebut bukan hasil seleksi sistematis yang telah terdokumentasi. Literatur pendidikan mengaitkan humor dengan kedekatan dan interaksi, sedangkan penelitian lintas budaya menunjukkan bahwa respons terhadap humor bergantung pada konteks dan jarak sosial. Kajian lawas dan Sakeco menyediakan konteks budaya, tetapi tidak membuktikan efek humor dalam Bagesa. Hubungan humor dengan kedekatan interpersonal dan keberlanjutan Bagesa dirumuskan sebagai proposisi konseptual yang memerlukan pengujian. Keberlanjutan budaya dipahami sebagai keberlangsungan praktik dan pewarisan antargenerasi, termasuk penggunaan bahasa dan nilai yang bermakna bagi komunitas. Keterbatasan kajian meliputi belum tersedianya dokumentasi pencarian, seleksi, dan penilaian kualitas yang dapat direplikasi serta terbatasnya bukti langsung tentang Bagesa.

Abstract: This study synthesizes literature on the interpersonal functions of humor and their relevance to Bagesa in Sumbawa. A qualitative literature review connects humor research with studies of oral traditions. The eight studies listed in the literature table are mapped by context, method, findings, and limits of application; this number is not a documented systematic selection outcome. Educational studies associate humor with closeness and interaction, while cross-cultural research shows that responses depend on context and social distance. Studies of lawas and Sakeco provide cultural context but do not demonstrate the effects of humor in Bagesa. Links between humor, interpersonal closeness, and Bagesa's sustainability are formulated as conceptual propositions requiring investigation. Cultural sustainability refers to continued practice and intergenerational transmission, including locally meaningful language and values. Limitations include the absence of reproducible search, selection, and quality-appraisal records and limited direct evidence concerning Bagesa.

I. Introduction

Humor is a form of communication that not only produces laughter but also serves social, cognitive, emotional, and relational functions (Aulia et al., 2025). In interpersonal communication, humor functions to build closeness, ease the atmosphere, reduce tension, and maintain relationships between communicators and recipients. Studies of humor in interpersonal communication show that humor can have both positive and negative consequences depending on its form, context, timing, and the relationship between the parties involved. Thus, humor cannot be understood merely as a stimulus that is funny, but rather as a communicative act that carries social purposes and meanings (Aditriyanto et al., 2026).

The meaning of humor is strongly influenced by cultural context because something considered funny in one community may not be perceived in the same way by another community (Kurniawan, 2024). Cao et al. (2023) demonstrate that social distance affects humor differently across cultural groups. Research on cross-cultural digital politeness provides a related discussion of communication norms, rather than direct evidence about humor in Bagesa (Lailiyah et al., 2025). In oral traditions, examining language, stories, and inherited interaction patterns can therefore help situate humor within its cultural context.

According to Suyasa (2026), oral traditions such as *lawas* and *Sakeco* in Sumbawa society demonstrate the use of figurative language, cultural symbols, entertainment, message delivery, and social expression that have developed within community life. Therefore, humor in local traditions needs to be understood based on the cultural context of the communities that own them. This indicates that humor in oral traditions does not merely function as entertainment but also forms part of how communities convey messages and build social interaction (Rif'an et al., 2026).

Studies in educational settings associate humor with relational communication, although their methods and contexts differ. Prasetya et al. (2024), using interviews with teachers and lecturers, describe bonding and coping functions in online instruction. Widiyastuti and Hutagaol (2023), using a focus group with lecturers, emphasize affective, cohesive, and interactive elements alongside difficulties in reading online responses. These context-specific accounts support examining humor as an interactional practice; they do not establish that laughter necessarily creates social bonds in every setting.

Research on Sumbawa oral traditions provides evidence about symbolic expression and cultural communication. Fajrin and Suryaman (2019) examine poetic structure and cultural meanings in *lawas*, while Hermansyah and Nurjadin (2024) discuss *Sakeco*'s aesthetic, moral, and social values and its potential integration into local-content education. By comparison, Sahidin Ode et al. (2025) address metaphor and symbolism in the Meagoliwu ritual of the Koroni community. That study belongs to a different cultural setting and is not evidence about Sumbawa *lawas* or Bagesa.

Two strands of literature inform this review: studies of humor in interpersonal communication and studies of Sumbawa oral traditions. Bagesa refers here to joking through the exchange of amusing stories and news within a social group, following Yetti's (2015, p. 506) account, which draws on Zulkarnaen (2011). *Lawas* is a form of oral poetry, while *Sakeco* is a performance tradition associated with *lawas*. They provide related cultural contexts but are not treated as synonyms for Bagesa. The evidence reviewed does not establish how specific Bagesa interactions produce lasting relational or cultural outcomes.

Existing studies on Sumbawa emphasize *lawas*, *Sakeco*, literary structures, social functions, and cultural conservation (Hermansyah & Nurjadin, 2024). This study brings these discussions into dialogue with humor and interpersonal communication research to develop a conceptual account of Bagesa. Its aim is to map the functions attributed to humor, compare their contextual limits, and identify propositions relevant to interpersonal closeness and cultural sustainability. The contribution is a basis for further investigation and documentation, rather than a demonstration of causal effects within Bagesa.

II. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative literature review to examine three questions: (1) What interpersonal functions of humor are reported in the literature? (2) How do studies of Sumbawa oral traditions inform the interpretation of Bagesa? (3) What evidence and limitations support proposed links between humor and cultural sustainability? The search services reported for the review are Google Scholar, DOAJ, and Scopus, alongside Elicit, Scite.ai, and SciSpace. Google Scholar, DOAJ, and Scopus provide literature discovery or indexing functions; the latter services are research-assistance tools and are not treated as independent evidence. The articles themselves remain the units of interpretation.

The review does not involve new field data. The discussion is organized around humor as interpersonal communication, humor in Sumbawa oral traditions, and cultural transmission. Table 1 summarizes eight studies listed in the manuscript; other references provide theoretical or contextual support, including Yetti (2015) for the definition of Bagesa. Comparisons distinguish each study's setting, reported findings, and limits of application to Bagesa. A reproducible search and selection record and a formal quality-appraisal record are not available in the present report. Consequently, the review does not claim exhaustive coverage, a verified systematic selection process, or pooled effect estimates. Its conclusions are interpretive and remain subject to selection bias and differences between the source studies.

III. Results And Discussion

Table 1 summarizes the eight studies presented in the original literature table. It is a descriptive evidence map, not a count of studies passing a documented systematic screening process. The table separates research settings and methods from reported findings and limitations of applying those findings to Bagesa. The limitations stated here concern transferability in this review and are not necessarily limitations identified by the source authors. Additional references support definitions, contextual comparisons, or specific arguments in the discussion. None of the eight studies directly establishes the effect of humor on the long-term sustainability of Bagesa.

Table 1. Literature Review

No	Author	Focus, method and context	Findings and limits of application
1	Prasetya, H., Wahdiyati, D., & Yunitasari. (2024).	Humor and immediacy in online teaching. Descriptive qualitative interviews with teachers and lecturers.	Reports bonding and coping humor and an affiliative orientation. Limit: educators' accounts in online teaching do not establish effects in Bagesa.
2	Umar, N. F., Pandang, A., & Fitri, Q. (2024)	Humor style, positive communication, and interpersonal skills. Correlational questionnaire study of 389 students in three Sulawesi provinces.	Reports associations with interpersonal skills, with a stronger contribution from positive communication. Limit: correlational student data do not demonstrate causation or Bagesa outcomes.
3	Widiyastuti, N., & Hutagaol, O. D. (2023).	Humor in synchronous online teaching during Covid-19. Qualitative case study using a focus group with 15 lecturers.	Identifies affective, cohesive, and interactive elements, alongside difficulties interpreting online responses. Limit: lecturers' perspectives and mediated teaching context.
4	Cao, Y., Hou, Y., Dong, Z., & Ji, L. (2023)	Culture, social distance, and humor. Four studies, including Chinese–American comparisons and a self-construal manipulation.	Social-distance effects differed by cultural group and self-construal. Limit: joke tasks in these populations do not directly represent Bagesa.
5	Natasari, N., & Marhandra, R. (2021)	Communication in Lawas Pamuji. Uses Lasswell's communication model and Lord's oral-tradition framework in the Sumbawa context.	Reports communication linked to changes in attitudes and knowledge. Limit: Lawas Pamuji is not Bagesa; sampling and data-collection details require full-text confirmation.
6	Fajrin, M., & Suryaman, M. (2019).	Poetic structure of Kusaremen Lawas Sia by Sanapiah Amin. Semiotic analysis of the lawas collection.	Identifies physical and inner poetic structures and cultural meanings. Limit: textual interpretation does not measure humor reception or interpersonal outcomes.
7	Suyasa, I. M. (2025).	Sakeco as public expression in Sumbawa. Literature study and document analysis.	Interprets Sakeco as a space for criticism, identity, solidarity, and marginalized voices. Limit: interpretive evidence about Sakeco, not measured effects in Bagesa.
8	Suyasa, I. M. (2026)	Sakeco, local genius, and conservation of Sumbawa lawas. Method and sample require confirmation from the full article.	The manuscript identifies relevance to cultural conservation. Specific findings remain to be verified; this entry is not used as direct evidence of Bagesa's sustainability.

A. Humor as an Interpersonal Communication Strategy

1) Humor as a Means of Building Interpersonal Closeness

Humor plays an important role in creating a more open interactional atmosphere and building interpersonal relationships. Shah Firman (2026), in discussing digital memes and humor, suggests that humor can serve as a communication instrument that increases engagement and enhances

interaction experiences when used appropriately. Therefore, the success of humor in communication is strongly influenced by how recipients understand and interpret the message according to its context (Alda et al., 2025). This indicates that the use of humor needs to consider the recipient's cultural background and experiences so that the message can be understood according to the communicator's intended meaning.

Prasetya et al. (2024) discuss humor as a means of fostering togetherness in online teaching. Cao et al. (2023), by contrast, examine how culture and social distance shape humor appreciation, sharing, and production. Their findings indicate that closeness does not uniformly increase humor appreciation across cultural groups. These studies address different relational processes: using humor to support interaction and the conditions under which humor is perceived as amusing. Neither establishes that laughter alone indicates a stronger relationship.

Together, these studies suggest that humor's relational significance depends on how it is delivered and interpreted. Educational interviews describe perceived benefits, whereas cross-cultural comparisons examine conditions affecting humor responses. Neither type of evidence directly measures Bagesa interactions. Applied to Bagesa, the resulting proposition is that joking may support familiarity when participants share interpretive expectations; this requires observation of actual exchanges, including disagreement, silence, or discomfort as well as laughter.

2) Humor, Communication Styles, and Relationship Management

Research on humor styles shows that not all forms of humor have the same interpersonal consequences. Tanadi and Wijaya (2023) discuss four humor styles: affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating. Affiliative humor tends to be relationship-oriented, whereas aggressive humor may be associated with forms of communication that can negatively affect relationships (Tanadi & Wijaya, 2023). This demonstrates the importance of distinguishing the functions of humor from merely identifying the presence of humor in conversation.

Pratiwi Rachma and Salsabilla Ayu (2025) examine violations of conversational principles in a youth humor book, providing a textual rather than a relational-outcome perspective. Umar et al. (2024) report associations between humor style, positive communication, and interpersonal skills among university students. Their correlational design does not establish that humor causes improved relationships. These different approaches suggest distinguishing message construction, participant characteristics, and recipients' responses when interpreting humor.

For Bagesa, these findings suggest examining humor style, communicative intention, recipient response, and cultural norms together. A joke intended to create familiarity may instead embarrass its target or exclude someone who does not share the reference. These are analytical possibilities to investigate, not observed outcomes in the present review. Assessing relational consequences therefore requires participants' accounts and interactional evidence rather than relying only on the speaker's intention or the presence of laughter.

B. Humor in Sumbawa Oral Traditions

1) Humor as an Expression of Cultural Values and Identity

Humor interpretation requires attention to cultural and communicative context. Almira et al. (2026) discuss humor caricatures in intercultural Indonesian-language learning for foreign speakers (BIPA); their topic should not be represented as a general systematic review of cultural differences in humor. Kurniawan (2024) addresses contextual challenges in humor translation. Both offer contextual considerations, but neither provides direct evidence about Bagesa interactions.

Cao et al. (2023) found a social-distance effect among Chinese participants that was weak or absent among American participants in their comparative studies. This difference cautions against assuming that humor always works better between socially close people. For Bagesa, cultural norms and the relationships among participants are therefore questions for investigation, rather than conditions whose effects can be inferred directly from another population.

Fajrin and Suryaman (2019) analyze the physical and inner structures of *lawas*, including figurative language, imagery, tone, and themes. Their literary analysis connects textual form with cultural meaning. It does not establish that every figurative expression is humorous or measure audience responses. For the present review, *lawas* provides contextual evidence about symbolic expression; a claim about humor in Bagesa additionally requires identifying the humorous utterance and how participants interpret it.

2) *Humor in Sumbawa Oral Traditions*

Studies of Sumbawa oral traditions show that traditional forms of communication have diverse functions. Natasari and Marhandra (2021) explain that *lawas Pamuji* is a form of communication used to convey messages to the community while building awareness of values related to the social and cultural life of the Sumbawa community. The study also places communication as an important aspect of maintaining the continuity of Sumbawa oral traditions, particularly in transmitting messages, cultural values, and local knowledge from one generation to the next.

Suyasa (2026) examines *Sakeco* in relation to local genius and the conservation of *lawas*. The complementary study by Hermansyah and Nurjadin (2024) identifies language, musicality, symbolism, performance, and emotional expression as relevant to *Sakeco*'s cultural and educational value. These studies place oral expression within a broader cultural practice. However, the existence of entertainment and moral messages in *Sakeco* does not by itself demonstrate the interpersonal effects of humor in Bagesa.

The studies contribute different kinds of evidence: *lawas* research interprets textual or communicative meanings, while *Sakeco* studies address performance, educational potential, or public expression. Their shared attention to oral communication supports a contextual comparison, but differences in genre and method limit direct transfer. Bagesa remains the proposed site for testing how joking organizes interaction; effects on closeness and cultural transmission cannot be established by substituting findings from *lawas* or *Sakeco*.

C. *Humor, Tradition Transmission, and Cultural Sustainability*

1) *Humor as a Mechanism of Cultural Transmission*

Discussions of oral-tradition revitalization emphasize preservation amid social change (Achmad et al., 2025). Syarifah (2026) examines oral traditions and cultural inheritance among the Bugis community in Rampa Cengal. This is a cross-cultural comparison, not a study of West Sumbawa folklore. It draws attention to the question of transmission, but the form and conditions of inheritance in Bagesa require evidence from its own community.

Fajrin and Suryaman (2019) show how the structure of a *lawas* collection can be examined in relation to cultural meaning. Such textual documentation preserves material for interpretation, but it does not measure whether younger generations continue using the tradition. A distinction is therefore necessary between preserving a text and sustaining its social practice. The latter requires evidence of participation, learning, and continued use within the community.

The literature supports considering both documentation and communicative practice when discussing cultural transmission. The suggestion that humor makes Bagesa easier to remember or retell is a conceptual proposition, not an outcome measured by this review. Cultural sustainability is used here to mean the continued practice and intergenerational transmission of a tradition with locally meaningful language and values. Proposed indicators for future research include younger participants' involvement, opportunities to learn from experienced speakers, continued use of *Samawa*, and repeated community practice. No values for these indicators are reported here.

2) *Humor as a Space for Expression and Adaptation of Tradition*

Suyasa (2025), through literature study and document analysis, interprets *Sakeco* as a space for public expression, social criticism, and marginalized voices. This contributes an account of the social meanings of performance rather than a measured effect of humor on audiences. It provides a

basis for asking whether joking in Bagesa likewise permits indirect criticism, while leaving that relationship open to empirical investigation.

Setyawati et al. (2026) analyze humor in A Mild cigarette advertisements and identify implicature-based strategies for constructing indirect and persuasive meanings. The evidence concerns advertising texts, not cross-cultural conversation. Kurniawan (2024), in discussing humor translation, emphasizes the importance of context. Together, these perspectives suggest examining both how an indirect message is constructed and how it is understood; humorous wording alone does not establish acceptance by its recipients.

For Bagesa, humor can therefore be proposed as a possible resource for adapting expression to changing social circumstances. Whether this supports cultural continuity depends on participation, transmission, and the community's interpretation of the practice. Adaptation could sustain engagement, but changes in language or context could also weaken shared meaning. The present literature does not determine which outcome occurs in Bagesa, so this relationship remains a proposition for further research.

IV. Conclusion

The literature reviewed supports examining humor as a context-dependent communicative practice with relational and expressive functions. Studies of online teaching report perceived benefits for interaction, while cross-cultural research shows that responses to humor vary with social distance and cultural context. These findings do not establish that humor invariably reduces social distance or improves relationships. Differences in research design and setting limit the strength and transferability of the conclusions.

Research on lawas and Sakeco provides cultural context for interpreting oral expression in Sumbawa. Bagesa, understood here as joking through shared amusing stories and news, is related to this broader oral environment but is not equivalent to either tradition. The proposed links between humor, interpersonal closeness, and cultural sustainability in Bagesa are conceptual inferences. Direct evidence is still needed to determine how participants experience these exchanges and whether they support continued practice or intergenerational transmission.

The main limitations are the lack of a reproducible search and selection record, the absence of a documented formal quality appraisal, and the limited direct evidence concerning Bagesa interactions. Future research should use communication ethnography to document joking exchanges, participants' responses, and culturally acceptable forms of humor. Research on continuity should also examine participation across generations, learning opportunities, use of Samawa, and repeated practice. Such evidence is needed before claiming that humor contributes to the sustainability of Bagesa.

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