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## From Custom to Management: Cikondang Leadership and Decision-Making Patterns

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This research is grounded in the expanding crisis of leadership in modern organizations, characterized by rigid bureaucracy and impersonal managerial approaches. Conversely, indigenous communities such as Cikondang in Bandung Regency have for centuries practiced sustainable collective leadership and consensus-based decision-making systems. The gap between these two realities raises fundamental questions about how local wisdom can contribute to contemporary leadership thought. This study examines the transformation of leadership patterns and decision-making mechanisms in the Cikondang indigenous community and their relevance to modern management practices. The Cikondang community is known for its leadership structure based on customary values, deliberation, and local wisdom passed down through generations. Through a qualitative approach involving literature review and document analysis, this study demonstrates that Cikondang indigenous leadership is characterized by collectivity, moral legitimacy, and an orientation toward social harmony. These patterns are then compared with contemporary management principles, particularly in the areas of participatory leadership, conflict management, and consensus-based decision-making. The results reveal that Cikondang's indigenous values align with modern management concepts emphasizing collaboration, effective communication, and the strengthening of organizational values. Furthermore, these findings are critically linked to major theories such as Participatory Leadership and Ethical Leadership, as well as sustainable development studies. Therefore, integrating local values into management can provide a more humanistic, adaptive, and sustainable leadership model, while offering an alternative framework for community governance in the modern era.*

**Keywords:** *Traditional Leadership; Consensus Decision-Making; Modern Management.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In an era marked by rapid globalization and organizational complexity, many modern institutions face a leadership crisis characterized by excessive bureaucracy, impersonal management, and diminishing stakeholder trust (Tourish, 2019; Alvesson & Einola, 2019). This has spurred a global search for more participatory, ethical, and sustainable leadership models that can foster resilience and social cohesion (Maak et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2022). Concurrently, there is growing recognition within international frameworks—such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—of the value of indigenous knowledge and local wisdom in promoting inclusive and sustainable development (United Nations, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). Against this backdrop, the study of traditional leadership

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systems offers critical insights into alternative governance approaches that prioritize collectivity, moral legitimacy, and ecological harmony (Whyte, 2018).

One community that embodies such a living repository of indigenous governance is the Cikondang indigenous community in Bandung Regency, West Java (Suryadi, 2019; Rosyadi & Nugraha, 2020). As a Sundanese society that has preserved its socio-cultural system amidst sweeping modernization, Cikondang presents a compelling case of sustainable customary praxis (Iskandar & Iskandar, 2017; Permana et al., 2021). The community operates under a leadership structure centered on figures such as the *kuncen* (custodian) and customary elders, who oversee social relations, rituals, and community welfare through deliberation and consensus (Hidayat, 2018; Widianingsih & Morrell, 2020). This system has allowed Cikondang to maintain its cultural identity while coexisting with formal village administration and contemporary economic dynamics (Nugraha & Purnama, 2022).

The phenomenon of the Cikondang Traditional House is evident in the persistence of ancestral values and traditions amidst the tide of modernization (Ningrum & Abdullah, 2025). This traditional house serves not only as a physical structure but also as a center for customary activities, deliberation, and community decision-making. The Cikondang community still upholds the role of traditional leaders, customary rules, and traditional rituals, but at the same time, it is beginning to adapt to modern administrative and management systems, resulting in a fusion between traditional leadership and modern social practices in everyday life.

Taboos in the Cikondang Traditional House are customary rules passed down through generations and believed to have symbolic and spiritual significance. These taboos include not altering the shape, size, or orientation of the traditional house, as this is considered a violation of ancestral beliefs. One is not permitted to enter carelessly or behave inappropriately in a traditional house, such as by speaking rudely or acting inappropriately; nor is one allowed to use a traditional house for personal gain. Furthermore, the timing and procedures for repairing a traditional house have certain taboos that must be followed, including provisions for customs and the involvement of traditional figures, as a form of respect for tradition and trust in the Cikondang community.

Previous research, such as that by Geertz (1973) on cultural interpretation and Koentjaraningrat (2009) on Indonesian anthropology, has extensively examined traditional leadership structures in various indigenous communities. However, most studies tend to focus on describing traditional systems in isolation, without significantly exploring their dynamic interaction and potential integration with contemporary management paradigms. This creates a research gap regarding how indigenous leadership mechanisms—such as those in Cikondang—can adapt to and enrich modern managerial practices, particularly in contexts of social and administrative change.

The novelty of this study lies in its explicit effort to bridge indigenous wisdom with modern management science by proposing a hybrid leadership model. Unlike prior works that often treat tradition and modernity as separate realms, this research examines their interplay, selective adaptation, and synergistic potential within the Cikondang community. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze the transformation of leadership patterns and consensus-based decision-making in the Cikondang indigenous community and to assess their relevance and applicability to modern management principles. The benefits of this research are both

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theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it contributes to the literature on cross-cultural leadership and indigenous management studies. Practically, it offers insights for local stakeholders, policymakers, and organizational leaders on how to integrate local wisdom into governance and management systems to foster more humanistic, adaptive, and sustainable community development.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative approach to gain a deep and contextual understanding of leadership patterns and decision-making mechanisms within the Cikondang indigenous community. This approach was selected because it can capture the complexity of social phenomena, values, meanings, and interactional processes that are difficult to quantify, while also offering flexibility in exploring the dynamics between tradition and modernity. Data were collected through two primary techniques: document analysis and literature review. Document analysis was applied to customary records, deliberation minutes, community activity reports, and local historical archives to obtain authentic and contextually rich primary data. Meanwhile, a literature review was conducted using books, scholarly journals, and prior studies relevant to traditional leadership, local wisdom, and modern management theory, in order to build a theoretical foundation and identify research gaps. The collected data were then analyzed using descriptive-analytical methods with a thematic approach, involving data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, which was verified through source triangulation. Through this methodological design, the study not only describes existing leadership patterns but also critically and systematically analyzes their potential integration with contemporary management principles.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the study show that the traditional leadership patterns of the Cikondang indigenous community have strong collective and participatory characteristics. Leadership is not centralized on one individual who has absolute power, but rather it is exercised jointly by the *kuncen* and traditional elders who have moral and spiritual legitimacy. Custom is seen as an exemplary figure whose duties guard mark culture, direct social life, as well as ensuring the continuity of customs. Values such as deliberation consensus, mutual assistance, mutual cooperation, respect for ancestors, and social harmony are the main foundations in carrying out traditional leadership.

The decision-making process in the Cikondang traditional structure is carried out through a deliberation mechanism involving traditional leaders and the community. Decisions related to traditional rituals, social life, and community management are not taken unilaterally, but through joint consideration to reach a collective agreement. This aims to guard balance, social and prevent internal conflict. The results of the study show that this mechanism is still consistently maintained, even though the Cikondang community is now in an increasingly complex social environment.

The interaction between Cikondang traditional leadership and modern management principles began to emerge with the introduction of village administration systems, government policies, and changes in the mindsets of the younger generation. In practice, traditional

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leadership remains the primary authority on cultural and spiritual matters, while modern managerial approaches are applied to administrative management, activity planning, and relations with external parties. These findings suggest a form of selective adaptation, where elements of modern management are adopted without eliminating core traditional values.

The transformation of leadership from traditional patterns to a more managerial approach is influenced by various factors. Driving factors include demands for transparency, the need for efficient community management, and the involvement of younger generations who are more open to formal systems. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors include concerns about the erosion of traditional values, resistance from some traditional leaders to change, and limitations of managerial understanding. This dynamic shows that the transformation process takes place gradually and negotiable.

Based on the results of the discussion, this study formulates a hybrid leadership model as an alternative, relevant to the Cikondang indigenous community. This model integrates the moral legitimacy and local wisdom of indigenous leadership with modern management principles such as planning, coordination, and accountability. Hybrid leadership enables indigenous communities to maintain their cultural identity while enhancing their governance capacity to address social and administrative challenges. Thus, this model has the potential to create adaptive, humanistic, and sustainable leadership.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the traditional leadership of the *Cikondang* indigenous community is collective, participatory, and rooted in moral legitimacy and local wisdom, with the *kuncen* and traditional elders acting not as authoritarian figures but as guardians of values, social guides, and consensus-driven decision-makers who prioritize deliberation to maintain harmony, social stability, and cultural sustainability amid social change. The interaction between this traditional leadership and modern management principles reveals a selective, gradual adaptation process, where customary authority dominates cultural and spiritual domains while modern approaches are integrated into administrative and community management aspects, supporting the relevance of a hybrid leadership model for adaptive, humanistic, and sustainable governance. For future research, scholars could conduct longitudinal studies or comparative analyses with other indigenous communities to empirically test the scalability and long-term impacts of this hybrid model in diverse modernization contexts.

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