


## The Influence of Traditional Dayak Desa Leadership Values on Community Harmony in Sekadau Regency

<sup>1</sup>Adil Bertus AS, <sup>2</sup>Darius Damestuteles, <sup>3</sup>Fitria Elvi

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Institut Teknologi Keling Kumang

Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Traditional leadership, Dayak Desa, social harmony, indigenous leadership</p>	<p>This study explores the influence of traditional leadership values within the Dayak Desa community on social harmony in Sekadau Regency, West Kalimantan. Rooted in local wisdom, the leadership practices of the Dayak Desa are based on principles such as customary justice, communal consensus, moral exemplarity, restorative conflict resolution, and collective solidarity. Using a qualitative approach, the research involved in-depth interviews and participatory observation. The findings reveal that customary leaders, such as the temenggung, play a central role in maintaining social order, resolving disputes, and upholding ethical standards. These leadership values foster a strong sense of belonging, mutual respects, and social cohesion. However, the study also highlights challenges related to the generational gap, where younger members are becoming less engaged in traditional practices. Strategic efforts involving cultural educational and intergenerational dialogue are essential to ensure the sustainability and relevance of customary leadership values in the face of modernization. This research underscores the critical role of traditional leadership in preserving communal harmony and cultural identity.</p>
<p>This is an open access article under the <a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/">CC BY-NC</a> license</p> 	<p><b>Corresponding Author:</b> Adil Bertus AS Institut Teknologi Keling Kumang <a href="mailto:sdilbertus72@gmail.com">sdilbertus72@gmail.com</a></p>

### INTRODUCTION

In the dynamics of community life, leadership plays a crucial role as a directional guide, regulator of social order, and maintainer of community stability. Amidst rapid progress and social change, traditional communities still maintain forms of leadership based on local values and wisdom. Local wisdom, meanwhile, can be understood as a cultural richness originating from and developing within community life, which has become a crucial part of maintaining social solidarity. The values contained within it constitute a highly valuable social heritage and play a crucial role in building pride and maintaining the honor of nation. (Lodra, 2020). One example is the Dayak community, which until now still adheres to the traditional leadership system as part of their lives.

The Dayak Desa are a sub-tribe of the Dayak people originating from Sintang Regency. This indigenous community is spread across seven sub-districts in West Kalimantan: Sintang, Kalam Permai, Binjai Hulu, Dedai, Sungai Tebelian, Sepauk, and Tempunak. The Dayak Desa are part of the larger Iban Dayak group (Seran et al. 2023). In West Kalimantan there are two ethnic groups who call themselves the Dayak Desa, and both are included in the Dayak ethnic

group. In one of the Dayak sub-tribes, the vowel [e] is pronounced as the sound [ə] (pepet), as in the word understand, not as the sound [e] as in the word table (Bamba, 2008). The Dayak Desa sub-tribe is also found in Sekadau Regency, Their presence in this area is a result of migration from their original regions, namely Sintang and Kapuas Hulu Regencies. This migration was undertaken in search of fertile agricultural land and to avoid inter-tribal conflict, particularly with the Iban (Nyaming, 2020). The Dayak Desa in Sekadau Regency is spread across the Sekadau Hilir District, with residents located in Perupuk Mentah, Tapang Kemayau, Tapang Sambas, and Tapang Semadak. In addition to Sintang and Sekadau Regencies, the Dayak Desa Community is also found in Kapuas Hulu Regency. Their presence in Kapuas Hulu is due to proximity and migration in search of more fertile agricultural land. In terms of kinship system, communication patterns, views on nature and types of work, the Dayak Desa community in Kapuas Hulu shares strong similarities with the Dayak Desa in Sintang and Sekadau (Mikael, 2010).

The Dayak Desa people live their lives guided by a philosophy that continually guides and gives meaning to their lives. They embrace various cultural values imbued with noble wisdom, such as strong family ties, a spirit of togetherness, a simple life, and a deep love for nature (Seran., Mardawani, 2020). The Dayak Desa Community has a cultural system that is generally similar to that of the Dayak in general. However, the most prominent aspect of Dayak Desa culture is the existence of customary law and the implementation of ritual ceremonies. Indigenous communities live as a life based on traditions passed down through generations, and cultural values play a vital role in guiding their social order (Fadrullah., et al. 2024). The customary laws that apply cover various aspects of life, such as marriage, birth, death, adoption, and unique practices such as cutting teeth and ngemaik anak manik (a child's bead). In addition, there are also customary rules regarding violations, such as salah basa (violation of customary law etiquette), which include the Pati custom, the Kampang custom, and the fighting custom. Other customs include beuma betaum, the Pati tapang temawang customs, buah layah, ulah celaka sisil, ampal-ampal, pampas, and various other forms (Kwirinus, 2022).

Customary leadership in Dayak Desa communities is not merely symbolic. It also regulates various aspects of social life. Customary leaders, known as temenggung or panglima adat (traditional commanders), have strong authority and legitimacy to resolve internal issues, regulate customary governance, and maintain cultural sustainability and intergroup relations. These functions are carried out based on noble values such as justice, wisdom, deliberation, and solidarity. In general, customary communities have a system of customary law that serves as a guideline for governing communal life (Fidyah Apriliani Fidori et al. 2024). This rule various customary violations which, when viewed from a national legal perspective, fall within the realm of civil and criminal law (Arkanudin and Rupita, 2021).

These traditional leadership values are believed to play a significant role in establishing and maintaining social harmony within the Dayak Desa community. In the context of daily life, this harmony is reflected in the strong spirit of mutual cooperation, low levels of open conflict, and close ties between individuals and their communities. Therefore, it is important to examine how these traditional leadership values influence the quality of social relations and

community cohesion. Especially amidst the tide of modernization, many traditions are being abandoned and no longer practiced in daily life. A tradition can disappear from community life due to the influx of foreign cultural influences, which makes people less interested in their own traditions. In this context, the presence of traditional institutions is crucial. Traditional institutions play a crucial role in guiding the attitudes and behavior of their communities. Although they are open to outside influences, they still strive to preserve traditional values to prevent extinction. The system implemented by these traditional institutions is well-structured, but active participation is predominantly from the age group 35 and above. As a result, the preservation of traditions is largely carried out by older people (Sonia and Sarwoprasodjo, 2020).

In recent decades, modernization and external cultural influences have begun to bring significant changes to the social structure of the Dayak Desa community. These changes include a weakening of the role of traditional leadership due to shifting value systems among the younger generation and the increasing influence of formal governance systems. In some cases, internal conflicts and a loss of social solidarity have emerged as a result of weakened adherence to traditional values. This raises concerns about the continued role of traditional leadership values in maintaining community harmony. Maintaining and preserving traditional traditions within local communities is crucial to ensuring the continuity of ethnic identity, preventing it from becoming extinct or eroded by changing times (Annisa Dwi Lestari et al., 2023).

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of Dayak Desa traditional leadership values on community harmony in Sekadau Regency. By understanding the extent to which these values are still applied and relevant in community life, it is also hoped that this will contribute to efforts to preserve traditional values and strengthen the role of traditional leadership in facing the challenges of social change in the modern era..

## METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach, namely a type of research that aims to understand in depth the phenomena experienced by research subjects (Moloeng dalam (Reni Ardiana, 2022)). In the process, researchers sought to comprehensively understand the behavior, perspectives, motivations, and actions of informants. This understanding was then presented in the form of descriptions depicting natural situations, utilizing various scientific methods. This research aimed to explore in depth how Dayak Desa traditional leadership values influence social order and create harmony within the life of indigenous communities. A qualitative approach was chosen because it suited the study's contextual nature, rich in meaning, and closely related to local values and social experiences. The research was conducted in Sekadau Regency, West Kalimantan Province, specifically in the areas of Tapang Semadak, Tapang Kemayau, and Tapang Sambas. These locations were chosen purposively because they still maintain an active traditional leadership structure and practice customary law in their daily lives.

The research subjects consisted of traditional figures, namely community leaders, youth and students from Dayak Desa, and ordinary residents active in community activities. Determination of informants was carried out using purposive sampling techniques based on

certain criteria (Subhaktiyasa, 2024), such as having knowledge, direct experience, and involvement in the customary system and social life of the Dayak Desa community. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with an open guide to delve deeper into the informants' experiences related to customary leadership values and their influence on the social life of the community. Participatory observation was conducted by directly engaging in various customary activities, namely village deliberations, customary dispute resolution, and customary ceremonies such as gawai, so that researchers obtained a real picture of the practice of customary values. Documents in the form of customary records, archives of customary chief decisions, and recordings of customary activities were used as supporting data to strengthen the results of interviews and observations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Dayak Desa's traditional leadership values have proven to be a crucial foundation for building and maintaining social harmony within their communities. This leadership reflects a formal structure, serving as the center of moral and spiritual values that govern relationships between individuals and groups within society. Through a process of hereditary inheritance, traditional leaders, such as temenggung (traditional chiefs), carry with them principles of local wisdom deeply rooted in a collective value system. This study identified five main themes representing the strength of traditional leadership values: customary justice, deliberation and consensus, moral exemplarity, customary-based conflict resolution, and a spirit of collectivity. These five themes are not isolated; they are intertwined in creating a harmonious social atmosphere, fostering mutual respect and solidarity.

### **Customary Justice as a Foundation of Social Trust**

Customary justice is a fundamental principle in the Dayak Desa leadership system. In practice, the customary chief, or temenggung, does not simply decide cases based on written rules or legal norms (Ndraha et al., 2025), but rather on a deeper understanding of the social context and interpersonal relationships within the community. Decisions made always consider the balance between retributive justice (punishment) and restorative justice (restoring social relations). For example, in cases of customary violations such as defamation or disputes between residents, customary leaders prioritize the process of restoring relationships rather than simply imposing sanctions (Prayoga et al., 2024). The customary peace procession following deliberation is an important part of the resolution process. Conflict resolution is an essential element of the lives of customary law communities, particularly in areas that still maintain and practice customary traditions and norms (Dirkareshza et al., 2024). This strengthens the public's trust in their leaders. This trust transforms into social capital that maintains long-term social stability and order.

### **Consensus as a Mechanism of Traditional Democracy**

Consensus-based deliberation is a hallmark of traditional democracy still strongly practiced by the Dayak Desa community. Village deliberations (village halls) serve as discussion forums, but they also serve as a forum for collective decision-making involving various levels of society, from traditional leaders and religious leaders to youth and women.

Traditional leaders in these forums act as mediators, not sole decision-makers. They must be able to absorb aspirations, reconcile differing opinions, and facilitate the birth of collective decisions. This mechanism fosters a sense of ownership over each decision made collectively, so that its implementation in the field tends to be more accepted and implemented voluntarily by residents. The presence of deliberations also reflects the values of openness, transparency, and respect for the right to speak (Al Amin & Maruf, 2020). In this context, democratic values do not conflict with local culture, but instead strengthen social bonds through dialogue and agreement.

### **Moral Exemplarity as a Source of Social Legitimacy**

One of the main strengths of Dayak Desa traditional leadership is the moral example demonstrated by its leaders. Traditional leaders who live simply, honestly, fairly, and consistently uphold ancestral values hold a special place in the hearts of their communities. This exemplary behavior is a daily reality that can be directly experienced by residents. Leaders who work directly in the fields, selflessly help their neighbors, or are always present at community activities demonstrate that authority in traditional culture is not derived from formal power, but from respect born of consistent action. Such exemplary behavior also inspires the younger generation to understand that leadership is not about position, but about moral responsibility. Moreover, in many cases, traditional leaders serve as ethical references and role models when the community faces moral dilemmas. This social legitimacy not only strengthens traditional authority but also contributes significantly to maintaining unity of values and social harmony in an increasingly complex society.

### **Custom-Based Conflict Resolution as a Restorative Instrument**

Conflict resolution in Dayak Desa communities tends to prioritize customary approaches over formal law. This is because customary systems are better able to understand complex social relations and prioritize restoration of relationships over separation or punishment. Conflicts between individuals, families, or groups are usually mediated by customary leaders in open forums. In these forums, all parties are given space to express their grievances, and then a just and comprehensive solution is sought. This process is often followed by symbolic customary rituals, such as a communal meal or a specific ceremony marking the end of the conflict. This approach demonstrates that justice in the context of indigenous communities is not simply a matter of right or wrong, but rather about how all parties can recover emotionally, socially, and spiritually. As a result, social relations are restored to harmony, and the potential for further conflict is prevented.

### **The Spirit of Collectivity and Social Solidarity**

The spirit of collectivity is the lifeblood of the Dayak Desa community. The value of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) is a principle of life that continues to be preserved in various aspects of life, from agriculture to religious and traditional activities. Traditional leaders act as facilitators and motivators in various collective activities. They provide instructions but also directly participate in each joint activity. This sets a concrete example for the community and strengthens a sense of solidarity. Collective practices are evident in the preparation and implementation of traditional ceremonies such as the *gawai* ceremony, the construction of traditional halls, and the repair of village roads. This spirit is present not only

in happy times but also when residents experience disaster. Solidarity is manifested in the form of assistance in labor, material, and emotional support, strengthening bonds between residents. Collectiveness is also reflected in the maintenance of customary forests, communal fields, and sacred sites considered a shared ancestral heritage. These values not only maintain social harmony but also strengthen the community's cultural identity.

Although traditional values remain strong, serious challenges arise in leadership regeneration. Many younger generations live outside the village or are more focused on the modern world, making them less involved in traditional activities. As a result, there are concerns that traditional values will no longer be recognized or appreciated by the next generation. Traditional leaders and community leaders must adopt new approaches to bridge this gap. Educational approaches through traditional schools, cultural training, documentation of local narratives, and the involvement of young people in community activities are crucial steps to ensure continuity. Furthermore, it is crucial to reflect on how traditional values can be translated into contemporary contexts—whether through social media, cultural festivals, or cross-generational forums. Regeneration is not just about finding replacement leaders, but also about ensuring that inherited values remain alive and evolving with the times.

## CONCLUSION

The traditional leadership values of the Dayak Desa contribute to maintaining social harmony within the indigenous community. This research shows that the principles of customary justice, deliberation and consensus, moral exemplarity, customary-based conflict resolution, and a spirit of collectivity and social solidarity are the main foundations supporting the social order of the Dayak Desa community. These five values contribute to the formation of a harmonious, ethical, and resilient community. Traditional leadership actively regulates and resolves social issues based on local wisdom. Traditional leaders are respected for their integrity and exemplary behavior demonstrated in daily life. The conflict resolution process, which prioritizes the restoration of social relations, demonstrates the effectiveness of the customary system in fostering peace. However, serious challenges arise in the regeneration of traditional leadership. The lack of involvement of the younger generation threatens the sustainability of these noble values. Therefore, a strategic approach involving cultural education, strengthening traditional institutions, and innovation in preserving traditions is necessary to ensure that leadership values remain alive and relevant amidst modernization.

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