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## Sand Bed as Space and Place: A Cultural Perspective on The Sustainability of Tradition and Ecology

Febry Maharlika\*

Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Indonesia

Institut Seni Indonesia Bali, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Email: [febry.maharlika@email.unikom.ac.id](mailto:febry.maharlika@email.unikom.ac.id)

### ABSTRACTS

This study explains the sand mattress as a space and place in the context of culture and ecology in Kasur Pasir Village, Sumenep. Using the Yi-Fu Tuan theory, this study analyzes how the sand mattress is not only a physical element in the residential environment in Kasur Pasir Village, but also as a cultural symbol in the traditions of its people. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, focusing on one family that maintains the use of sand mattresses from generation to generation. The results of the study indicate that the sand mattress is a sustainable practice that connects tradition with ecological aspects. The results of the study indicate that the sand mattress is a sustainable practice that connects tradition with ecological aspects. Culturally, the sand mattress reflects a sense of from place and community identity, while ecologically, sand mattresses are an environmentally friendly solution because they do not require chemicals in their manufacture, do not produce industrial waste, and support the use of locally available natural materials. This study emphasizes the importance of preserving traditional practices in line with sustainable progress through cultural innovation and ecological awareness.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Cras aliquet nisi rutrum, sagittis enim id, Sand mattress is one of the unique traditions that is still practiced by the people of Kasur Pasir Village, Sumenep. Unlike beds in general, sand mattresses are made by spreading fine sand on the floor in the room or in a tub made of brick and cement with a height of about  $\pm 20$  cm which functions as a bed. The people of Kasur Pasir Village usually make sand mattresses in the bedroom, in the yard,

and in various types of stalls, both grocery stores and rice stalls. The sand mattress in the bedroom is used for sleeping and resting, while the sand mattress in the yard functions as a place to relax and gather with family, relatives, and friends. The sand mattress in the grocery store is used as a resting place for the stall owner while waiting for his merchandise, while in the rice stall, the sand mattress is used by the stall owner to rest in between the busyness of serving customers (Figure 1).



Source: Maharlika (2025)

**Fig. 1. Sand mattress in the bedroom, sand mattress in the yard, sand mattress in the shop.**

Kasur Pasir is part of the Madurese tribe, which adheres to a matrilineal population system, where after marriage, the husband resides in his wife's family home (Sa'dan, 2016). This system plays a significant role in preserving the tradition of the sand mattress, as it is passed down through the female lineage. Husbands who settle in their wife's family home gradually adapt to the customs and cultural practices that have been upheld for generations, including the use of sand mattresses as an integral part of daily life.

Hisyam (2020), states that the social nature of humans is inherent, as individuals cannot live in isolation or achieve optimal development without

interacting with others. When a group of individuals engages in continuous social interactions, a society is formed (Koentjaraningrat, 2005). In this context, the sustainability of the sand mattress tradition is closely tied to the strong kinship structure within the community. The close bonds among family members serve as a foundation for maintaining and reinforcing cultural practices, ensuring that traditions such as the sand mattress continue to be passed down from generation to generation.

Thus, the sand mattress not only serves as a place to rest but also becomes an integral part of the cultural identity preserved by the people of Kasur Pasir

Village. Its existence reflects how social interactions within a community contribute to the preservation of cultural values. As social beings, humans rely on relationships and communication with others to maintain and develop traditions. Through interactions within the family and community, cultural heritage is not only preserved but also continues to evolve in line with social dynamics, ensuring the longevity of the sand mattress tradition in local life.

Kasur Pasir Village is located on the coast of Legung Timur Beach, precisely in Legung Timur Village, Batang-Batang District, Sumenep Madura. Located near the coastline south of the settlement, most of the residents of Kasur Pasir Village work as fishermen who rely on marine products as their main livelihood. Life close to the sea and strong kinship patterns shape the way people adapt to their environment, including in the practice of utilizing sand mattresses. The use of sand mattresses not only reflects adaptation to the local environment, but also contains cultural and ecological values that are passed down from generation to generation. Its existence is not only as a functional element in a residence, but also as a symbol of identity and community attachment to its customs.

In this context, the sand dunes can be understood as space and place, as explained in the Yi-Fu Tuan theory (Tuan, 2007) regarding the relationship between humans and their environment. In the theory of space and place, space is understood as a broader and more abstract concept, while place has an emotional attachment and meaning for individuals and society, as seen from the statements of residents who proudly

stated that they gave birth on the sand dunes. The sand dunes not only function as an element of space in the house, but also have a deep meaning for the local community, namely creating a sense of place that forms identity and social togetherness. In addition, from a sustainability perspective, the sand dunes offer an environmentally friendly solution because they use natural materials without industrial processes that produce waste or pollution.

Despite its potential as a sustainable practice, modernization and lifestyle changes have led to a decline in the use of sand mattresses in some communities. Therefore, this study aims to analyze sand mattresses as a space and place in the lives of the Kasur Pasir Village community, uncover the cultural meanings and local identities associated with the use of sand mattresses, and explain the contribution of sand mattresses to sustainability, both from a social and ecological perspective. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, focusing on the experiences of the Kasur Pasir Village community who still maintain the use of sand mattresses. The results of this study are expected to provide insight into how traditional practices can contribute to cultural and ecological sustainability, while strengthening local identity amidst the challenges of modernization.

Research on sand beds has been conducted by several scholars; however, none have specifically examined sand beds from the perspective of space and place, as well as their relation to the sustainability of tradition and ecology. Previous studies, such as that of Utomo (2019), highlight sand beds as part of local wisdom that reflects a harmonious

relationship between humans and the natural environment. Meanwhile, [Mulyadi et al., \(2021\)](#) focused solely on the physical function of sand beds without exploring their role in the context of space and place.

Additionally, research by [Inayatullaili & Pinasti \(2017\)](#), discusses the efforts made by the community to preserve sand beds amid the challenges of globalization and modernization. [Fauzan \(2019\)](#) examined the origin of sand beds, the sleeping process associated with them, and the strategies employed by the residents of Legung Timur Village to maintain this tradition. Furthermore, [Nafiro, \(2023\)](#) analyzed the values of local wisdom embedded in sand beds, encompassing philosophical, health, and familial aspects.

These previous studies serve as a foundation for the development of this research. However, as [Soja, \(1996\)](#) argues, understanding space and place as part of social and cultural experience is essential. Therefore, in comparison to prior studies, this research aims to explain how sand beds function not only as social spaces but also as meaningful places with cultural and ecological significance for the communities that utilize them.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of space and place is an important aspect in understanding the relationship between humans and their environment. [Yi-Fu Tuan \(2007\)](#) in the theory of Space and Place: Perspective of Experience explains that space is an area that is abstract and has no particular meaning, while place is a space that has been given meaning through human experience and interaction. The definition of space has indeed been described by

several experts, space can be interpreted as a material substance, such as stone and wood, although space is shapeless and scattered, space is formed because of the relationships between several interconnected elements ([Ching, 1996](#)). A sand mattress in the context of space is an area whose boundaries can be felt invisibly. The boundaries of the space in question are invisible with limiting elements in the form of socio-cultural values in its society. The phenomenon of the use of this sand mattress can be analyzed as a space and place that has cultural and social value for the people of Kasur Pasir Village so that its sustainability needs to be maintained.

According to [Hall \(1997\)](#) cultural identity is formed through social practices that are passed down from generation to generation. The sand mattress as part of the tradition of the Kasur Pasir Village community is a symbol of cultural identity that strengthens relations between community members. The sustainability of this tradition is also related to the social system of the Madurese community which adheres to a matrilineal population system ([Sa'dan, 2016](#)), namely that after marriage the husband lives in the wife's family home, so that the practice of using the sand mattress is still preserved in the family environment.

Sustainability in traditional architectural and interior practices is often associated with the use of local materials and environmentally friendly construction techniques ([Vale & Vale, 1996](#)). Sand mattresses as traditional sleeping elements not only reflect the ecological adaptation of communities to coastal geographic conditions, but also constitute a low-waste practice that does not rely on modern industrial materials.



According to research on vernacular architectural textures (Oliver, 2006), the practice demonstrates how local communities utilize natural resources sustainably.

Rapoport (1969) in House Form and Culture stated that the form and function of a dwelling are greatly influenced by the physical environment and lifestyle of its people. In the context of Kasur Pasir Village, the use of sand mattresses can be categorized as part of vernacular architecture that adapts to local environmental conditions, namely coastal areas with hot air temperatures. Although the people of Kasur Pasir Village almost entirely do not use traditional architectural styles, they still maintain the sand mattresses as part of their homes. The use of sand as a bed material allows for better air circulation and provides a cooling effect for its users, thus reflecting the community's response to the local climate. In addition, the Madurese tradition that emphasizes the value of brotherhood is one factor in maintaining the culture of gathering on sand mattresses with relatives and friends.

The sustainability of tradition does not only depend on cultural heritage, but also on innovations that remain relevant today. In this case, the use of sand as the main material can be an example of sustainable practices that have been implemented by indigenous peoples of Indonesia. Although it looks simple and traditional, sand mattresses are a form of local wisdom that helps preserve the environment. According to Ardiani (2015), traditional houses generally use materials taken not far from the location where the house is built, so that when viewed from the principle of

sustainability, this saves energy sources used to transport materials to the construction site. The concept of sustainability itself is one of the important achievements in the world today, considering the extent of environmental damage caused by human activities. In the context of sand mattresses, innovation can be done through the development of a broader cultural narrative to increase appreciation for this practice while supporting environmental conservation efforts.

### 3. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to understand the sand mattress as a space and place in the context of culture and the sustainability of tradition and ecology. The case study was conducted at the home of Mrs. Kusma's family located in Kasur Pasir Village, Legung Timur Village, Batang-Batang District, Sumenep Regency, Madura, Indonesia. This village is known as one of the communities that still maintains the practice of using sand mattresses in everyday life. Data collection was carried out through direct observation and in-depth interviews with residents of the house and local residents. The researcher visited Mrs. Kusma's family home twice, namely on September 23, 2023 and January 27, 2025. To observe how the practice of using sand mattresses persists and adapts over time. The data collected were analyzed using an interpretive approach, highlighting aspects of spatiality, spatial culture, and sustainability in the practice of using sand mattresses. This analysis aims to understand how sand mattresses shape the relationship between humans, space, and the environment within the

framework of the sustainability of tradition and ecology.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Sand Mattress as a Representation of Local Culture and Identity.

According to Hillier and Hanson in Wardhana (2007), space in sociological studies can represent the process of group formation, both from an internal aspect that reflects individuals and an external aspect manifested through behavior and thought patterns. The sand mattress located in the yard has long been perceived as a social space for the people of Kasur Pasir Village, given its function as a gathering place that has been used for generations. This can be observed from the number of sand mattresses within a residential cluster, which typically consists of only one or two units, allowing for collective use within an extended family.

Based on interview results, family members often gather on the sand mattress in the yard at night. Lefebvre argues that space has different levels, ranging from the most abstract and visibly perceptible as natural space (absolute space) to more complex spaces whose meanings are socially constructed. Space is not only created by its community but also reflects the identity and existence of the group managing it. Consequently, individuals who are not part of the group may experience

alienation and a lack of connection to that space (Hendra, 2018). This phenomenon also applies to the sand mattress as a social space, where only the residents of Kasur Pasir Village recognize and utilize it as a gathering place within their social interactions.

Observation Results at Ibu Kusma's Family Home in Kasur Pasir Village, Legung Timur Village, Batang-Batang District, Sumenep, Madura, East Java show that sand mattresses not only function as a place to sleep, but also have deep cultural meaning. As a hereditary heritage, sand mattresses represent the identity of the local community and are an important part of everyday life. Ibu Kusma revealed that she was born on a sand mattress, as well as when she gave birth to her first child which also took place on a sand mattress. In addition, sand mattresses are not only used for resting, but also become the center of social activities, where family and relatives often gather on them, especially in the yard (Figure 2). As seen in the photo of Ibu Kusma's family gathering on a sand mattress, this practice is still maintained as part of everyday life. The photo shows how sand mattresses are not only a symbol of comfort, but also strengthen family ties in the community. The warmth of the interactions that occur on the sand mattress shows that this tradition is still relevant and continues to be passed down from generation to generation.



Source: Maharlika 2023 & 2025

**Fig. 2. Sand mattress in the middle yard of Mrs. Kusma's family housing cluster.**

The settlement pattern in Kasur Pasir Village applies a cluster system, including the house of Mrs. Kusma's family. This system has a yard inside, similar to the concept of the traditional Madurese house, Tanean. Lanjang, where the central yard area in the cluster functions as a gathering place for relatives. This pattern strengthens social interaction and shows the value of tharetan dhibi, Madurese culture that highly values brotherhood and togetherness. As seen in the house and building plan in Ibu Kusma's house

cluster (Figure 3), the houses in this cluster are arranged linearly with an orientation facing the central courtyard. This courtyard is a communal space used for various family activities, from gathering, resting, to carrying out traditional and religious activities. This open and interconnected spatial arrangement reflects the principle of openness in Madurese culture, where relationships between family members and neighbors remain closely connected in everyday life.

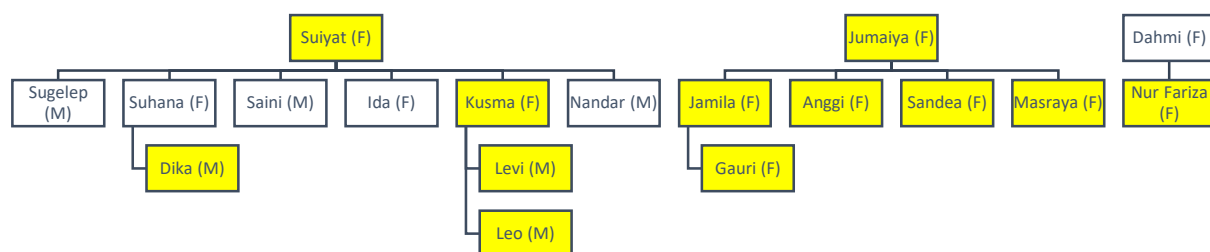


Source: Maharlika (2024)

**Fig. 3. Spatial and building layout in bu kusma family housing cluster.**

- A: Rice stall (non-permanent building)  
 B: Kiosk/shop (owner not part of the family)  
 C: Mrs. Juma'iya's kitchen (aunt from Mrs. Kusma's side)  
 D: Mrs. Kusma's female cousin's house (has been sold to someone outside the family)  
 E: Mrs. Nur Fariza's house (Mrs. Kusma's female cousin)  
 F: The sand mattress belongs to Mrs. Kusma's cousin's family.  
 G: Well, toilet, place for washing dishes and clothes  
 H: House of Mrs. Kusma and Mrs. Sandea (Mrs. Kusma's older sister)  
 I: Mrs. Suiyat's house (Mrs. Kusma's biological mother)  
 A: Mrs. Juma'iya's house (Mrs. Kusma's maternal aunt)  
 K: Mrs. Sandea's house (Mrs. Kusma's maternal aunt)

The matrilineal system applied in the culture of the Kasur Pasir Village community is one of the main factors in maintaining the sustainability of the Kasur Pasir tradition. In this system, after marriage, the daughters of local residents are given a house or room in the family cluster environment. Currently, in the Bu Kusma family cluster, the people who live there are those whose parents are cousins from *the extended family*. In Madurese culture, what is meant by *an extended family* is a family outside *the nuclear family* (nuclear family). The oldest house owners in this cluster are Bu Suiyat, Bu Jumaiya, and (the late) Bu Dahmi. The following is the Bu Kusma family scheme (Figure 4), with yellow marks indicating family members who live in this cluster.



Source: Maharlika (2025)

**Fig. 4. Mrs. Kusma's family scheme.**

Mrs. Suiyat, Mrs. Jumaiya, and Mrs. Dahmi are blood cousins. Each has a child who lives in the cluster. After getting married, the son no longer lives with the family in this cluster, while the daughter brings her husband to live with the wife's family. Based on interviews (2025), if a family there does not have a daughter, the son is allowed to bring his wife to live

with the husband's parents' family, as long as his wife is not an only child in the family.

In addition to the tradition factor passed down from generation to generation, the sand mattress reflects the concept of "sense of place", where the bedroom made of sand creates a unique spatial experience. This can be seen from



the results of the researcher's interview (Figure 5) with Mrs. Kusma's family and the documentation of other researchers. Based on direct observation and interviews, the sand mattress contains the spatial experience of the residents that has been built since childhood. Mrs. Kusma admitted that since childhood she and her siblings always played on the sand mattress. *"We used to play cooking in the sand, boiling water and things like that, if the kids now play with their cellphones, but on the sand mattress, my son Leo likes to*

*bring animals like chickens, birds to play on the sand"* . These childhood memories build a bond between the residents and the sand mattress. Mrs. Kusma admitted that she could not live in a house that did not have a sand mattress. *"I can't, miss, there must be a sand mattress"* . According to the residents, if the residents had to leave the village, they would bring supplies of sand in a container just to rub the sand on their bodies so they could sleep soundly.







Source: Maharlika (2025)


**Fig. 5. Interview activity with Mrs. Kusma's family.**

The researcher also summarized the results of interviews from electronic sources (YouTube channels) of other researchers (Table 1). Based on the interviews, the community believes that sand mattresses provide thermal comfort, especially in coastal areas of Madura which have hot temperatures. In addition, sand mattresses are also

considered to have health benefits, such as helping to reduce back pain and improving sleep quality.

**Table 1. Summary of interviews with residents of Kasur Pasir Village from various electronic sources.**

Interview with residents	Impression
<p>1</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "It has become a habit here, sleeping on a mattress is uncomfortable, it is better to sleep on the sand"</li> <li>• "There is a regular mattress but it is hot, it is never used, if it rains the room becomes hot, the sand mattress is not sticky"</li> <li>• "I gave birth in the sand, the feces were immediately thrown away, it was better than in the hospital, my first child was born in the hospital, my second child was born in the sand, it felt much better giving birth on a sand bed". (Cerita, 2023)</li> </ul>
<p>2</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "The sand mattress is cool, nice, soft"</li> <li>• "People who go to Malaysia, to Saudi Arabia bring sand supplies, they have to rub it on their bodies. The benefits are to overcome aches and pains." (Dolandolen, 2021)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "If it is black magic, then it will not enter" (Rachmayani, 2021)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "In the past, when people were tired, sleeping on the sand was more enjoyable, better than sleeping on a mattress." (CNN Indonesia, 2021)</li> </ul>

	Interview with residents	Impression
3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "The whole family loves sand, every night we sleep in the sand, our whole bodies are bathed in sand, it feels good, cool."</li> <li>• "Body heat becomes cool, rheumatism is cured"</li> <li>• "Headache gone"</li> <li>• "After giving birth, the remaining blood can be thrown away immediately, no need to wash it" (News, 2015)</li> </ul>

The interview results presented in Table 1 highlight the impressions of residents in Kasur Pasir Village regarding sand beds, the majority of which are positive. Several key points emerged from these interviews, namely comfort and practicality, health benefits, cultural habits, and beliefs. Sleeping on sand is perceived as more comfortable and well-suited to the local climate. Sand provides a sense of comfort due to its naturally cool, soft, and non-sticky properties. Additionally, sand beds are believed to offer health benefits, such as alleviating body aches, treating rheumatism, reducing body heat, and relieving headaches. From a cultural perspective, sleeping on sand beds is a long-standing tradition passed down through generations, preserved, and regarded as a defining aspect of local cultural identity. Furthermore, there is a belief that sleeping on sand protects individuals from supernatural attacks, commonly

referred to as *guna-guna* (witchcraft or mystical harm).

#### 4.2. Continuity of Tradition amidst Social Change

In addition to factors supporting the sustainability of tradition, there are also factors that have the potential to hinder or threaten its sustainability. Changes in the mindset of the younger generation, modernization, and limited land for building houses in family clusters are the main challenges in maintaining the Kasur Pasir tradition in Kasur Pasir Village. One indication of the weakening of this tradition is the decreasing number of residents who choose to sleep on sand mattresses. This phenomenon generally occurs in individuals who have left the village for a certain period of time. In the case of Mrs. Kusma's family, there are several family members who no longer use sand mattresses as their main bed. For example, Mrs. Suhana, who lived



outside the village for three years to work in Malaysia, experienced a change in sleeping preferences after returning to her hometown. In addition, Levi, Mrs. Kusma's 15-year-old son, stopped using sand mattresses after studying at an Islamic boarding school for three years in junior high school. Educational factors outside the village environment seem to influence the sleeping habits of the younger generation.

In addition to the experience of living outside the village, social aspects also contribute to this change in habits. Anggi, one of the family members, admitted that she was reluctant to use a sand mattress because she felt uncomfortable if there was sand left on her body when doing activities at school and meeting her friends. This shows that social interactions outside the community also play a role in shaping individual preferences for traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation.

Thus, the sustainability of the Kasur Pasir tradition is not only influenced by internal factors, such as cultural inheritance patterns within the family, but also by broader social dynamics. Environmental changes, modernization, and increasing interaction with the

outside world are challenges that need to be considered in maintaining the sustainability of this tradition amidst the flow of social change.

#### **4.3. Sand Mattress and the Concept of Ecological Sustainability**

From an ecological sustainability perspective, sand mattresses are an example of sustainable vernacular architectural practices. Sand as the main material is sourced from the surrounding environment, so it does not cause a large ecological impact like the production of foam mattresses or spring mattresses that involve chemicals and industrial processes. In addition, sand mattresses also have a natural material circulation, where used sand can be returned to nature or replaced with new ones without polluting the environment. This is in accordance with the concept of sustainability which is currently a world concern, considering the extent of environmental damage due to human exploitation of natural resources. The main material of the sand mattress is beach sand available around the residents' homes. Residents process the sand mattress by drying it and then sifting the sand so that the texture is smooth and can be used for sleeping (Fig.6).



**Fig. 6. Quality of sand texture on a sand mattress in the bedroom.**



Its management does not cause damage to the environment and does not require high costs so that it can support the economy of residents, most of whom work as fishermen. Residents replace the sand mattress in the room on average every 6 months and then move it to the sand mattress in the yard. This practice applies the concept of reuse in a sustainable concept. If the sand cannot be used, it will be thrown into the yard and eventually carried away by rainwater.

#### **4.4. Future Challenges and Opportunities**

Although sandbars have high cultural and ecological value, the main challenge in preserving them is the changing lifestyle and perception of the community towards the tradition. Many young people consider sandbars as something old-fashioned and less comfortable compared to modern sandbars. However, there is an opportunity to maintain this tradition by reviving its cultural value and ecological benefits through education and promotion at a wider level. Introducing sandbars in the context of cultural tourism or ecotourism can be one strategy to maintain its sustainability, while also raising public awareness about the importance of preserving environmentally friendly traditional practices.

#### **4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study confirms that sand mattresses are not only functional elements in a dwelling, but also have deep cultural meaning and ecological sustainability values. Sand mattresses play a role in forming a sense of place for the people of Kasur Pasir Village,

Sumenep, where this practice is passed down from generation to generation as part of local identity. In addition, the settlement pattern that applies a cluster system strengthens social interaction and the value of tharetan dhibi, a culture of brotherhood typical of Madura. In terms of sustainability, sand beds are an environmentally friendly vernacular architectural practice because they use natural materials without requiring industrial processes that produce waste or pollution. However, modernization and changes in lifestyle have caused this practice to be abandoned by some people, although there are still families like Bu Kusma's family who still maintain it. In order for this tradition to remain sustainable, innovation does not always mean replacing old practices, but can be in the form of reinterpreting cultural values, promoting through cultural tourism, and increasing awareness of the ecological benefits of sand beds.

#### **Suggestion**

1. Preserving traditions  
Local governments and cultural communities can play a role in preserving sand dunes as part of local identity by organizing educational and documentation programs about the history and benefits of sand dunes.
2. Introduction to Tourism and Culture  
Integrating sand dunes into ecotourism or cultural tourism programs can increase community appreciation of these practices, both at the local and national levels.
3. Further  
research is needed to determine the impact of using a sand

mattress on the health and comfort of its users, so that it can become a more widely known sleep alternative.

4. Empowering Local Communities  
Local communities can be encouraged to maintain this tradition by providing support in the form of publications, cultural festivals, or community activities that introduce sand mattresses to the younger generation.

With this step, it is hoped that the sand mattress will remain a part of the lives of the people of Kasur Pasir Village, not only as a cultural heritage but also as an example of sustainable practices that are in line with the principles of ecology and global sustainability.

## CONFESSION

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