

# Cultural Preservation and Local Identity: Revitalizing Traditional Performing Arts in Dadapayu Village, Gunungkidul

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aims to analyze how village governance contributes to the preservation of traditional performing arts in Dadapayu Village, Gunungkidul. The research focuses on identifying the forms of governmental roles as facilitators, communicators, and catalysts, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the sustainability of local cultural practices.

**Method:** A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, using in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation analysis. Informants consisted of village government officials, sub-district representatives, and traditional art practitioners, whose insights were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

**Findings:** The study reveals that the village government undertakes cultural facilitation through limited financial support, event coordination, and the provision of communal spaces for art activities. However, inconsistencies remain in communication between authorities and art groups, creating gaps in information flow and cultural support distribution. Furthermore, the absence of formal recognition for many art groups (such as SKOK registration) hinders access to governmental assistance. While strong community enthusiasm and cultural pride support cultural continuity, modern entertainment preferences, declining youth participation, and inadequate funding pose significant challenges.

**Significance:** The findings highlight the crucial role of village-level cultural governance in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and strengthening local identity. This study emphasizes the need for more strategic cultural policies and generational engagement to ensure the sustainability of traditional performing arts in rural Indonesia, offering valuable insights for cultural policymakers, practitioners, and scholars of local arts management.

## INTRODUCTION

Traditional performing arts represent a significant dimension of cultural heritage that reflects the collective memory and identity of local communities. These artistic expressions emerge from long historical processes shaped by social values, ritual practices, and local worldviews that continue to influence community life today. Scholars argue that cultural practices serve as a medium for maintaining social cohesion and transmitting intergenerational knowledge (Nauck, 2001). In many regions, traditional arts function not only as entertainment but also as symbolic expressions of cultural resilience. However, the rapid influence of modernization often disrupts the continuity of these cultural expressions, especially in rural areas facing demographic shifts and economic pressures

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(Inglehart, 1997; Yeganeh, 2024). This condition highlights the urgency of studying how local cultural systems adapt to contemporary challenges.

Indonesia is widely recognized as one of the most culturally diverse nations, with thousands of artistic forms that embody local identity and communal values. Traditional performing arts such as Karawitan, Reog, Wayang, and Jathilan illustrate the richness of intangible heritage that has been preserved for generations. These arts not only represent aesthetic creativity but also contain symbolic meanings that reveal social structures, belief systems, and moral principles (Fernández, 2025). In rural communities like those in Gunungkidul, traditional arts remain closely linked to agricultural cycles, community rituals, and social gatherings. Nevertheless, the sustainability of these art forms is increasingly challenged by shifting preferences among younger generations who are drawn to modern cultural products (Chen, 2022; LIAOANSUN & Banerjee, 2024). This shift raises concerns about the long-term viability of local cultural traditions.

The role of local governance is crucial in responding to the cultural challenges faced by rural communities. Village governments hold strategic authority to promote, regulate, and support various cultural activities through programs, facilities, and community engagement initiatives. Scholars affirm that cultural governance at the local level significantly influences the vitality of heritage practices and the cultural participation of local actors (Iaione et al., 2022; Li et al., 2020a; Maags & Holbig, 2016). In the Indonesian context, the Village Law provides autonomy for villages to manage cultural resources and facilitate preservation efforts. This autonomy allows local governments to design context-specific strategies that align with community needs and local cultural landscapes. Therefore, understanding how village governance contributes to cultural preservation is essential for evaluating policy effectiveness.

Dadapayu Village in Gunungkidul presents an illustrative case where traditional arts continue to thrive despite economic limitations and generational changes. The community maintains various art forms that include Karawitan, Kethoprak, Wayang, and other performances deeply rooted in local identity. These artistic practices have become important symbols of local pride and cultural recognition both within and beyond the village. However, several art groups in this region remain unregistered and lack formal recognition, limiting their access to institutional support and funding opportunities. Similar issues have been documented in other rural communities where informal cultural groups often operate without administrative legitimacy (Molden et al., 2017; Vasstrøm & Normann, 2019). This condition underscores the need for stronger cultural governance frameworks to support local artists.

Modernization and globalization further complicate the preservation of traditional performing arts in local contexts. Increased exposure to global media and digital entertainment has shifted cultural preferences among younger generations, resulting in declining participation in traditional art practices (Mihelj et al., 2019). Additionally, economic pressures encourage community members to prioritize income generating activities rather than participation in cultural events. These challenges contribute to the weakening of cultural transmission and the risk of cultural discontinuity. Researchers highlight that intangible cultural heritage is particularly vulnerable when community engagement declines over time (Eichler, 2021; Tavares et al., 2021). Consequently,

targeted interventions are required to revitalize cultural participation and sustain heritage practices.

Governmental support plays a crucial role in facilitating cultural continuity and revitalizing traditional arts in rural environments. Effective cultural governance requires policies that ensure equitable distribution of support, sustainable funding mechanisms, and inclusive communication channels between authorities and cultural practitioners. Studies indicate that collaborative cultural governance strengthens cultural resilience and promotes community participation in heritage preservation (Fabbricatti et al., 2020; Kumar T.K. & Niglio, 2025). However, inconsistencies in policy implementation often create disparities in access to cultural resources. In the case of Gunungkidul, some groups receive considerable attention while others experience limited support due to administrative and bureaucratic challenges. This imbalance highlights the need for more structured and inclusive cultural governance strategies at the village level.

Considering these complexities, examining the role of village governance in sustaining traditional performing arts becomes an important endeavor for cultural research. This study explores how Dadapayu Village mobilizes its governance structures to support cultural continuity through facilitation, communication, and catalytic roles. The analysis also identifies key supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the effectiveness of cultural preservation efforts. Such an inquiry contributes to broader discussions on cultural sustainability, local identity, and rural development. Previous studies emphasize that the survival of cultural heritage depends on the active involvement of both state and community actors (Della Lucia & Trunfio, 2018; Li et al., 2020). Therefore, this research provides meaningful insights into how governance mechanisms can strengthen intangible cultural heritage in rural Indonesian communities.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore how village governance contributes to the preservation of traditional performing arts in Dadapayu Village. The design was chosen to allow an in depth understanding of cultural practices, community dynamics, and governance mechanisms within their natural context. Qualitative inquiry enables researchers to capture participants' perspectives, meanings, and lived experiences related to cultural preservation. This approach aligns with cultural studies research that emphasizes contextual interpretation and engagement with local realities. Through this design, the study seeks to uncover patterns, processes, and challenges underlying village level cultural governance.

### **Participant**

Participants consisted of individuals directly involved in cultural governance and traditional performing arts within the village. The sample included the village head, village officials, sub district representatives, and members of traditional art groups representing key cultural stakeholders. Ten participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that only those with relevant knowledge and involvement were included in the study. This sampling strategy is appropriate for qualitative cultural research that prioritizes depth over breadth. All participants were residents of Dadapayu Village or

officials responsible for cultural affairs within the local administrative structure. Their positions allowed them to provide insights into cultural policies, community engagement, and challenges in sustaining traditional arts.

### **Instrument**

Data were collected using semi structured interview guides, observation sheets, and documentation protocols. The interview guide contained open ended questions designed to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations regarding cultural preservation efforts. Observations focused on community art practices, cultural events, and interactions between artists and local authorities. Documentation included village archives, photographs, meeting records, and policy documents relevant to cultural activities. These instruments enabled triangulation of data, increasing the credibility and richness of the findings. The combination of instruments ensured that both verbal and non verbal cultural expressions were captured.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis model that involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. First, transcripts from interviews and field notes were condensed to identify significant statements and emerging themes related to cultural governance and preservation. Second, categorized data were displayed in thematic matrices to observe connections and recurring patterns. Third, interpretations were synthesized to develop meaningful conclusions consistent with the cultural context of the village. Throughout the process, constant comparison and memo writing were used to maintain analytic rigor. This analysis approach allowed the researcher to construct a coherent understanding of governance roles in sustaining traditional performing arts.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

The village government performs several facilitative functions aimed at supporting the continuity of traditional performing arts. Findings indicate that the local administration provides access to communal spaces, logistical assistance, and occasional financial support for cultural events. Some art groups receive assistance during village festivals such as Independence Day celebrations, where traditional art performances are showcased. However, the distribution of support is inconsistent, with several groups reporting that they receive minimal or no assistance throughout the year. This inconsistency appears to be influenced by limited resources and the absence of a structured cultural funding mechanism within the village. As a result, facilitative efforts remain uneven across different art communities.

Communication between the village government and cultural practitioners demonstrates a mix of positive interaction and significant challenges. While formal communication channels, such as village meetings and announcements, are maintained, many art groups report a lack of timely information regarding funding opportunities or cultural programs. Several practitioners expressed difficulty communicating their needs to village authorities, especially groups that are unregistered or informally organized. This communication gap often leads to misunderstandings and unmet expectations related to cultural support. Despite these challenges, some practitioners acknowledge that the

government is generally responsive when communication is initiated directly by the art groups. These findings indicate that communication effectiveness is highly dependent on initiative, access, and administrative legitimacy.

Catalytic roles include encouraging cultural activities, promoting traditional arts to wider audiences, and acting as intermediaries between art groups and external cultural agencies. The village government occasionally coordinates with district cultural offices to facilitate performances at broader events, although such opportunities remain limited. In some instances, local leaders motivate art communities by recognizing their cultural contributions in public forums, which strengthens cultural pride within the community. However, catalytic efforts are often constrained by administrative limitations, especially in cases where art groups lack formal registration. These constraints reduce the village government’s ability to advocate effectively for their participation in larger cultural festivals or competitions.

Several factors support cultural preservation efforts in Dadapayu Village. These include strong community enthusiasm, intergenerational pride, and the symbolic value of traditional performing arts in social ceremonies. Local cultural identity remains a strong motivator for sustaining various art forms. Environmental factors, such as cohesive social networks and longstanding local traditions, also contribute positively. On the other hand, multiple inhibiting factors significantly hinder cultural continuity. These include the lack of formal recognition for many art groups, insufficient financial support, limited availability of performance equipment, and the declining involvement of younger generations. Modern entertainment options and economic pressures further reduce participation in traditional arts. Additionally, bureaucratic requirements, such as the need for SKOK registration, limit access to government support. To provide a clearer overview, key findings are summarized in the table below.

**Table 1.** Summary of Governance Roles and Cultural Conditions in Dadapayu Village

| Governance Role / Factor | Findings                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Facilitation             | Provides space and occasional financial support, but distribution uneven and dependent on event schedules.               |
| Communication            | Formal channels exist but are not effective; unregistered groups face difficulties accessing information.                |
| Catalyst Role            | Encourages cultural participation and links groups to wider networks, but limited by administrative constraints.         |
| Supporting Factors       | Community enthusiasm, cultural pride, strong local identity, longstanding traditions.                                    |
| Inhibiting Factors       | Lack of SKOK registration, limited funding, low youth engagement, competition with modern culture, inadequate equipment. |

Overall, the findings reveal that village governance plays an important yet inconsistent role in sustaining traditional performing arts in Dadapayu Village. The government demonstrates willingness to support cultural activities, but its efforts are hindered by administrative, financial, and generational challenges. Art groups that are formally recognized have a distinct advantage in accessing support, while unregistered groups remain marginalized. Despite these barriers, strong cultural identity and community commitment continue to sustain the arts, although long term preservation requires more structured and inclusive governance strategies.

## Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the facilitative role of the village government in Dadapayu is essential yet remains inconsistently implemented across different traditional art groups. This condition aligns with broader discussions in cultural governance studies which emphasize that institutional support is a major determinant of cultural sustainability at the community level (Bauer et al., 2020; Soini et al., 2016). Although the government occasionally provides logistical and financial support, the absence of a standardized cultural funding scheme limits long term preservation efforts. Traditional performing arts require continuity, structured support, and stable resources to survive modernization pressures. When resources are scarce or unevenly distributed, cultural activities become irregular, weakening intergenerational transmission. These findings indicate that facilitation must evolve from event based support to a systematic cultural preservation strategy. Therefore, improving the consistency of facilitative policies is crucial for enhancing cultural resilience in rural settings.

Communication emerges as another significant dimension influencing the effectiveness of cultural governance in Dadapayu. The presence of formal communication channels does not necessarily guarantee the equal flow of information to all cultural practitioners. This echoes previous research showing that informal or marginalized cultural groups often experience limited access to policy related communication (Dawson, 2018; de Freitas & Martin, 2015). Unregistered traditional art groups face the greatest barriers, particularly in conveying their needs and receiving relevant announcements. Poor communication restricts their ability to participate in cultural programs and gain visibility within broader cultural networks. These conditions weaken the inclusivity of cultural governance, creating disparities between groups with different administrative statuses. Strengthening communication systems is therefore essential to ensure equitable cultural development in the village.

The catalytic role of the village government is found to be symbolically significant but structurally limited in practice. Village authorities occasionally promote traditional arts at inter village or district level events, yet these efforts remain sporadic and heavily dependent on administrative eligibility. This reflects broader challenges documented in cultural policy literature, where grassroots cultural actors often struggle to access higher level cultural platforms due to bureaucratic constraints (Bonet & Négrier, 2018; Marx, 2019; Valtysson, 2022). The lack of formal recognition is particularly detrimental for art groups seeking external funding or performance opportunities. Catalytic involvement should ideally function as a bridge linking local cultural expressions with broader cultural institutions, but such bridging remains weak in Dadapayu. Consequently, the catalytic role must be reinforced through improved administrative support and long term cultural planning. Enhancing this role can promote wider cultural exposure and encourage generational participation.

Supporting and inhibiting factors observed in this study reveal a tension between cultural enthusiasm and structural limitations. On one hand, the community exhibits high cultural pride and a strong sense of identity, reflecting patterns of cultural attachment observed in many rural societies (Brown et al., 2016; Knez & Eliasson, 2017). These

intrinsic motivations are important foundations for sustaining intangible cultural heritage. On the other hand, extrinsic barriers such as limited funding, inadequate facilities, and low youth engagement pose significant threats to cultural longevity. The growing influence of modernization creates cultural displacement, leading younger generations to favor modern entertainment over traditional arts (Inglehart, 1997). Without targeted interventions, these conditions may result in gradual cultural erosion. Therefore, cultural preservation requires a balanced approach that integrates community values with institutional reinforcement.

Overall, the findings of this research contribute to a deeper understanding of how village level cultural governance shapes the sustainability of traditional performing arts in rural Indonesia. The results reinforce the argument that cultural preservation is not solely a community responsibility but a shared endeavor between cultural actors and governing institutions. When governance mechanisms are fragmented or inconsistent, cultural practices become vulnerable to socio economic and generational disruptions. Strengthening facilitation, communication, and catalytic functions is therefore essential for safeguarding cultural heritage. This study also highlights the need for policy innovations that include administrative recognition, youth oriented cultural programs, and sustainable funding schemes. Such improvements will not only preserve traditional arts but also reinforce local identity and cultural continuity. Consequently, these findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, cultural practitioners, and scholars seeking to enhance heritage protection in rural cultural environments.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that village level cultural governance plays a decisive yet uneven role in sustaining traditional performing arts in Dadapayu Village. While the government provides facilitation through event based support, communal spaces, and occasional funding, these efforts remain inconsistent and are hindered by limited resources and the absence of standardized cultural policies. Communication challenges further marginalize unregistered art groups, restricting their access to information and support, while catalytic efforts to promote local arts are weakened by administrative barriers. Despite these limitations, strong community identity, cultural pride, and intergenerational commitment continue to support cultural continuity, although modern entertainment trends and low youth involvement pose substantial risks to long term preservation. Strengthening facilitative, communicative, and catalytic functions, complemented by administrative recognition and sustainable cultural planning, is therefore essential for enhancing cultural resilience and ensuring the survival of traditional performing arts in rural Indonesian communities

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