

EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH LOCAL WISDOM-BASED TRAINING FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION

Latifah

Universitas PGRI Yogyakarta
Email: Latifahlatif010@gmail.com

Abstract

This research explores how training and mentoring rooted in local wisdom can empower young generations to preserve cultural heritage thru community-based organizations. This research focuses on the Cultural Youth Forum in Yogyakarta, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving local cultural values. This research method uses a qualitative case study approach, with information gathered thru questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and documentation of organizational activities involving 30 active members, alumni, and officers. The findings of the research indicate that practical training such as cultural tours, public speaking workshops based on Javanese ethics, and traditional skills sessions significantly improve technical and soft skills, particularly in the areas of communication, leadership, and cultural understanding. On the other hand, informal guidance helps improve social adjustment, emotional comfort, and a strong sense of belonging to the organization. All respondents indicated that they felt more capable and had a greater sense of responsibility toward cultural preservation after participating in the mentoring program. This research makes a new contribution by discussing youth development in non-profit cultural organizations using a humanistic and contextual approach, a topic rarely studied in previous studies which have focused more on formal institutions or the business sector. This research also emphasizes the transformative power of local wisdom in building identity and fostering young people's long-term commitment to cultural sustainability. The resulting guidance model is recommended for implementation in other areas to strengthen community-based tourism and cultural education. This study contributes to the discussion on youth empowerment, cultural sustainability, and non-formal education by presenting a framework that can be applied in human resource development based on cultural heritage.

Keywords: youth empowerment, local wisdom, cultural preservation, experiential learning, mentoring.

A. INTRODUCTION

The preservation of local culture is a complex issue amidst global progress and rapid social change. Younger generations, as a crucial part of preserving culture, often face a dilemma between modernization and local identity. In Indonesia, the contribution of youth in preserving culture has not been fully supported in a planned and participatory manner.

According to the Indonesian Youth Statistics 2023 from the Central Bureau of Statistics, progress in the socio-cultural field for youth still lags behind education and employment. Additionally, the National Cultural Development Index indicates that indicators related to "cultural heritage" and "cultural expression" have not shown progress in the last five years.

This situation is reinforced by a survey conducted by GNFI (Good News From Indonesia) in 2024, which found that although 78% of young respondents consider cultural preservation important, only 32% of them actively participate in cultural activities in their communities. This discrepancy reflects the difference between young people's actual understanding and involvement in preserving culture. Previous research has largely focused on cultural training in formal settings such as educational institutions or government agencies (Mursalim, M., and Tech, M. I. 2019), or in the creative industries and tourism sectors (Wijaya, N. M. S. 2017). However, research on the development of youth human resources in community organizations that focuses on local culture is still very limited.

This research aims to address these needs by investigating how training and mentoring based on local wisdom can empower youth to preserve culture thru community organizations. This study focuses on the Yogyakarta City Cultural Youth Forum, a non-profit organization involved in local cultural training and advocacy. Thru a qualitative case study method, this research explores the understanding and experiences of 30 active members, alumni, and administrators who participated in training based on local values such as *tepa salira* (empathy), *unggah-ungguh* (etiquette), *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), and *andhap asor* (humility). The importance of this research lies in the need to create a cultural training model that not only focuses on teaching technical skills, but also helps build identity, value reflection, and long-term commitment to cultural preservation. This research also provides innovation by combining humanistic and contextual approaches in the development of youth human resources, and by emphasizing the role of informal mentoring as an adaptive strategy in community organizations.

Conceptually, this research is supported by experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), which emphasizes the importance of learning thru direct experience, and community-based human resource development theory (McLean and McCormick, 1998), which highlights the significance of the local context in individual capacity building. Additionally, local cultural values were examined thru the lens of cultural sustainability (Soini and Birkeland, 2014), which emphasizes that cultural preservation must involve young generations as the owners and developers of these values. Therefore, this research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of a sustainable and relevant community-based cultural training model for the social situation of youth in Indonesia.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach using the case study method to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of empowering young people to preserve culture thru training based on local wisdom. The case study method was chosen because it provides an opportunity to deeply explore the context of dynamics within the organization, individual experiences, and cultural practices that occur naturally in society. Case studies also allow researchers to understand the complexities of social relationships, local values, and learning

processes that cannot be simplified into numbers or generalizations. The research was conducted at the Yogyakarta City Cultural Youth Forum, a community organization involved in training, advocacy, and documentation of local culture. This organization was chosen because its characteristics align with the research focus, which is training that emphasizes values, youth participation, and non-formal approaches to cultural preservation. The research subjects consisted of 30 individuals selected purposively, including active members, alumni, and organization administrators. The selection of these subjects was based on their participation in training, mentoring, and cultural documentation activities, as well as their willingness to delve into personal experiences.

Information was gathered thru in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis from the organization. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format to delve into the participants' experiences, perspectives, and reflections on the training and the cultural values they encountered. Participatory observation was conducted in various activities aimed at showcasing learning rooted in local wisdom. Researchers were directly involved in organizing traditional fashion training and fashion show events, public speaking sessions on the theme of cultural narratives, and Javanese ethics exercises in organizational forums. Additionally, observations were also made during traditional art performances such as classical dances and gamelan music. These activities were chosen because they represent a blend of practical skills and an understanding of cultural values, and they provide an opportunity for researchers to witness the dynamics of social relationships, value reflection, and informal mentoring processes that occur naturally within the community.

The research tools included interview guides developed with reference to five main themes: engagement with cultural narratives, documentation of practices, cultural learning processes, motivation and loyalty to the organization, and understanding of local values. Additionally, researchers also used observation notes and short questionnaires to supplement the background information of the respondents. The data analysis process was conducted using a thematic approach. The analysis steps included initial coding to identify important patterns, grouping codes into thematic categories, and creating a narrative synthesis that explained the relationships between themes. Data validity is strengthened thru source triangulation (interviews, observations, documents) and verification of interpretations by multiple respondents (member checking). With this method, the research is expected to comprehensively reflect the process of youth empowerment in preserving culture, not only in terms of skills, but also from the perspective of values, identity, and social commitment.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Improvement in Technical and Soft Skills

The findings of the study indicate that the training conducted by the Yogyakarta City Cultural Youth Forum has a significant impact on improving the technical skills and interpersonal abilities of the participants. This increase is not only functional but also brings about profound changes, as it involves the process of internalizing local cultural values that influence how people think, interact, and express their self-identity. The various types of

training attended by the participants included technical activities such as modeling, fashion shows, beauty classes, and public speaking, as well as value-focused activities like Javanese ethics workshops, etiquette training, and cultural tours. Technical training such as modeling and fashion shows not only taught visual presentation techniques but also introduced the symbolism of regional and traditional clothing as a form of cultural identity representation. Public speaking skills, which are typically associated with general communication abilities, are in this context directed toward conveying cultural stories while adhering to Javanese communication ethics, thereby strengthening the emotional and intellectual dimensions of the participants. Training that emphasizes values such as Javanese ethics workshops and organizational etiquette serves as a platform for internalizing the principles of manners, empathy, and humility. These values are not only taught in theory but are also applied in social interactions and organizational activities. Cultural tours and traditional skills sessions deepen understanding of local history, artistic practices, and communities, thereby fostering historical awareness and emotional connection to cultural heritage.

Theoretically, these findings support the concept of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), which emphasizes that real-world experience, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation are key to meaningful learning. Here, young people not only serve as training participants but also function as individuals who experience, reflect on, and absorb cultural values thru direct engagement. This process demonstrates that experiential learning not only develops technical skills but also enhances participants' reflective and emotional abilities. This finding also supports the community-based human resource development framework (McLean and McCormick, 1998), which highlights the importance of local context and community participation in strengthening individual capacity. Community organizations serve as learning environments that not only offer training but also create a social ecosystem that supports individual and collective growth. In this case, the Cultural Youth Forum becomes a strategic place for young people to improve their skills in a context relevant to their local identity.

From a scientific contribution perspective, this research provides new insights by demonstrating that community-based cultural training can have a comparable, and even more contextually relevant, impact compared to formal training conducted in educational institutions or the creative industries. Previous research (Arafah 2025) has shown that cultural training can improve social skills, but little has been done to address the integration of local values with technical practices within a single training framework. This research expands the understanding of youth empowerment, from merely improving technical skills to achieving identity formation and commitment to culture. However, there are still challenges that need to be addressed. Some respondents revealed that access to training has not been fully equitable, especially for new members and less active alumni. This indicates that although the training proved effective, there still needs to be reinforcement in managing participation and role division so that the impact of empowerment can be felt more evenly. In addition, there is a lack of systematic documentation regarding the learning process and reflection of the participants, so the potential to be used as a training model or module has not been fully utilized. Thus, these results not only answer the research question regarding the effectiveness of local wisdom-based training in empowering youth, but also strengthen

the theoretical foundation used, provide contextually relevant scientific contributions, and open space for critical reflection on fairer and more sustainable cultural training practices.

Strengthening Identity and Sense of Belonging

One of the key findings of this study is that young people's participation in cultural organizations not only enhances their skills but also fosters a deep sense of social identity and belonging to the community. Respondents consistently reported feeling more emotionally comfortable, socially connected, and responsible for the organization's sustainability after participating in informal mentoring and cultural activities. This engagement is not transactional; rather, it brings about change, where they feel they are part of something meaningful, not just participants in an activity. This finding directly answers the question of how local wisdom-based training and guidance can empower young generations in cultural preservation. In this context, empowerment is understood not only as an increase in technical skills, but also as the formation of a collective identity and a sustained commitment to cultural values. The informal guidance process carried out by organization leaders, whether thru casual conversations, accompaniment in activities, or daily interactions, has proven to be an important way to create emotional closeness and member loyalty.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings strengthen the framework of Organizational Commitment Theory developed by Meyer and Allen in 1991, particularly in the dimension of affective commitment. Affective commitment refers to an individual's emotional attachment to the organization, which motivates them to remain engaged because they feel a sense of ownership and trust in the values held by the organization. In this context, young people demonstrate commitment not because of structural demands, but because of the shared values and experiences they hold. This finding is also consistent with Social Identity Theory proposed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979, which explains that individual identity is formed thru membership in meaningful social groups. Social identity formed within cultural organizations not only strengthens self-confidence but also influences values and behaviors aligned with cultural preservation goals. Young people who feel like they are part of a cultural community tend to show higher loyalty, initiative, and sustained engagement.

From a scientific contribution perspective, this study offers innovation by emphasizing that identity formation and a sense of belonging within youth cultural organizations do not always arise from formal mechanisms. Conversely, this tends to happen thru informal social interactions based on values. This approach differs from previous research, which focused more on organizational structure, work programs, or incentives as the main elements of participation (Judijanto, L. 2025). This research reveals that community-based communication arrangements and warm social relationships can be a stronger foundation for deepening cultural commitment. However, there are a few things that need to be considered for future development. Some respondents revealed that the mentoring process is still insufficiently structured or poorly documented, making the continuity and implementation of this informal mentoring model still dependent on individual initiative within the management. Additionally, the inactivity of alumni suggests that a sense of ownership can diminish over time if there are no mechanisms to maintain

relationships and open spaces for contribution. Therefore, organizations need to design more systematic and inclusive mentoring systems, as well as build communication platforms that involve multiple generations to maintain the continuity of collective identity. Overall, these findings reinforce the understanding that cultural preservation is not solely determined by the transfer of knowledge or skills, but also by the formation of social identity and emotional commitment that develops thru relationships within the community. Mentoring based on values and meaningful social interaction is key to building a young generation that not only possesses skills but also has a sense of responsibility toward the preservation of local cultural sustainability.

Reflection and Meaning-Making of Cultural Values

One of the most important findings of this study is that training grounded in local wisdom not only serves as a tool for transferring cultural knowledge but also as a space for deep reflection and understanding of values. The respondents revealed that values such as *tepa salira* (empathy and understanding), *gotong royong* (cooperation), and *andhap asor* (humility and respect) are not only discussed in theory but also applied in daily life. Some of them even stated that they began to apply these values in family interactions, the work environment, and in social decision-making processes. This finding directly answers the question of how local wisdom-based training can empower youth to preserve culture. In this case, empowerment is not only seen as an increase in technical skills or participation in organizations, but also as a process of internalizing values that shape individuals' moral and social orientation. Training that allows for dialog, reflection, and discussion about values has been proven to encourage young people to see culture not only as heritage, but also as relevant and applicable guidelines for life.

From a theoretical perspective, these results support the idea of cultural sustainability as expressed by Soini and Birkeland (2014), who emphasize that cultural preservation must be connected to young people's understanding and adaptation of values. Sustainable culture is not a static culture trapped in symbols or rituals, but rather a culture that actively lives thru reflection, reinterpretation, and application within a dynamic social context. In this case, youth not only serve as the inheritors or executors of tradition, but also as agents of meaning-making. Support for this result can also be seen in national data. The 2021 Indonesian Socio-Cultural Statistics published by the Central Bureau of Statistics show that cultural aspects play an important role in building social welfare and national character. However, youth participation in cultural activities is still relatively low, especially in terms of reflection and values. This indicates that despite high awareness of the importance of culture, opportunities to understand and internalize values are still limited. This research makes a valuable contribution by revealing that community organizations can be a strategic opportunity to address these shortcomings.

In terms of innovation, this research offers a different perspective compared to previous studies that focused more on cultural preservation as a documentation or performance activity. Agung, A. A. G.'s (2015) research delves deeper into cultural training within the context of the creative industry and tourism sector, while Laili, N., and Ashari, M. Y. (2024) focus more on the educational aspect within formal education. This research

broadens perspectives by demonstrating that community-based training that allows for value reflection can have a transformative impact on the social and moral mindsets of young people. However, there are some aspects that need to be strengthened. The process of value reflection within the organization is still informal and not well-organized. Not all members have the same opportunity to engage in dialog or deeply reflect on cultural values. Additionally, documentation regarding this reflection process is still very limited, making it difficult to use as a reference or training module that can be reapplied. Therefore, organizations need to develop more inclusive and documented value reflection mechanisms, such as thru regular discussion forums, reflection journals, or value-focused mentoring.

Overall, these findings reinforce the understanding that sustainable cultural preservation efforts should include the process of interpretation and adaptation of values by younger generations. Training that provides space for reflection and dialog about values not only produces skilled individuals, but also individuals with a moral and social orientation aligned with local cultural philosophies. In the context of national cultural development, this approach is crucial for shaping a generation that not only understands culture but also lives it out in their daily lives.

Uneven Human Resource Involvement

The findings of this study indicate that although the local wisdom-focused training programs conducted by the Yogyakarta City Cultural Youth Forum yielded positive results in improving individual capabilities, human resource involvement in the organization's strategic processes was not uniform. On the other hand, new members and inactive alumni feel significantly less involved in decision-making and program development. This finding directly answers the question of how effective training is in empowering youth inclusively. In the context of community empowerment, equal participation is a key indicator of training success. This imbalance indicates that although training has successfully improved individual qualifications, a participatory and fair organizational ecosystem has not yet been fully realized.

Theoretically, these results indicate the importance of strengthening community-based human resource management. The community-based human resource development framework (McLean and McCormick, 1998) emphasizes that individual capacity building needs to be done participatively and contextually, involving every element of the community equally. If access to strategic space is only held by a select group of people, then the empowerment process will be exclusive, potentially creating social inequality within the organization. This uneven distribution of human resource involvement is also evident in national data. The 2023 Indonesian Youth Statistics released by the Central Bureau of Statistics show that youth participation in socio-cultural organizations is still dominated by the core group, while the involvement of new members and alumni tends to be fluctuating and unsustainable. This is supported by the 2023 National Cultural Development Index, which shows that the "Cultural Expression" and "Cultural Heritage" indicators have stagnated, particularly in terms of cultural actor regeneration and intergenerational participation. These two data points indicate that the challenges in human resource involvement in organizational

culture are a structural issue that needs to be addressed with a systematic and cross-sectoral approach.

In terms of scientific contribution, this research provides a new perspective by highlighting the aspect of role distribution within youth cultural organizations, which has not been extensively discussed in previous studies. Previous studies have focused more on the effectiveness of training in improving individual skills (Nasution, A., and Irham, M. 2024), but have not deeply examined how this training is accessed and understood by different groups of organizational members. This research expands the scope by showing that the success of training depends not only on the material and methods, but also on the structure of participation and the distribution of roles within the organization. However, there are still aspects that need improvement. Organizations must design more inclusive training and mentoring mechanisms, providing access for new members and alumni to participate in strategic processes. Additionally, it is important to develop a documentation and evaluation system for participation that can be used to monitor the distribution of roles and ensure that every member has an equal opportunity to contribute. Increasing the capacity of the management team in participatory-based management is also very important for creating a fair and sustainable organizational ecosystem.

Thus, these results reinforce the understanding that wisdom-based training needs to be supported by inclusive and participatory human resource management. Youth empowerment in cultural preservation will not be effective without a fair distribution of roles and open opportunities for contribution for all community members. In the context of national cultural development, this approach is crucial to ensure that cultural preservation is carried out collectively, regeneratively, and sustainably.

Informal Mentoring as a Learning Mechanism

One significant finding from this study is that the learning process within the cultural community organization does not occur thru a formal curriculum or organized modules, but thru an informal mentoring system that is relational, contextual, and value-based. In the context of the Cultural Youth Forum in Yogyakarta, informal mentoring serves as the primary means for developing the capacity and cultural identity of young people. Respondents revealed that they gained knowledge not only from technical training, but also from shared experiences, casual discussions, direct observation, and participation in cultural activities led by seniors or organization leaders. This finding provides a direct answer to the question of how training based on local wisdom can empower youth in preserving culture. Here, empowerment occurs not only thru the transmission of knowledge, but also thru the process of meaning-making and identity formation that takes place in intergenerational social interactions. Informal mentoring creates opportunities for intergenerational dialog, cultural value transfer, and adapting cultural practices to the current life context of young people.

Theoretically, these findings have a strong connection to the situated learning approach introduced by Lave and Wenger in 1991. The theory emphasizes that learning does not occur in a separate space, but rather within important social practices. In cultural communities, youth learn by actively participating in activities, observing practices carried out by seniors, and engaging in discussions about values. They not only gain information but

also build understanding thru direct experience and social interaction. Informal mentoring within an organizational community is a prime example of legitimate peripheral participation, where new members gradually become part of the community of practice thru increasingly deeper involvement. This finding can also be linked to the concept of informal pedagogy within cultural communities, which emphasizes that cultural learning often takes place outside the formal education system. In the Indonesian context, where many cultural communities thrive naturally and are rooted in local values, this informal approach is highly relevant. Young people learn about cultural philosophy, social ethics, and traditional practices not from books, but from direct experience with cultural figures, community facilitators, and fellow organizers.

To address the challenges of sustainability and inclusivity in informal mentoring practices, this research creates an initial design for a value-based community mentoring model that is adaptive, reflective, and participatory. This model emerged from observations of the natural learning dynamics occurring at the Yogyakarta City Cultural Youth Forum, where the mentoring process is not conducted formally, yet has a significant impact on the formation of youth identity and social skills. In this community, mentoring takes place thru intergenerational relationships that are dialogical and empathetic. Senior facilitators, both from the management and alumni who already understand the cultural values, serve as supporters for new members. This interaction is collaborative, not hierarchical, where experience and values are passed on thru conversation, activity mentoring, and shared reflection. This model also emphasizes the importance of having an open space for reflection as a place to internalize cultural values. Regular discussion forums, reflective journals, and experience-sharing sessions serve as a means to deepen participants' understanding of local cultural philosophies. In that space, young people not only learn about cultural values but also reflect on how those values are relevant to their daily lives in their families, schools, or work environments. This reflection process strengthens emotional bonds and commitment to cultural preservation.

In addition, the mentoring approach is designed to be contextual and adaptive. The material and methods are tailored to the participants' backgrounds, including their language, experience, and interest in culture. This is important so that every participant feels valued and can learn in a way that suits their identity. In practice, mentoring is flexible and responsive to individual needs, not uniform. To ensure sustainability and replicability, the mentoring process was documented in narrative form and jointly evaluated. This documentation not only records activities but also captures the reflection and transformation experienced by the participants. The evaluation is conducted participatively, involving mentors and participants in assessing the effectiveness of the approach, the challenges faced, and any necessary improvements. In this way, the mentoring model will not only become a local practice, but can also be developed as a framework applicable in other cultural communities with appropriate contextual adjustments.

Overall, the design of this value-based community mentoring model reinforces the finding that effective cultural learning does not always depend on the presence of formal structures, but rather on the quality of social relationships, space for reflection, and the ability to adapt to the participants' context. In the context of national cultural development,

this approach offers a more humanistic and sustainable alternative for shaping young generations who not only know culture but are also able to bring those values to life and develop them in their own lives.

D. CONCLUSION

This research aims to explore how training and guidance based on local wisdom within community organizations can empower young generations to preserve culture. Thru an analysis of the Cultural Youth Forum in Yogyakarta, it was revealed that training incorporating local values not only serves to enhance technical skills and interpersonal abilities but also deeply builds social identity, emotional attachment, and reflective capacity among participants. The main finding is that the learning process within a cultural community unfolds transformatively thru informal guidance, opportunities for reflection, and social participation based on experience. Contextual and humanistic training models have proven to be more responsive than formal methods because they can address aspects of values, intergenerational relationships, and the sustainability of participation. However, there are challenges such as unequal distribution of human resources, inadequate documentation, and unstructured regeneration processes, highlighting the need for strengthening participatory guidance and evaluation systems. As a practical contribution, this research presents an initial concept for a value-based community guidance model that can be adapted and applied in other communities with appropriate adjustments. This model emphasizes the importance of intergenerational interaction, space for reflection, a flexible approach, and narrative documentation as the foundation for sustainable cultural learning.

For future studies, it is recommended that there be further in-depth exploration of the dynamics of intergenerational relationships within cultural organizations, including how alumni and new members can be facilitated in a structured manner within the mentoring and regeneration process. Additionally, creating evaluation instruments that assess participation based on values and conducting comparative studies across cultural communities in different regions could enrich understanding of the effectiveness of training models rooted in local wisdom. Thus, this research not only contributes to the theory of experiential learning and community-based human resource development but also presents a practical framework for creating a relevant, inclusive, and regenerative cultural training system for Indonesian youth..

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