The Role of Leadership in the Transformation of Local Cultural Values through Community-Based Islamic Education

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the role of leadership in transforming local cultural values through community-based Islamic education in an indigenous community in Indonesia. The research method is a qualitative approach using ethnographic techniques, including participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The results of the study indicate that customary and religious leadership play a key role in maintaining local cultural values , such as cooperation and deliberation, in line with Islamic teachings. This leadership not only functions as a director in social life but also as a facilitator in the process of internalizing cultural values in society, ensuring that traditions remain alive without sacrificing religious principles. In addition, customary and religious leaders work together to guide the community so that these values are relevant to the modern social and religious context. The implications of this study indicate the importance of community-based Islamic education as an effective means to maintain and transform local culture, as well as the need to strengthen the leadership capacity within indigenous communities to manage cultural change. These findings contribute to the development of community-based Islamic education theory and the relevance of local cultural values in the era of globalization.

Keywords: *Leadership, Local Culture, Islamic Education, Indigenous Communities*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tentang peran kepemimpinan dalam transformasi nilai budaya lokal melalui pendidikan Islam berbasis komunitas pada salah satu Masyarakat adat di Indonesia. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik etnografi, yang mencakup observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Analisis dilakukan dengan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman, yang mencakup reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan adat dan agama berperan kunci dalam menjaga agar nilai-nilai budaya lokal seperti gotong royong dan musyawarah tetap selaras dengan ajaran Islam. Kepemimpinan ini tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai pengarah dalam kehidupan sosial, tetapi juga sebagai fasilitator dalam proses internalisasi nilai budaya dalam masyarakat, memastikan bahwa tradisi

tetap hidup tanpa mengorbankan prinsip-prinsip agama. Selain itu, pemimpin adat dan agama bekerja bersama untuk mengarahkan masyarakat agar nilai-nilai tersebut relevan dengan konteks sosial dan keagamaan modern. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menunjukkan pentingnya pendidikan Islam berbasis komunitas sebagai sarana efektif untuk mempertahankan dan mentransformasikan budaya lokal, serta perlunya penguatan kapasitas kepemimpinan dalam komunitas adat untuk mengelola perubahan budaya. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi bagi pengembangan teori pendidikan Islam berbasis komunitas dan relevansi nilai budaya lokal dalam era globalisasi.

Kata Kunci: *Kepemimpinan, Budaya Lokal, Pendidikan Islam, Komunitas Adat*

INTRODUCTION

Amidst the increasingly powerful currents of globalization, many communities face significant challenges in maintaining their local cultural values (Arsal et al., 2023; Banda et al., 2024; Bihari, 2023). Globalization brings lifestyle changes that impact the socio-cultural life of communities, leading to the displacement of traditional values that have long been a key component of local cultural identity (Chukwuemeka et al., 2024; Rao, 2025). Communities face the threat of foreign cultures that influence the lifestyles and thinking of the younger generation, leading to the loss of traditions and noble values (Gulnora, 2024; Mohyeddin, 2024). Research by Alvesson & Sveningsson (2024) and Shennan, (2025) explains that cultural transformation is an effort to maintain local values so that they remain relevant despite changing times. Field research demonstrates that, although many theories acknowledge the importance of a dynamic local culture, social practices demonstrate serious threats to the survival of traditional cultural values. Indigenous communities, such as the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam in Sukabumi, have successfully maintained local cultural values despite the impacts of modernization, thanks to the leadership that guides their transformation. Community-based Islamic education is recognized as an effective means of maintaining and transforming local cultural values. However, few studies have examined the role of community leadership as a key driver of this transformation.

In the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam indigenous community in Sukabumi, despite facing significant influences from modernization and globalization, they have successfully maintained local cultural values such as cooperation, deliberation, and politeness. This is inseparable from the active role of community leaders, both traditional and religious figures, in guiding and ensuring that local cultural values remain intact and aligned with Islamic teachings. Through community-based Islamic education, both informal and non-formal, the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam community has integrated Islamic teachings with its local traditions, ensuring that cultural values such as cooperation and deliberation remain relevant and are preserved. The role of leadership within this community is crucial in maintaining the balance between traditional values and Islamic teachings.

Previous research has shown that integrating local cultural values with Islamic teachings is widely practiced across various indigenous communities. For example, Nursanty et al. (2023) and Pranskūnienė & Zabulionienė (2023) suggests that local cultural transformation is a process of preserving cultural values in line with social change. Furthermore, Acemoglu & Robinson (2025) also states that culture is a system of meaning that can be reinterpreted in response to changing times. Another study by Akhyar et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of Islamic education grounded in local cultural values, but did not examine in depth the role of leadership in this process. Similarly, research conducted by Desfitri et al. (2024) showed that community-based Islamic education can help communities maintain their local culture. However, little has been done to examine the role of community leadership in managing and facilitating this transformation. This study will broaden our understanding of how leadership in indigenous communities, both as religious and traditional leaders, plays a role in transforming and maintaining local cultural values through community-based Islamic education.

Similarly, research on leadership in indigenous communities shows that leadership is crucial to maintaining local culture's continuity. For example, a study by Ruhullah & Ushama (2024)found that inclusive indigenous leadership grounded in Islamic principles can foster a harmonious relationship between local values and religious teachings. Ruhullah explained that indigenous leaders often act as bridges between local traditions and Islamic teachings, enabling cultural transformation to proceed smoothly without losing the original cultural identity. Furthermore, Moslimany's et al. (2024) research revealed that leaders with a deep understanding of Islamic teachings and local culture can facilitate a learning process that effectively integrates the two.

The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on leadership in transforming local cultural values through community-based Islamic education. While much previous research has addressed the integration of local culture with Islamic teachings, this study introduces a new perspective by highlighting how community leaders, both indigenous and religious leaders, play a crucial role in the process of transforming these cultural values. By examining in greater depth how leaders act as facilitators, guiding communities in transforming local cultural values to maintain their relevance to Islamic teachings, this study offers an important contribution to the development of community-based Islamic education theory and to the strengthening of local culture. This study aims to analyze the role of leadership in transforming local cultural values through community-based Islamic education. More specifically, this study will examine how leadership in the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam indigenous community directs and facilitates the transformation of local cultural values through community-based Islamic education.

The main argument of this study is that leadership in the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam indigenous community plays a key role in transforming local cultural values through community-based Islamic education. Leaders, both traditional and religious figures, act as guardians of tradition and guides, ensuring that local cultural values persist and develop in accordance with Islamic principles.

Through a community-based Islamic education approach, leaders not only maintain cultural sustainability but also ensure that values such as cooperation, deliberation, and politeness remain relevant and internalized within the community. Therefore, leadership's role in this cultural transformation is crucial to ensuring that local culture remains an integral part of people's lives in this era of globalization.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employed a qualitative, ethnographic approach (Azatovna, 2023; Jones-Hooker & Tyndall, 2023) to gain a deep understanding of how local cultural values are transformed through Islamic education in the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam indigenous community. This method allows researchers to understand social phenomena (Masullo & Coppola, 2023; Oreg & Babis, 2023)within the context of community life and to explore the meanings inherent in the community's cultural practices and Islamic teachings. Furthermore, this ethnographic method facilitated direct interaction with local indigenous people and religious leaders, yielding rich, comprehensive data on the dynamics of local cultural transformation.

This research was conducted in the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam Traditional Village, Sukabumi Regency, chosen because this community has deeply rooted cultural traditions and has integrated with Islamic teachings for centuries. Kasepuhan Gelar Alam is a highly relevant location for examining how local cultural values can be maintained and transformed through Islamic education, particularly amid the challenges of globalization that can erode these values. The cultural diversity and influence of Islam in this region make it an ideal case for examining the process of local cultural transformation within community-based Islamic education.

The data in this study were collected through several primary techniques, namely participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation was conducted by directly engaging the researchers in local traditional, educational, and religious activities, such as the Seren Taun ceremony and madrasah activities. In-depth interviews were conducted with traditional leaders, religious figures, Koran teachers, and residents to explore their understanding of the integration of local culture and Islamic teachings. Documentation was also crucial, with data collected in the form of photographs, videos, and archives of traditional activities to support understanding of the social and cultural practices at play.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data obtained through observation and interviews were analyzed inductively, focusing on the interpretation of the transformation of local cultural values in the context of Islamic education. Data presentation was conducted by describing emerging findings in narrative and matrix form. At the same time, conclusions were drawn to identify the patterns and implications of the ongoing transformation in the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results
Leadership as a Catalyst for Value Transformation

Traditional and religious leadership in the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam community plays a key role as a catalyst in the transformation of local cultural values through community-based Islamic education. In this context, traditional and religious leadership not only serves as a guide in social and cultural life but also as a bridge that aligns Islamic values with local wisdom. These leaders act as role models and facilitators in internalizing cultural values, which are then integrated with Islamic teachings in both informal and formal education.

An interview with Ki Uher, a religious and educational figure in Gelar Alam, stated, "We don't want this culture to simply disappear. Instead, we guide the community on how to continue practicing these traditions, but in a way that aligns with Islamic teachings." Ki Uher emphasized that the cultural transformation undertaken is not an elimination, but rather an adjustment that enriches local culture with Islamic values. He believes that religious leadership plays a crucial role in providing clear direction to the community on how to practice traditions in an Islamic manner without losing their cultural identity.

Ki Sodong, a traditional figure, added, "Islam did not come to abolish customs, but to adapt practices that conflict with Islamic teachings." In his interview, Ki Sodong explained that cultural traditions, such as traditional clothing, that were initially not entirely in accordance with Islamic teachings, have been modified to reflect religious principles, such as the use of the hijab during traditional ceremonies. This demonstrates how traditional and religious leadership collaborate to maintain local identity while ensuring alignment with Islamic teachings.

The researcher's observations of traditional ceremonies, such as the Seren Taun ceremony in Kasepuhan Gelar Alam, demonstrate a harmonious blend of local cultural values and Islamic practices. Before and after the traditional ceremony, the community performs congregational prayers and listens to religious sermons. This reflects a clear integration between custom and Islam, with religious and traditional leaders working together to strengthen the community's social and religious ties. In this process, traditional and religious leadership serve as guides and reinforcers in the transformation of values.

Based on this data, it is clear that leadership within the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam traditional community plays a crucial role in directing and internalizing Islamic values within local cultural traditions. Religious leadership, represented by figures like Ki Uher, and customary leadership, represented by figures like Ki Sodong, work together to guide the community in understanding and practicing traditions in harmony with Islamic teachings, while simultaneously preserving important local cultural values.

This demonstrates the synergy between customary and religious leadership in transforming local cultural values. These two types of leadership complement each other, with religious leaders providing guidance based on Islamic teachings, while customary leaders maintain and modify traditions to remain relevant to changing times. This transformation occurs gradually and involves all levels of society, from the younger generation to traditional elders,

all of whom play a role in ensuring the preservation of local culture enriched with Islamic values.

Non-formal Education as a Transformative Space

Islamic education in the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam community is not limited to formal institutions but flows through daily life through family interactions, social activities, and traditional rituals. This non-formal education serves as a transformative space that integrates local cultural values with Islamic teachings. Local leadership plays a crucial role in ensuring that this education occurs naturally, connecting religious teachings with local traditions without compromising the culture's essence. Through family-based teaching and active participation in social and religious activities, education in this community is a holistic process that internalizes Islamic values within the existing social and cultural context.

Ki Uher, a religious leader in Gelar Alam, stated, "Religious education here is not only taught in the madrasah, but also through daily social interactions, such as religious study groups and traditional rituals. We ensure that children learn directly from role models." Ki Uher emphasized that community-based Islamic education is an integral part of community life, reinforcing religious values through direct participation in social and cultural activities.

According to Ki Sodong, another traditional figure, added, "We teach the values of mutual cooperation and respect for elders through direct practice, not just through lectures. Education at Gelar Alam flows into daily life, interwoven with Islamic customs and teachings." According to Ki Sodong, traditional leadership is vital for transforming local cultural values by integrating Islamic values into every aspect of life, including traditional ceremonies colored by religious values.
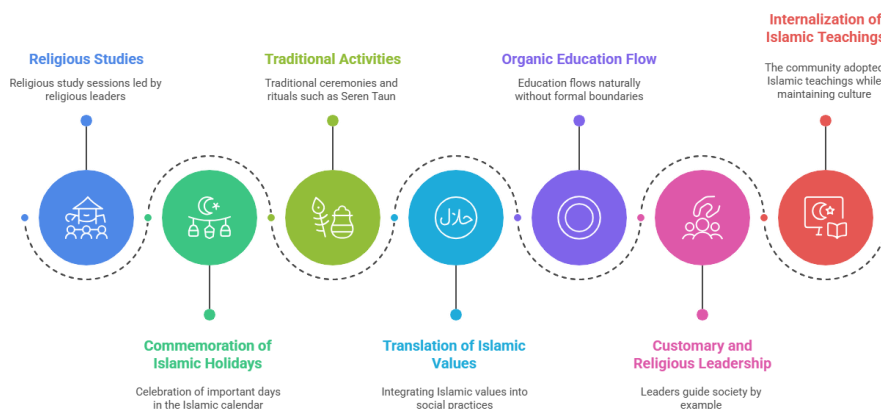

Figure 1. Non-formal Education in Kasepuhan Gelar Alam

Figure 1 shows that non-formal Islamic education in Gelar Alam is closely interwoven with daily life. For example, during the Seren Taun ceremony, while retaining traditional symbols such as traditional clothing and music, the activity also includes communal prayers and religious lectures. This indicates that the transformation of local cultural values is gradual and contextual. This form of Islamic education emphasizes learning relevant to the community's social life, making it more effective in transforming cultural values.

This suggests that non-formal Islamic education in Kasepuhan Gelar Alam plays a crucial role in transforming local cultural values. Education that occurs in daily life, such as through family interactions, religious studies, and traditional rituals, demonstrates that Islamic values are integrated in a manner appropriate to the local culture. This process is not merely religious instruction but also the internalization of moral and social values aligned with Islamic teachings.

The pattern evident in this data demonstrates a balance between maintaining local culture and integrating Islamic values. Non-formal Islamic education in Gelar Alam is integrated with social and cultural activities, in which Islamic values are introduced through direct experience. Traditional and religious leadership work in coalition to keep traditions alive, while adapting them to profound Islamic values. This demonstrates that community-based education can be an effective means of preserving local culture while transforming religious values.

The Role of Religious and Community Leaders as Educational Leaders

Religious and traditional leaders in the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam community play a key role in conveying and teaching local cultural values integrated with Islamic teachings. They serve not only as teachers but also as moral models, demonstrating living examples in everyday life. In this context, religious and traditional leadership serve as pillars in the internalization of cultural values aligned with Islamic teachings, through direct involvement in social activities such as cooperation, religious celebrations, and religious study groups. This dual role reinforces the transformation of cultural values, with religious and traditional leaders facilitating a harmonious understanding of tradition and Islam.

Tabel 1. The Role of Religious and Community Leaders as Educational Leaders

Interview Excerpt	Indicators	Informant
"We integrate religious teachings with existing customs. We don't erase culture, we just adapt it to Islam."	Integration of cultural and religious values	Ki Uher (Religious Leader)
"In every traditional tradition, we always consult with religious leaders, especially regarding whether the tradition aligns with Islamic teachings."	Consultation between customs and religion	Ki Sodong (Traditional Leader)
"We use Islamic values to improve traditional traditions, such as replacing certain rituals with communal prayers."	Changes in traditional rituals through Islam	Abah Ugi (Religious Leader)

Table 1 illustrates the process of cultural value transformation through the active role of religious and traditional leaders in the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam community. Ki Uher emphasized that integrating cultural values with Islamic teachings does not mean eliminating local traditions, but rather aligning them with Islamic principles. Conversely, Ki Sodong explained the importance of consulting with religious leaders to ensure that existing cultural practices remain in line with Islamic teachings, illustrating the process of selecting which cultural practices to accept or abandon. Meanwhile, Abah Ugi demonstrated how changes to traditional rituals were carried out profoundly and gradually, without

eliminating the essence of local culture, but instead incorporating an Islamic touch.

Social and religious activities in Kasepuhan Gelar Alam demonstrate that religious and traditional leaders actively facilitate the integration of Islamic values into cultural activities. For example, the Seren Taun ceremony, which previously focused solely on traditional rituals, now includes communal prayers and religious studies that strengthen religious understanding. This reflects their efforts to bridge local traditions with Islamic teachings and demonstrates that religious and traditional leaders serve not only as ritual organizers but also as agents of cultural transformation.

Based on the above, it is clear that religious and traditional leaders play a central role in transforming local culture through community-based Islamic education. They act as agents of change by providing direct examples in social life, across both religious and cultural spheres. Through consultation, teaching, and the implementation of Islamic values within local traditions, they help communities adapt and update existing cultural practices without losing their original cultural identity.

The integration of local culture and Islamic teachings occurs through a selective and gradual approach. Religious and traditional leaders act not only as regulators but also as facilitators, guiding change through consultation, teaching, and living examples. This transformation occurs organically, with Islamic values applied to refine and perfect local cultural practices, such as modifying traditional rituals to eliminate elements inconsistent with Islamic teachings, thereby fostering harmony between religion and culture.

Internalization of Cultural Values in Social and Religious Behavior

The internalization of cultural values in the social and religious behavior of the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam community occurs through participation in these activities. Cultural values integrated with Islamic teachings, such as cooperation, ethics, and discipline, become part of the community's daily behavior. These values are not only instilled through religious teachings but also through routine social practices, such as cooperation (gotong royong), deliberation, and religious activities. Thus, the community not only accepts these values theoretically but also implements them in their daily lives, strengthening their cultural and religious identity.

In an interview with Ki Uher, a religious figure in Kasepuhan Gelar Alam, he stated, "Our mutual cooperation is not just a habit; we instill the intention of worship in every action." Ki Uher emphasized that the value of cooperation, long a part of local culture, is now understood as a pious deed in Islam. This statement reflects how local cultural values are internalized in a way that aligns with Islamic teachings, making social activities such as cooperation a form of worship.

Ki Sodong, a local traditional leader, added, "Ethics and discipline in our community are taught through direct example, especially in every social activity." He described how traditional leaders not only teach social ethics through lectures but also through direct involvement in community activities. According to Ki Sodong, behavior such as discipline in following customary and religious rules is an integral part of the identity of the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam

community, which is passed down through generations through informal education.

The process of internalizing local cultural values through community-based Islamic education can be described as two stages. First, the community accepts and adapts existing cultural values, such as cooperation, ethics, and discipline, through the example set by religious and traditional leaders. Second, these values are then integrated with Islamic teachings, giving them new meaning and transforming them into acts of worship. This process occurs in a participatory manner, where the community is not only taught these values theoretically but also practices them in their daily lives. Community-based education that involves all levels of society is key to ensuring that these values remain alive and thriving, as shown in Figure 2.
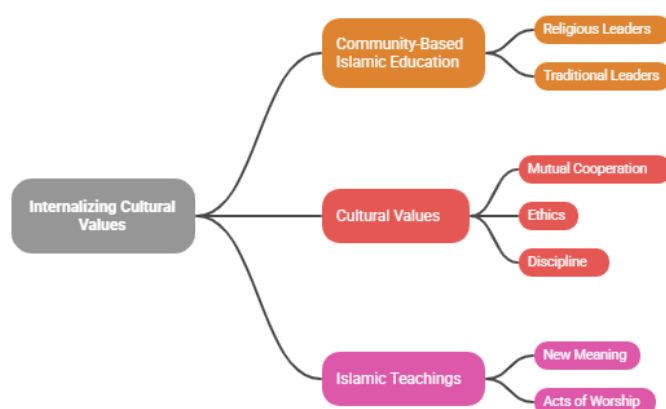

Figure 2. Internalization of Local Cultural Values through Islamic Education

Social and religious activities in Kasepuhan Gelar Alam demonstrate that values such as cooperation, ethics, and discipline are integral to the community's daily lives. In cooperation (gotong royong), for example, every action taken by residents is not only aimed at completing a shared task but also intended for worship. Similarly, in religious activities such as tahlilan (religious recitation), the community demonstrates discipline and ethics as it participates together in the worship process. This demonstrates that the values internalized through Islamic education and customs have become an integral part of the community's social behavior.

Table 2. Internalization of Cultural Values in Social and Religious Behavior

Cultural Values	Islamic Interpretation	Social Practices
Mutual Cooperation	Righteous Deeds *(ta'awun)*	Helping others in social work
Ethics and Discipline	Noble Morals	Adhering to customary and religious rules, maintaining politeness in social interactions
Silih Asih (Compassion)	*Birrul Walidain* (Serving One's Parents)	Helping family and the community with religious intentions

Table 2 shows that local cultural values, such as cooperation, ethics, and discipline, have been integrated with Islamic teachings through community-based education. These values are not only learned theoretically but also directly

put into practice in daily life through various social and religious activities. Religious and traditional leaders act as agents of change, demonstrating through their role models how these values can be applied in an Islamic context. This process demonstrates that community-based education in Kasepuhan Gelar Alam has successfully internalized Islamic values within the local culture harmoniously and contextually.

The process of internalizing local cultural values in the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam community occurs organically, beginning with the teaching of existing cultural values, which are then enriched with Islamic teachings. Religious and traditional leaders play a central role in this process, not only as teachers but also as moral models demonstrating how these values should be applied in daily life. Education grounded in social role models and direct involvement in community activities ensures that these values remain alive and become an integral part of the community's cultural and religious identity.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that traditional and religious leadership play a key role in guiding the process of transforming local cultural values to ensure their relevance to Islamic teachings. Traditional and religious leaders serve as guides, aligning local values with Islamic principles without losing the essence of the culture. These findings align with existing theories, such as those advanced by Saefudin et al. (2023) and Shennan (2025), who argue that cultural transformation is an effort to maintain local cultural values despite changing times. However, this study's contribution lies in emphasizing the role of leadership within indigenous communities, which is directly involved in directing the integration of local culture and Islamic teachings, an aspect that has been less discussed in previous literature. In this context, leadership functions not only as a cultural guardian but also as a mediator that facilitates gradual adaptation between tradition and religious norms.

The importance of community-based education in transforming cultural values is also a key finding of this study. Islamic education in Kasepuhan Gelar Alam is not limited to formal institutions but also occurs in daily life through social interactions and traditional rituals. This demonstrates that community-based Islamic education can operate holistically, integrating local cultural values with Islamic teachings. This aligns with research emphasizing the importance of local cultural values in Islamic education (Chuanchen & Zaini, 2023; Muliadi et al., 2024; Sanjani et al., 2024). However, this study focuses more on how non-formal education is integrated into social life without losing its essence. Thus, community-based education serves as an adequate transformative space in transforming cultural values. The findings suggest that non-formal educational settings become effective spaces for value internalization when supported by consistent leadership practices within the community.

From a theoretical perspective, this study's findings contribute to our understanding of leadership theory in the context of indigenous communities. Indigenous leadership grounded in Islamic principles can serve as a bridge that

aligns local cultural values with religious teachings. This confirms the findings of Ngarawula & Wahyudi (2024) and Thoha et al. (2025) findings, which showed that inclusive leadership can foster a harmonious relationship between local traditions and religious teachings. Social practices carried out by traditional and religious leaders in Kasepuhan Gelar Alam demonstrate that integration occurs through a selective, gradual approach. Traditional and religious leaders work together to maintain local identity while introducing relevant Islamic values into the community's daily lives. This collaborative pattern of leadership strengthens cultural continuity while allowing controlled transformation in response to contemporary challenges.

The practical implications of this research are significant, particularly for the development of community-based education in other indigenous communities. An approach that integrates local cultural values with Islamic teachings can serve as a model for other indigenous communities seeking to maintain their traditions while remaining relevant to current developments. Therefore, community leaders, both traditional and religious leaders, need to be prepared to act as facilitators in this process. Leadership training based on strengthening Islamic cultural and religious values can be a practical step towards optimizing cultural transformation at the community level.

Overall, this research provides new insights into the relationship among leadership, Islamic education, and the preservation of local cultural values amid the challenges of globalization. It also confirms the crucial role of leadership in ensuring the sustainability of local cultures enriched with Islamic values. More broadly, these findings have the potential to enrich theories of community-based Islamic education, particularly regarding the integration of local cultural values with religious teachings.

CONCLUSION

This study found that customary and religious leadership in the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam community plays a crucial role in transforming local cultural values through community-based Islamic education. The main lesson from this study is the importance of synergy between customary and religious leadership in guiding the community to maintain local cultural values relevant to Islamic teachings. A community-based educational approach that integrates Islamic teachings with local traditions, such as cooperation (gotong royong) and deliberation (musyawarah), has proven effective in strengthening the community's cultural identity without diminishing the essence of tradition. This demonstrates that education occurs not only in formal institutions but also through social interactions and daily religious practices. Leadership emerges as a key factor that ensures this integration process remains contextually appropriate and socially accepted within the community.

Scientifically, this study makes an important contribution to enriching the theory of community-based leadership, particularly by integrating local cultural values and religious teachings. It also introduces a new perspective on the role of leadership in cultural transformation, a topic that has received little attention in

studies of community-based Islamic education. However, this study's limitations lie in its limited scope within a single customary community, so the results may not be fully generalizable to other customary communities. For future research, it is recommended to examine the role of leadership in cultural transformation across other indigenous communities and to explore the influence of external factors, such as globalization, on the maintenance of local cultural values. Further comparative studies may also strengthen the applicability of this leadership-based approach in diverse cultural and educational settings.

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