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Mobilizing Local Religious Knowledge for Community Development: A Participatory Islamic Education Initiative in Kediri, East Java

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Abstract

Local religious knowledge represents an important social and educational resource for strengthening community development. In Indonesia, Islamic education operates not only through formal educational institutions but also through mosques, religious study groups, family networks, pesantren, and community-based religious activities. Nevertheless, the potential of these institutions to support broader community development requires educational approaches that connect religious learning with participation, social responsibility, and collective action. This article proposes a participatory Islamic education initiative in Kediri, East Java, Indonesia, designed to mobilize locally available religious knowledge as a resource for community empowerment. The program framework integrates participatory learning, local knowledge, community asset identification, and collaborative action planning. Drawing on Freire's critical pedagogy, Chambers' participatory development approach, and the capability perspective of Sen, the article positions community members as active contributors to the educational process rather than passive recipients of religious instruction. The proposed initiative emphasizes contextual religious learning, intergenerational knowledge exchange, collaborative problem identification, and the development of locally relevant social initiatives. The article contributes a conceptual and practical framework for community service programs seeking to connect Islamic education with sustainable social development. Its proposed outcomes include strengthened community participation, greater contextual relevance of religious learning, and improved local capacity for collective action. These outcomes require evaluation through documented implementation and participant feedback.

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1. Introduction

Community development requires more than the provision of material assistance or the implementation of short-term educational activities. It involves strengthening people's capacity to identify shared problems, mobilize available resources, develop collective solutions, and sustain improvements in their social environment. From this perspective, education becomes an important instrument of development because it can expand individual capabilities while strengthening relationships among community members. Sen (1999) emphasizes that development should be understood in terms of expanding people's substantive freedoms and opportunities rather than measuring progress exclusively through economic indicators. This perspective offers a useful foundation for community service initiatives that seek to improve social participation and local capacity.

In Indonesia, Islamic education has a distinctive position within community life. Religious knowledge is transmitted through formal schools, pesantren, mosques, majelis taklim, family relationships, and interactions with local religious leaders. These institutions function as educational spaces in which religious teachings, moral values, social expectations, and collective identities are communicated across generations. Research on Islamic education in Indonesia indicates that religious learning can influence local cultural practices and social relationships, particularly when educational activities are connected with the experiences and needs of local communities (Karim et al., 2024). Islamic education therefore has the potential to contribute to community development when its learning processes are connected with everyday social realities.

However, the contribution of religious education to community development cannot be assumed simply because religious activities are regularly conducted. Religious instruction may remain focused on the transmission of normative knowledge without creating sufficient opportunities for participants to identify social problems, exchange experiences, or develop practical responses to local needs. Freire (2000) argues that education becomes transformative when learners participate actively in interpreting their circumstances and developing critical awareness. His perspective suggests that community-based Islamic education should provide opportunities for dialogue, reflection, and collaborative problem-solving rather than relying exclusively on one-way instruction.

The relevance of this approach becomes particularly important in Kediri, East Java, where community life can be examined through the interaction of religious institutions, family networks, neighborhood relationships, educational activities, and local traditions. These settings provide potential entry points for community engagement programs that seek to connect religious knowledge

with practical social concerns. Nevertheless, the specific religious practices, community assets, development priorities, and institutional relationships of a selected community in Kediri must be established through local consultation rather than presumed in advance.

Local religious knowledge should not be understood merely as a collection of religious texts or doctrinal interpretations. It also encompasses the practical knowledge developed through religious teaching, communal worship, mutual assistance, charitable activities, family education, and the experiences of local religious leaders. Geertz (1973) demonstrates the importance of interpreting cultural meanings within their social contexts, while Hefner (2000) examines the relationship between Islam, civil society, and democratic life in Indonesia. These perspectives encourage an understanding of religious knowledge as a social resource whose significance depends partly on how communities interpret and practice it.

A similar argument can be developed through the concept of social capital. Putnam (2000) explains that social networks, norms of reciprocity, and interpersonal trust can facilitate collective action. Community-based religious institutions may provide spaces in which these relationships develop, although their actual contribution depends on patterns of participation, inclusion, leadership, and institutional practice. Religious networks should therefore be examined not only as channels for disseminating information but also as potential structures for organizing collaborative responses to community needs.

The relationship between religious knowledge and development also requires attention to educational participation. Chambers (1997) argues that development processes become more responsive when local people participate in identifying problems and determining priorities. Arnstein's (1969) analysis of citizen participation similarly distinguishes meaningful participation from arrangements in which people have little influence over decisions. These perspectives suggest that an effective community service initiative should involve residents in designing learning activities, defining relevant problems, and evaluating the usefulness of proposed interventions.

Recent Indonesian scholarship provides additional support for connecting Islamic education with local knowledge and community empowerment. Karim et al. (2024) examine the social, cultural, and educational implications of Islamic education for local communities. Faoziyah (2022) discusses community empowerment through religious education and socio-religious resilience, while Alfahrizy et al. (2023) address community empowerment to improve Islamic religious education. These studies provide a basis for examining religious education as part of broader community development rather than treating it exclusively as a pedagogical activity.

Despite this potential, a practical question remains: how can local religious knowledge be

mobilized systematically to support community participation and locally identified development priorities? The issue is not simply whether religious knowledge is available, but whether educational processes can connect that knowledge with collaborative learning, community assets, and practical action.

This article addresses that question by proposing a participatory Islamic education initiative in Kediri, East Java. It has three objectives: first, to formulate a framework for identifying and mobilizing local religious knowledge; second, to develop a participatory learning process that connects religious education with community priorities; and third, to establish an evaluation framework for assessing educational and social outcomes. The article contributes a practical model for community service programs seeking to strengthen the relationship between Islamic education, local participation, and sustainable community development.

2. Previous Studies and Research Gap

2.1. Previous Studies on Community-Based Islamic Education and Empowerment

Research on community-based Islamic education has increasingly emphasized the relationship between religious learning, local knowledge, community participation, and social development. These studies provide a foundation for designing community service initiatives that move beyond conventional religious instruction toward more contextual and participatory forms of educational engagement.

Fahmi et al. (2024), in Community-Based Islamic Education: Democratizing Learning through Local Wisdom, examine how Islamic education can support the democratization of learning by integrating local wisdom into educational practices. Their study highlights the importance of community participation, decentralized decision-making, and the adaptation of educational content to local circumstances. The study is relevant because it positions local knowledge as an important element of community-based Islamic education. However, its literature-based approach differs from a community service initiative that develops and evaluates a participatory program in a specific local setting. Syamhari and Suryadi (2022), in their study of religious development and local wisdom in Pujananting District, examine community empowerment through religious activities and locally grounded values. Their community service program incorporated focus group discussions and religious development activities. The reported evaluation indicated that 73.3% of the 30 participants perceived an influence on their religious knowledge, while 26.7% did not report such an influence. These findings illustrate the importance of assessing participants' perceptions rather than assuming that participation automatically produces educational improvement. Nevertheless, the study's

emphasis on religious development provides a different analytical focus from the present article's proposed integration of religious knowledge, participatory learning, and collective community action.

Djafri (2026) examines the empowerment of children's education and religious development through a Participatory Action Research approach in Biring Kassi Village, Takalar Regency. The program involved community participation in planning, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability. Its activities included Qur'anic literacy, Islamic character development, and basic Arabic learning. This study demonstrates the practical relevance of PAR for community-based Islamic education. The proposed Kediri initiative extends this general approach by emphasizing the mobilization of locally available religious knowledge as a resource for identifying community priorities and organizing collective action.

Rumah (2025) explores a community-based religious education program through an Asset-Based Community Development approach in Solok Regency. The initiative identified local educational resources and combined offline and online learning to strengthen Qur'anic and Arabic literacy. The study is particularly relevant because it demonstrates how existing community assets can be mobilized to expand educational opportunities. The present article shares this emphasis on local resources but places additional conceptual attention on the participatory relationship between religious knowledge, community decision-making, and broader social development.

Ihsan et al. (2026) examine the development of teaching materials for children's Islamic education through a participatory program at Al-Barkah Mosque in Sindangsari Village. Their approach combined consultation, planning, implementation, and reflection with locally relevant Qur'anic learning methods. The study illustrates how a religious institution can function as a community-based educational resource. However, the proposed Kediri initiative is intended to examine a broader process through which religious knowledge can be connected with community-defined development priorities, rather than focusing primarily on teaching materials and children's religious competencies.

Khusnan and Sutono (2025) investigate the strengthening of students' religious character through Islamic religious education in the Society 5.0 era. Their community service program included observation, planning, mentoring, interactive learning, and evaluation. The reported outcomes included increased student engagement and greater awareness of religious practices and responsible technology use. This study reinforces the importance of adapting Islamic education to changing social conditions. The proposed Kediri program differs in its principal unit of analysis: the community and its capacity to mobilize religious knowledge, rather than the religious character development of school students alone.

Finally, Kasim (2026) examines da'wah-based community empowerment through PAR in Bontolanra Village. The program integrated religious education, youth activities, mosque-based initiatives, and community participation. Its approach demonstrates the potential of religious activities to support community engagement and social cohesion. The proposed Kediri initiative builds on this general orientation by foregrounding the process of identifying, interpreting, and mobilizing local religious knowledge as an asset for community development

2.2. Comparative Analysis of Previous Studies

The reviewed studies share three important characteristics. First, they recognize that Islamic education is connected with social relationships and local cultural contexts. Second, they emphasize community participation as a means of making educational activities more responsive to local needs. Third, several studies demonstrate the practical relevance of PAR or ABCD for organizing community-based religious education.

2.3. Research Gap and Original Contribution

The reviewed literature provides useful insights into religious education, local wisdom, community empowerment, and participatory development. However, these themes can be brought together through a more explicit framework that examines how local religious knowledge is identified, interpreted, and mobilized for community-defined development objectives. The proposed initiative in Kediri addresses this conceptual and practical opportunity through three interconnected dimensions.

First, it approaches local religious knowledge as a community asset that may include religious teaching, local educational practices, charitable activities, and established forms of mutual assistance. This perspective shifts attention from the delivery of educational content alone toward the identification and mobilization of resources already available within the community. Second, it connects participatory Islamic education with collaborative action planning. Community members are involved not only in learning activities but also in identifying local priorities, selecting feasible initiatives, assigning responsibilities, and reviewing progress. This approach is consistent with participatory development principles articulated by Chambers (1997) and with critical pedagogy's emphasis on dialogue and active learning (Freire, 2000).

Third, it proposes an evaluation framework that distinguishes educational participation from collective action and longer-term sustainability. Such a distinction is important because attendance at religious activities does not, by itself, demonstrate increased community capacity or sustainable social change. The article's contribution therefore lies in the proposed integration of local religious knowledge, participatory educational practice, and community development. It should not claim that

no previous study has examined these relationships. Instead, its originality should be demonstrated through the particular program design, the social context of the selected Kediri community, and the empirical evidence obtained during implementation.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Community Engagement Approach

This community service initiative adopts a participatory approach that combines Participatory Action Research (PAR) with Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). PAR is used to organize collaborative processes of problem identification, planning, implementation, observation, and reflection, while ABCD provides a framework for identifying and mobilizing resources already available within the community. PAR emphasizes collaboration between researchers and community participants in generating knowledge and developing practical responses to identified problems (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Rather than positioning community members as passive beneficiaries, this approach recognizes them as contributors to the interpretation of local circumstances and the development of appropriate interventions.

ABCD complements PAR by emphasizing community strengths, relationships, skills, and institutional resources. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) argue that sustainable community development can be strengthened by connecting existing assets rather than defining communities exclusively through their needs or deficiencies. In this initiative, religious knowledge, local educators, community organizations, and established learning spaces are treated as potential resources whose relevance must be established through consultation.

The combination of these approaches is appropriate for the proposed article because its central concern is not merely the delivery of Islamic educational materials. It is the process through which locally available religious knowledge can be connected with participatory learning and community-defined development objectives. The initiative is designed for implementation in a selected community in Kediri, East Java, Indonesia. The specific village or neighborhood, partner institution, participant population, and implementation period must be identified before the methodology is finalized.

3.2. Location, Community Partners, and Participants

The program is situated in Kediri, East Java, with the final location to be determined in collaboration with the relevant community partners. The selection of the location should consider the presence of an active community institution, the relevance of local religious education, the willingness of residents to participate, and the feasibility of sustaining activities after the intervention. Potential partners include local religious leaders, mosque administrators, majelis taklim coordinators, Islamic educators, parents, youth representatives, and community organization members. Their participation

should reflect the actual social composition and priorities of the selected community.

Participants should be recruited purposively based on their relevance to the program's objectives. The final article must report the actual number of participants, their relevant characteristics, the recruitment procedure, and their roles in the activities. These details should not be estimated or invented in advance. Community partners will be involved in identifying educational needs, mapping local resources, reviewing proposed learning materials, and determining feasible follow-up activities. This arrangement is intended to ensure that the program reflects local circumstances rather than relying entirely on the assumptions of external facilitators.

3.3. Stages of Program Implementation

The program is organized into four phases: preliminary assessment and asset mapping, participatory educational activities, collaborative community action, and evaluation with follow-up planning.

Phase 1. Community assessment and asset mapping. Initial consultation, observation, interviews, and focus group discussions identify existing religious knowledge, community resources, educational needs, and participation barriers. The initial phase establishes an understanding of the community's educational environment and available resources. Data collection may include semi-structured interviews with religious leaders and community representatives, focus group discussions with residents, observation of existing educational activities, and examination of relevant community documents.

The assessment will explore three principal questions: what forms of religious knowledge are available locally, how this knowledge is transmitted and practiced, and which community priorities could reasonably be addressed through participatory education. Asset mapping will identify local educators, learning spaces, community organizations, established religious activities, and networks of mutual assistance. The analysis will also consider whether particular groups face barriers to participation and whether educational resources are accessible across age groups, genders, and social positions. The findings of this phase will inform the content and structure of subsequent activities. This process is consistent with the participatory principle that interventions should be developed in relation to community-defined priorities (Chambers, 1997).

Phase 2. Participatory Islamic education. Facilitated learning sessions combine religious materials, contextual examples, group discussions, and reflection on locally identified social concerns. he second phase consists of educational activities designed in collaboration with community partners. The content may include religious literacy, ethical responsibilities, family education, social solidarity,

charitable practices, or other themes identified during the initial assessment.

The sessions will combine short presentations, guided discussions, contextual case studies, and collaborative reflection. Religious educators will provide appropriate guidance on Islamic concepts, while participants will contribute experiences and perspectives concerning their practical application. This format draws on Freire's (2000) emphasis on dialogue and active learning. It also reflects situated learning theory, which explains how learning develops through participation in meaningful social practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The educational process should provide opportunities for participants to ask questions, discuss differing experiences respectfully, and identify practical implications of the material. The final article should specify the actual number of sessions, duration, learning materials, and teaching methods used.

Phase 3. Collaborative community action. Participants select a feasible initiative, allocate responsibilities, establish an activity schedule, and agree on indicators for reviewing progress. The third phase connects learning with a practical activity selected by the participants. The activity should address a concern identified during consultation and should be achievable using available community resources. Possible activities include peer-led religious learning, family education sessions, educational assistance for children, or the coordination of community-based charitable initiatives. The final selection must reflect the priorities and decisions of the actual community.

Participants will identify the objective, determine responsibilities, establish a timeline, and select appropriate indicators for assessing progress. The facilitator's role is to support planning and coordination while allowing community members to exercise meaningful influence over decisions. This phase reflects the relationship between participatory development and local agency described by Chambers (1997). It also operationalizes the asset-based principle that community initiatives should draw upon locally available capacities (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993)

Phase 4. Evaluation and sustainability planning. Program activities are reviewed through participant feedback, documentation, observation, and a jointly developed follow-up plan. The final phase reviews the implementation process and develops a plan for continued activity. Evaluation will consider participation, learning, collective action, community ownership, and the feasibility of sustaining the initiative.

A reflection meeting will allow participants to identify activities they considered useful, difficulties encountered, and adjustments needed. The findings will inform a follow-up plan that specifies responsible individuals, proposed activities, required resources, and a schedule for subsequent review. Sustainability will be assessed through documented arrangements and, where follow-up evidence is available, actual continuation of activities. The existence of a plan alone will not

be interpreted as proof of long-term impact.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Mobilizing Local Religious Knowledge as a Foundation for Community Development

Local religious knowledge represents an important social resource for community development because it connects moral values, everyday practices, collective identity, and relationships among community members. In Kediri, East Java, an initiative based on participatory Islamic education can be examined through the ways religious teachings are connected with local social needs and community priorities. Rather than treating religious education exclusively as the transmission of doctrinal knowledge, this approach places it within the broader context of social participation, community empowerment, and the development of collective responsibility.

The central argument of this initiative is that Islamic education can contribute to community development when religious knowledge is translated into practical activities that address concerns identified by community members themselves. Values such as ta'awun (mutual assistance), ukhuwah (brotherhood), amanah (trustworthiness), musyawarah (deliberation), and maslahah (collective welfare) offer a moral foundation for collaborative action. These principles can encourage people to understand social problems not merely as individual difficulties but also as shared responsibilities requiring collective responses.

This perspective corresponds with Freire's (1970) argument that education should develop critical awareness and enable people to participate actively in transforming their circumstances. Education becomes socially meaningful when participants are encouraged to reflect on their lived experiences, examine the conditions affecting their communities, and formulate possible responses. Within Islamic education, such a process can connect religious reflection with concrete concerns, including educational participation, family relationships, environmental responsibility, social solidarity, and the inclusion of vulnerable groups.

The significance of local religious knowledge also relates to its social legitimacy. Religious teachings are frequently communicated through established community relationships, religious gatherings, informal discussions, and interactions with respected local figures. These settings may provide opportunities to discuss community concerns in a language that is culturally familiar to participants. Nevertheless, religious authority should not be assumed to produce participation automatically. Its contribution depends on whether community members can express their concerns, question proposed solutions, and participate in decisions concerning activities that affect their lives.

For this reason, the initiative should be understood as an effort to connect religious knowledge

with participatory learning rather than as a program that simply disseminates instructions from religious leaders to community members. Its effectiveness needs to be examined through evidence of participation, the relevance of activities to local priorities, and the extent to which community members assume responsibility for subsequent action.

4.2. Participatory Islamic Education and the Development of Community Awareness

her local organizers

A second analytical dimension concerns the relationship between participatory Islamic education and community awareness. Conventional educational activities may emphasize the delivery of information, the explanation of religious concepts, and the assessment of participants' understanding. Although these activities remain important, community-oriented education requires a broader process in which participants can connect knowledge with their experiences and social environments. Freire (1970) distinguishes between education that positions learners as passive recipients and education that encourages dialogue and critical reflection. This distinction is relevant to community-based Islamic education because participants possess knowledge derived from family life, religious practice, local customs, occupational experiences, and social relationships. An educational initiative can draw on these experiences as starting points for collective learning.

In practical terms, participatory sessions may begin with discussions about problems that residents consider important. Facilitators and participants can then explore how Islamic ethical principles relate to these concerns, identify existing community resources, and formulate realistic activities. For example, a discussion about amanah may be connected with transparent management of community funds, while ta'awun may inform collective assistance for households experiencing economic or educational difficulties. Environmental cleanliness can be discussed through the relationship between religious responsibility and the maintenance of shared public spaces.

These examples illustrate possible applications rather than verified outcomes of the Kediri initiative. The actual discussion should identify which themes emerged from community consultations and explain how participants interpreted them. Evidence may include interview excerpts, observation notes, records of group discussions, or descriptions of activities documented during implementation. Participatory education also requires attention to differences in participants' experiences and social positions. Adults, young people, women, religious educators, community organizers, and economically disadvantaged residents may understand local problems differently. If educational sessions privilege only the perspectives of established leaders, the program may reproduce existing inequalities rather than expand community participation. Facilitators should create conditions in which different groups can articulate their experiences and contribute to decisions.

This concern is consistent with Arnstein's (1969) analysis of citizen participation, which emphasizes that participation varies according to the actual distribution of decision-making power. Attendance at an activity does not necessarily mean that participants influence its direction. A community development initiative should consequently distinguish between participation as presence and participation as meaningful involvement in defining problems, selecting priorities, implementing activities, and evaluating results. The contribution of participatory Islamic education should therefore be assessed not only through the amount of religious information delivered but also through the quality of dialogue and the opportunities available for collective decision-making. Evidence of success would include documented instances in which community members identified priorities, contributed ideas, negotiated different perspectives, and participated in determining follow-up activities.

4.3. Community Assets, Social Capital, and Collective Action

The mobilization of local religious knowledge becomes more sustainable when it is connected with resources already available within the community. Asset-Based Community Development provides a useful framework for examining this relationship. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) argue that community development should begin by identifying existing capacities, associations, skills, institutions, and relationships rather than defining communities primarily through their deficiencies. Applied to the Kediri initiative, an asset-based perspective encourages attention to religious learning groups, mosques, Islamic educational institutions, community organizations, local educators, voluntary associations, and residents who possess relevant knowledge or practical skills. These resources may provide organizational foundations for community activities. Their availability, however, should be established through actual asset mapping rather than assumed in advance.

The distinction between a needs-based and an asset-based approach is important. A needs-based assessment identifies problems that require intervention, while an asset-based assessment examines the capacities that can be mobilized to address them. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Communities need to identify structural constraints, including limited access to educational services, economic insecurity, or insufficient organizational resources, while also recognizing their capacity to develop locally appropriate responses. Sen's (1999) capability approach offers a complementary perspective. Development is not adequately measured by the availability of resources alone; it also concerns people's substantive opportunities to pursue lives they value.

From this perspective, religious education contributes to development when it expands people's ability to participate in decisions, access relevant knowledge, cooperate with others, and act on shared

priorities. A series of educational meetings, for example, would have limited developmental significance if participants acquired information but lacked opportunities to apply it in their social environment.

Social capital provides another explanation for the potential relationship between religious knowledge and collective action. Putnam (2000) emphasizes the importance of social networks, trust, reciprocity, and civic engagement in facilitating cooperation. Religious gatherings and community organizations may create opportunities for people to exchange information, establish relationships, and coordinate activities. Nevertheless, social networks do not always generate inclusive outcomes. Strong internal relationships can coexist with exclusion of people who belong to less influential groups. Consequently, the initiative should examine both the strengths and limitations of existing social relationships. Relevant questions include whether community resources are accessible to different social groups, whether responsibilities are distributed fairly, and whether cooperation extends beyond established networks. This analysis can reveal whether religious institutions operate as bridges connecting different community groups or primarily reinforce relationships among people who already share similar backgrounds.

The relationship between religious knowledge and community assets is most productive when moral commitments are translated into organizational practices. Mutual assistance, for instance, can be institutionalized through transparent arrangements for identifying beneficiaries, distributing responsibilities, and monitoring collective activities. Deliberation can be incorporated into regular meetings, while accountability can guide the management of resources. Such practices move religious values beyond individual understanding and embed them within collective action.

4.4. Community Participation and the Role of Religious Leaders

Unity-based Islamic education because they may possess religious knowledge, social recognition, and established relationships with residents. Their involvement can help connect ethical principles with local concerns and encourage dialogue among participants. However, the developmental significance of religious leadership depends on how authority is exercised and how opportunities for participation are organized.

Bourdieu (1986) explains that social resources are partly embedded in networks and relationships, while symbolic capital derives from forms of recognition that are socially valued. Religious authority can therefore be understood as a resource that may support collective mobilization. When community members recognize a religious leader's knowledge and integrity, that recognition may help establish trust in a proposed activity. Yet such influence should not be interpreted as evidence that all residents agree with the leader or that every initiative supported by religious authority

is necessarily inclusive. A participatory approach requires religious leaders to function not only as speakers or instructors but also as facilitators of collective learning. Their contribution may include opening discussions, interpreting religious principles in relation to community concerns, encouraging cooperation, and helping participants negotiate differences. At the same time, decision-making should remain open to the experiences and perspectives of other community members.

This balance is particularly important when discussing issues that affect women, young people, economically disadvantaged households, or residents whose voices are less visible in formal community forums. Participation should not be restricted to those who already hold organizational positions. Facilitators need to consider whether meeting schedules, communication practices, language, and decision-making procedures allow different groups to contribute meaningfully.

Minkler and Wallerstein (2008) emphasize the importance of community participation in health and social change initiatives, particularly where collaborative relationships influence the relevance and sustainability of interventions. Their work supports the broader principle that community members should be involved in the processes through which problems are defined and responses developed. In the present context, participation is not simply a method for implementing a predetermined program; it is part of the intended developmental process. An evaluation of the Kediri initiative should therefore document how responsibilities were distributed between facilitators, religious leaders, and residents. It should also identify whether participants influenced the selection of activities and whether any mechanisms existed for addressing disagreements. These details are necessary to determine whether the initiative developed a genuinely participatory model or primarily relied on the authority of its organizers.

4.5. Linking Religious Values with Practical Community Development

The connection between Islamic ethical principles and practical community development represents a central concern of this initiative. Religious education may strengthen social awareness, but its contribution to development becomes more visible when learning is connected with organized action. This relationship requires a clear sequence linking community-identified problems, relevant religious and social knowledge, collective planning, implementation, and evaluation.

For example, when residents identify educational participation as a priority, the initiative could facilitate discussion about the value of learning, collective responsibility for children's education, and cooperation between families and educational institutions. If environmental concerns emerge as a priority, religious reflection may be connected with community clean-up activities, waste management, or the maintenance of shared facilities. If social solidarity becomes the main concern, participants may

develop transparent procedures for coordinating assistance to households facing particular difficulties. These examples should be treated as possible program pathways. The final manuscript must specify which activities were actually implemented in Kediri and provide supporting evidence. It should explain who participated, what resources were mobilized, how decisions were made, and what immediate outputs were documented. Without such information, claims that the program improved educational participation, reduced social conflict, or increased community welfare would exceed the available evidence.

The distinction between outputs and outcomes is particularly important. Outputs refer to immediate products of an activity, such as the number of educational sessions conducted, learning materials developed, participants attending meetings, or community action plans prepared. Outcomes refer to changes that may follow, including improved understanding, stronger collaboration, more inclusive decision-making, or the continuation of collective activities. Longer-term impacts, such as sustained improvements in educational access or community welfare, require additional evidence and a sufficiently long observation period.

A credible evaluation should not treat attendance or participant satisfaction as sufficient proof of social transformation. Instead, evidence can be collected from observation, participant interviews, meeting records, and comparisons between initial community priorities and activities undertaken. Where appropriate, simple pre- and post-activity assessments may provide information about changes in participants' understanding. Such assessments should be interpreted cautiously and combined with qualitative evidence rather than used to establish causal claims that the study design cannot support. This approach also makes it possible to examine unintended consequences. Activities may encounter difficulties related to limited time, uneven participation, insufficient funding, or differences in community priorities. Documenting these constraints is academically valuable because community development is rarely a linear process. A transparent account of challenges helps explain why particular activities worked, required modification, or did not achieve their intended objectives.

4.6. Sustainability and the Institutionalization of Community Learning

Sustainability remains a key consideration in community-based religious education. A program may generate enthusiasm during implementation but lose momentum when external facilitators withdraw. Sustainable development therefore requires more than successful delivery of educational sessions; it requires arrangements through which community members can continue learning, organizing, and evaluating activities independently. An asset-based approach suggests that sustainability can be strengthened by connecting activities with existing institutions and community networks (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Where appropriate, follow-up activities may be

incorporated into regular religious gatherings, educational forums, community meetings, or the programs of local organizations. Such integration can reduce dependence on temporary project structures and make collective learning part of established community practices.

Sustainability also depends on the distribution of knowledge and responsibility. If planning, facilitation, and resource management remain concentrated in one or two individuals, activities may be vulnerable when those individuals become unavailable. Developing local facilitators, documenting procedures, distributing responsibilities, and establishing transparent communication channels can support continuity. These arrangements should be grounded in community preferences rather than imposed as standardized organizational requirements. Participation in monitoring and evaluation is equally important. Residents should have opportunities to assess whether activities remain relevant, whether intended beneficiaries are reached, and whether resources are used responsibly. Regular reflection can help participants revise activities in response to changing circumstances. This process is consistent with participatory action research, in which inquiry and action are connected through cycles of reflection, implementation, and reassessment (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008).

Nevertheless, sustainability should not be equated with the indefinite continuation of every activity. A program may need to change when community priorities shift or when an intervention proves ineffective. The more important question is whether the initiative strengthens the community's capacity to identify concerns, mobilize resources, and organize appropriate responses. Sustainability, in this sense, refers to the continuity of local capacity and collective learning rather than simply the permanence of a particular project.

4.7. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The discussion suggests that the relationship between Islamic education and community development can be understood through the interaction of three dimensions: meaningful learning, the mobilization of community assets, and participatory collective action. Religious knowledge provides an ethical and cultural framework through which community concerns can be interpreted. Existing institutions and relationships provide potential organizational resources. Participatory processes create opportunities for residents to translate shared values into practical responses.

These dimensions are interdependent. Religious knowledge may have limited social effects when it is disconnected from everyday problems. Community assets may remain underused when residents lack opportunities to collaborate. Participatory activities may also struggle to achieve continuity when responsibilities, resources, and evaluation procedures are unclear. An integrated approach can help connect educational processes with locally defined developmental priorities. The theoretical

contribution of this framework lies in treating religious knowledge as a potential resource for collective agency rather than only as a subject of instruction. This interpretation does not presume that religion automatically produces empowerment or social cohesion. Its developmental contribution depends on the relationships through which knowledge is interpreted, the inclusiveness of participation, and the institutional arrangements supporting collective action.

Practically, the initiative highlights the importance of beginning with community consultation, recognizing locally available capacities, facilitating dialogue, and establishing realistic follow-up arrangements. These principles may be relevant to other community-based Islamic education programs, although their application must account for differences in local institutions, social relations, economic conditions, and community priorities.

The principal limitation of the present discussion is that its conclusions must ultimately be grounded in documented field evidence from Kediri. Further analysis should incorporate participants' accounts, descriptions of implemented activities, and evaluation records to establish which proposed mechanisms were observed in practice. With this evidence, the article can move beyond a conceptual explanation of how participatory Islamic education might support community development toward a defensible account of what the initiative achieved, the challenges it encountered, and the conditions that shaped its results.

5. Conclusion

This article examines the potential contribution of local religious knowledge to community development through a participatory Islamic education initiative in Kediri, East Java. The central argument is that Islamic education can extend beyond the transmission of religious knowledge when learning is connected with community priorities, local capacities, and collective action. Islamic ethical principles, including ta'awun (mutual assistance), amanah (trustworthiness), musyawarah (deliberation), and maslahah (collective welfare), provide a normative foundation for discussing social responsibilities and organizing community-oriented activities.

The discussion brings together participatory education, asset-based community development, and social capital perspectives. Freire's (1970) approach to critical education highlights the importance of dialogue and reflection in enabling people to engage with their social circumstances. The asset-based perspective of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) emphasizes the identification and mobilization of existing community resources, while Putnam's (2000) analysis of social capital draws attention to the role of networks, trust, and reciprocity in collective action. Together, these perspectives offer a framework for understanding how religious knowledge, community institutions, and participatory learning may contribute to locally grounded development.

An important implication is that community development should not be measured solely by the number of educational sessions conducted or the amount of information delivered. Its broader significance lies in whether community members have meaningful opportunities to identify problems, participate in decisions, mobilize available resources, and maintain collaborative activities. Religious

leaders can support this process by facilitating dialogue and connecting ethical principles with practical concerns. Their involvement, however, needs to be accompanied by inclusive decision-making so that women, young people, disadvantaged households, and other less-represented groups can contribute to community priorities.

The discussion also emphasizes the importance of sustainability. Community-based Islamic education is more likely to remain relevant when activities are connected with existing local institutions, responsibilities are distributed among participants, and mechanisms for reflection and evaluation are established. Community members should be able to adapt activities to changing circumstances rather than remain dependent on external facilitators or temporary project arrangements. Nevertheless, the extent to which these potential contributions were achieved in Kediri must be established through empirical evidence from the actual program. Documentation of participants' experiences, implemented activities, community decisions, and evaluation results is necessary before claiming measurable improvements in awareness, social cooperation, or community welfare. The article consequently offers an analytical framework for connecting local religious knowledge with participatory community development while recognizing the need for field-based evidence to substantiate specific outcomes

Recommendations

This study highlights the potential of local religious knowledge to support community development through participatory Islamic education in Kediri, East Java. Islamic values, including mutual assistance, trustworthiness, and collective responsibility, can encourage social participation and strengthen community engagement. Integrating religious education with local needs, community assets, and inclusive decision-making may promote sustainable development. It is recommended that religious leaders, educational institutions, and community organizations collaborate in designing relevant programs, strengthening local capacities, and evaluating outcomes. Further empirical research is needed to assess the initiative's actual impact and identify effective strategies for sustainable community empowerment.

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