The Mosque Welfare Agency's Strategy in Developing the Leadership of Muslim Youth in Sorong City

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Abstract

Background: The Nurul Bahri's Mosque Welfare Agency (BKM) develops local wisdom leadership in fostering the skills and harmony of the Muslim young generation**. Research Objective**: This study aims to explore the strategies in fostering Islamic leadership among youth at the Nurul Bahri Mosque in Sorong City, Southwest Papua Province, Indonesia, and its contribution to maintaining a harmonious life. **Methods**: This qualitative study used interviews, observation, and documentation with six BKM administrators, three mosque youth mentors, and ten purposively selected active youths engaged in leadership, arts, culture, organizational activities, and community development within mosque-based programs. This study collected data over a period of about ten months, from June 2024 to April 2025. **Results:** The results show that the youth development has advanced from informal activities to structured programs that enhance confidence, leadership, communication, and cultural skills. Islamic arts serve as both a means of religious outreach and a medium for creativity, social legitimacy, and interfaith tolerance. These outcomes differ from Lombok's predominantly Muslim yet ethnically rooted Sasak culture, Belgium's highly diverse and secular European population, and Malaysia's multicultural Malay–Chinese–Indian society. Each demographic context shapes youth engagement and cultural expression differently, making this mosque-based model distinctive. **Conclusion:** This study concludes that BKM Nurul Bahri Mosque develops an integrative youth model blending spiritual education, skills training, and Islamic arts, recommending mosque adoption and policy support to strengthen youth leadership, cultural engagement, and social harmony in multicultural communities.

Keywords: mosque welfare agency, Islamic leadership, arts and culture, tolerance

Introduction

Numerous studies highlight the educational role of mosques, and limited attention has been given to the specific strategies employed by Mosque Welfare Agencies (BKM), particularly those integrating local cultural arts within the Papuan context. While scholarship increasingly recognizes the educational functions of mosques, a notable gap remains regarding the concrete, culturally grounded strategies deployed by Mosque Welfare Agencies (Badan Kesejahteraan Masjid/BKM), particularly those that leverage local artistic traditions in Papua. Abu-Ras et al. (2024) demonstrate how mosques operationalize programs (governance, volunteers, partnerships) with useful analogs for specifying BKM strategy

design. Despite this growing scholarship, existing research provides limited insight into how Mosque Welfare Agencies (BKM) design and operationalize culturally grounded youth strategies, especially in the distinctive context of Papua. Prior studies acknowledge the importance of mosque-based education and local cultural capital (Maemonah & Mohamad Agung Rokhimawan, 2024; and Delos Reyes et al., 2025), yet they rarely examine Islamic arts as strategic tools within youth development and show how Indonesian local cultural capital can structure faith-based initiatives, which are directly relevant to integrating Papuan arts within mosque programming. Pahlevi et al. (2025) frame measurable governance and strategy pathways for mosques to help articulate concrete strategies of BKM. Empirical models of mosque pedagogy and governance pathways offer useful foundations, but none address how BKM integrates Papuan artistic traditions or navigates the religious–ethnic diversity of coastal communities such as Sorong. Demirkoparan (2025) reveals an empirical study of mosque-based pedagogies and educational strategies that offer transferable models for culturally contextual programming.

In Sorong City, Southwest Papua Province, Indonesia, Ayu Sadewi & M. Makhrus (2024) stated that the dynamics of coastal communities with their religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity (Tang et al., 2018) present both challenges and opportunities for mosques. The Nurul Bahri Mosque in Sorong city, situated in a densely populated area near the port, is one of the mosques actively empowering young Muslim people. Then, Hidayati, (2015); Nur, (2022); and Muhammad Arbain et al., (2024) stated that mosque youth are viewed not only as congregants but also as agents of change expected to continue the leadership of the community.

In general, mosques in Indonesia have a historical function that goes beyond simply being places of worship (Farhan et al., 2022). According to Sony Eko Adisaputro et al., (2021), and emphasized by Farhan et al., (2022) and M. Andy Hermansyah (2024) Since the time of the Walisongo (Nahdlatul Ulama), mosques have served as centres for education, da'wah (Islamic outreach), the arts, the economy, and community development. This multifunctional role remains relevant today, especially amid the challenges of globalization, popular culture, and moral degradation affecting the younger generation (Sony Eko Adisaputro et al., 2021; and Suhail et al., 2025). Therefore, mosques are positioned not only as ritual spaces but also as socio-religious institutions that teach Islamic leadership values in youth (Nur, 2022).

The Mosque Welfare Agency (BKM) serves as a strategic institution responsible for managing mosque functions to ensure they remain relevant to the needs of the congregation (Elfrida & Pasaribu, 2023; and M. Andy Hermansyah, 2024). In the context of youth development, the BKM serves as a facilitator, mentor, and provider of spaces for actualization (Elfrida & Pasaribu, 2023). Without a focused strategy, mosques can lose their appeal to the younger generation, potentially creating spiritual and social gaps (M. Andy Hermansyah, 2024).

However, real challenges remain. Uktolseja et al., (2023); Rohmawati & Hamidah, (2025) and Rohmawati & Hamidah, (2025) said that many youths face low motivation to study religion, are influenced by secular popular culture, and lack organizational knowledge and experiences. Without adequate guidance, youth can become disoriented in developing their Islamic identity and leadership. Therefore, contextual, innovative, and adaptive development strategies are urgently needed. Previous studies support this urgency. Sulaeman, (2019); Farhan et al., (2022); M. Andy Hermansyah, (2024); and Lambert et al., (2025) emphasized that mosques are centers of non-formal education that Roza, (2023); Arsyad, (2023);

Muhammad et al., (2019); Ayu Sadewi & M. Makhrus, (2024); and Hanafi, (2025) thought it effectively shapes Islamic character. Madya, (2015); Uktolseja et al., (2023); Hidayat, et al., (2018); Ahmad Amir Aziz & Miftahul Huda, (2024); and Wirakusumah, (2022) demonstrated that youth involvement in mosque organizational leadership increases social responsibility and religious commitment. However, there is little research specifically highlighting the strategies of the Community Empowerment Agency (BKM) in Sorong city, Southwest Papua, making this study a significant academic contribution.

To provide a clearer context, it is important to outline the structure and working mechanism of the Mosque Welfare Agency (BKM). Typically, a BKM operates through an executive board consisting of a chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and several divisions—such as religious education, youth development, social affairs, and arts–culture—each responsible for planning and implementing mosque-based programs. Decisions are made through regular coordination meetings, while program execution involves collaboration with mosque youth, community leaders, and local partners.

Based on this institutional capacity, this study focuses on the strategies employed by the Nurul Bahri Mosque Community Empowerment Agency (BKM) in Sorong City to promote Islamic youth leadership. The research examines how BKM designs its youth development programs, how these strategies are implemented in daily activities, and how they contribute to strengthening Islamic leadership, cultural engagement, and social harmony within a diverse community.

The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of mosque-based Islamic education studies, as well as practical implications for other mosque administrators in Papua and Indonesia. Thus, mosques serve not only as places of worship but also as centers for leadership development, cultural preservation, and strengthening social cohesion.

Methods

This research employed a qualitative approach using a single case study design (Safitri Nuril et al., 2025).). A single case study was selected because the objective was to obtain an in-depth and context-specific understanding of the experiences, strategies, and pedagogical practices of the Nurul Bahri Mosque Welfare Agency (BKM) in fostering youth leadership. Unlike a multiple case study, which prioritizes cross-case comparison, the single case approach allows the researcher to focus intensively on one institutional setting, capturing its unique dynamics, decision-making processes, and culturally grounded strategies—features that cannot be fully explored through broader comparative designs. The boundaries of the case were clearly defined as: (1) the organizational structure and programs of the BKM Nurul Bahri Mosque; (2) the youth development initiatives conducted between 2023–2025; and (3) the stakeholders directly involved in planning, mentoring, and participating in the mosque's youth programs. This ensured that the analysis remained concentrated on one bounded system, consistent with case study methodological principles.

Qualitative research is appropriate for this purpose because it enables researchers to understand social phenomena in their natural context through direct interaction with participants (Creswell & Clark, 2011) Qualitative research is appropriate when researchers seek to understand social phenomena in a natural context through direct interaction with participants. Informants were selected using purposive sampling (Yaumi et al. 2018; Nurkanti

et al., 2023, and Lingu & Makassar, 2025), ensuring that data were collected from individuals who possess deep knowledge of and active involvement in the youth development processes within the mosque.

Research Location and Subjects

The research was conducted at the Nurul Bahri Mosque in Sorong city, Southwest Papua province, Indonesia. This mosque was chosen because the researchers were not part of its community. It is a well-known mosque for its active role in empowering youth through various religious, social, and arts and cultural activities. The research informants consisted of six BKM administrators who were directly involved in the planning and implementation of the youth development program; three mosque youth mentors, including ustadz (teacher of Islamic studies), arts instructors, and community leaders; and ten active youth members of the mosque were selected purposively based on their involvement in leadership, arts and culture, and organizational activities.

Table 1. Classification of informants

No.	Names of informants	Informants
1.	Mosque Welfare Agency (BKM)	6
2.	Youth Mentors	3
3.	Youth members of the Mosque	10
	Total	19

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through several techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Sarwono, 2011). The interviews were semi-structured to provide a guide for the questions, while still allowing for flexibility. Questions covered the BKM planning strategy, program implementation, challenges, and the impact of the guidance on youth. Interviews were conducted in several sessions, each lasting 45–90 minutes, and were recorded with the participants' permission (Creswell, 2009; Abduh et al., 2021; and Ta'ba' et al., 2024).

Furthermore, participant observation was conducted to observe youth activities in the mosque, including regular religious practices, arts, cultural training, exercise, and celebrations of Islamic holidays (Ta'ba et al., 2024). This observation helped researchers understand the dynamics of youth leadership in real-world settings, such as how they coordinate, lead prayers, and organize events. Documentation was then collected, including youth work programs, BKM activity reports, photo archives, videos of Islamic arts activities, and organizational administrative records. This documentation strengthened the data from the interviews and observations.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model (Mataputun, 2020; and Manshur & Munif, 2023), which includes three stages: first, data reduction, which involves selecting, focusing, and simplifying data from interviews, observations, and documentation; second, data presentation in the form of narrative descriptions, tables, and direct quotes from informants to bring the findings to life; and third, iterative drawing of conclusions by examining patterns, relationships, and meanings within the collected data.

Data Validity Testing

To maintain validity, this study employed source triangulation techniques (Sarwono, 2011; and Wirakusumah, 2022), which involved comparing information from BKM administrators, mentors, and youth. Member checking, which involved confirming interview results with informants, and peer debriefing, which involved discussions with fellow researchers. These techniques aimed to ensure that the findings accurately represented the reality on the ground, rather than merely the researcher's subjective interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher upheld research ethics by obtaining informed consent from informants, maintaining confidentiality, and using the data solely for academic purposes. The entire data collection process was conducted voluntarily without coercion, so informant participation was based on awareness and sincerity (Wirakusumah, 2022). The method includes an explanation of the research approach, the study subjects, the conduct of the research procedure, the use of materials and instruments, data collection, and analysis techniques.

Results and Discussion

1. Results

The findings of this study are presented empirically and organized thematically, covering the areas of spiritual and moral development, organizational and leadership development, Islamic arts and cultural activities, and social harmony and tolerance. These findings are directly quoted from youths, mentors, and administrators to strengthen the research's credibility. Research results indicate that the Nurul Bahri Mosque Welfare Agency (BKM)'s strategy for fostering Islamic leadership among youth is gradual and has evolved. Initially, youth activities at the mosque were simple, limited to regular Quranic recitations, Tadarus (recitation of the Qur'an), and daily worship activities. However, over time, the BKM recognized that such development was insufficient to meet the youths' needs in developing as future leaders of the community. Therefore, the development strategy was expanded into a more structured program, encompassing spiritual, social arts, cultural aspects, and organizational development.

Spiritual and Moral Development

The BKM administrators said that they emphasize "*the development of faith and morals as the foundation of Islamic leadership. Youth are guided in tafsir (interpretation of the Qur'an), Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and moral studies*".

A religious teacher explained that "*strengthening faith is the foundation for the young generation to enable them to face the challenges of the times. He believes that an Islamic leader must first be strong in his faith before appearing in the public sphere. This training not only encourages youth to attend religious studies diligently but also demonstrates changes in their daily behavior, such as more disciplined congregational prayer, polite speech, and concern for others*".

The youth mosque administrators stated that "*the Nurul Bahri Mosque's welfare board has programmed religious and moral development activities, such as Quran reading and writing, Quran recitation, and Islamic studies. This is done to strengthen the practice of Islamic values in daily life*".

Organizational and Leadership Development

Field observations show that "*youth who were initially awkward in speaking are now able to lead prayers, deliver speeches, and even host large events in front of a large audience. Their confidence grows because BKM provides real opportunities to practice leadership*". According to one of the BKM administrators, "*this process is designed to familiarize youth with decision-making, organizing meetings, and resolving internal conflicts*". In addition to spiritual development, the BKM administrators stated that they provide "*youth with opportunities to practice organizational management. They are entrusted with positions as chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and activity coordinator*".

The youth mosque administrators said, "*We held a working meeting to determine a work program that is relevant to our self-development needs in the areas of leadership training, community social activities, and the development of arts and culture with nuances of local wisdom integrated with Islamic teachings*".

The religious teachers as mentors said that "*they have a regular schedule to train the mosque youth according to the programmed fields such as leadership training activities, traditional Islamic dance and song training that can entertain, Shalawatan accompanied by Hadrah drums or traditional Papuan instruments with traditional dance movements so that other people can participate in singing and dancing together*".

Islamic Arts and Culture Activities

Mentors said that *one of BKM's key strategies is utilizing Islamic arts and culture as a vehicle for leadership development. Hadrah, Rebana Qasidah, Samra dance, and traditional Papuan dances are routine activities that are seriously prepared by the youth. Practice is carried out with discipline and guided by experienced trainers. These Islamic arts are performed at various events such as the celebration of the Prophet's Birthday, Isra Mi'raj, Ramadan, community social events or performances, weddings, and welcoming official activities.*

According to one of the teenagers, "*performing on stage is not just entertainment, but a means of cultivating courage, unity, and responsibility. They learn to organize practice schedules, prepare equipment, and maintain group cohesion. Islamic art serves as a fun and leadership learning tool*".

The BKM leader stated that "*familiarizing the younger generation with Islamic arts and traditions can foster a love for their religion, local culture, and communities of different ethnicities and beliefs, and strengthen social ties. Therefore, we must nurture this and direct it toward positive activities as a way to develop positive skills for maintaining harmony*".

Social Harmony and Tolerance

According to Mentors for Muslim youths, an interesting finding is that "*the Islamic arts and culture developed by the BKM actually strengthens the climate of tolerance in Sorong. Several non-Muslim residents, particularly from the Christian community, often attend as spectators and even help enliven Islamic arts events. Some are involved in providing facilities, while others join the event support team*. This phenomenon demonstrates that the BKM's strategy not only fosters leadership among Muslim teenagers but also fosters harmonious social interactions across religions*".

BKM administrators emphasized that *"Maintaining harmonious and tolerant relationships is an obligation for every Indonesian citizen. One way to achieve this is through the role of mosques in guiding, teaching, and developing useful skills for the younger generation of Muslims"*.

Muslim youth said, *"We are very happy and proud of the skills we have so that we can express them in various events, and are happy with a life of harmony and love of peace"*.

Real Impact on Teenagers

From observations and interviews, it is clear that teenagers in the mosque now have greater self-confidence. They can lead prayers, coordinate events, and even speak in public. Their communication and managerial skills have improved, along with a spirit of teamwork. One mentor noted that *"the previously passive youth have now become the driving force behind mosque activities. Their success is not only recognized within the mosque but also garners appreciation from the surrounding community"*.

2. Discussion

In this study, Islamic leadership is defined as a character- and service-based leadership model grounded in Islamic ethical principles (amanah, ikhlas, adab, ukhuwah), enabling young people to guide, influence, and serve their community with moral integrity, social responsibility, and spiritual consciousness. Islamic leadership is not limited to managerial competence but covers spiritual maturity, ethical behavior, community service, teamwork, communication, and the capacity to maintain social harmony in a multicultural environment (Qiso et al., 2025). This definition aligns with contemporary Islamic leadership scholarship, which positions mosque youth as agents of continuity, cultural preservation, and interfaith goodwill.

This study had differences and similarities in results with previous research. For instance, a study about the Islamic university's contribution in developing mosque-based non-formal Islamic education in Lombok, which explored a sustainable educational model that drove community transformation through a synergy grounded in Islamic values, fostering a meaningful societal impact, making a robust framework for education and community advancement (Ahmad Amir Aziz & Miftahul Huda, 2024). In addition, the use and the role of the mosque in health-promoting interventions involving its role in promoting health behavior change, and the role of theory in each intervention(Abu-Ras et al., 2024). Research in Belgium, also about the field of Islamic pedagogies, provides empirical insights into the educational strategies used by Diyanet mosques and mosque-based knowledge centers (Demirkoparan, 2025).

This research results indicate that the Nurul Bahri Mosque Welfare Agency (BKM)'s strategy for fostering Islamic leadership among youth is comprehensive and adaptive, encompassing spiritual development, organizational development, Islamic arts and culture training, and strengthening social cohesion. This strategy is relevant to Islamic leadership theory (Wiyono, 2019; Sulaeman, 2019; and Ipa Salma Alhamid et al., 2024), which emphasizes the importance of integrating faith, morals, knowledge, and practical skills.

Spiritual Development as a Foundation for Leadership

The development of faith and morals conducted by the BKM is a crucial initial step. From an Islamic educational perspective, leadership is not merely the ability to manage others, but rather a trust that requires strong faith and exemplary behavior. The Prophet

Muhammad (peace be upon him) is described as a great leader not simply because of his formal position, but because of his spiritual fortitude and noble morals. Therefore, strengthening the youth's spirituality through tafsir (interpretation of the Quran), Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and cultivating the habit of congregational worship forms the foundation for developing Islamic leadership character. This aligns with the concept of *Uswah Hasanah* (good role models), which is emphasized extensively in the Quran.

Organizational Experience as a Leadership Laboratory

Research findings also show that providing a concrete role in a mosque youth organization effectively fosters managerial and communication skills. In participatory education theory, experiential learning is the most effective learning medium. When youth are allowed to lead meetings, coordinate events, and resolve conflicts, they not only learn leadership theory but also practice it in real-life situations. This BKM strategy demonstrates that mosques can function as social laboratories, preparing future leaders.

Islamic Arts and Culture as a Creative and Educational Tool

Fostering through Islamic arts and culture is unique at the Nurul Bahri Mosque. Hadrah music, Rebana Qasidah, Samra dance, and even traditional Papuan dances are not just entertainment, but also a means of bringing Islamic teachings to life. Arts and culture in Islam have a dual function: as a medium for da'wah (Islamic outreach) and as a means of character education.

According to Al-Ghazali, as stated by Sulaeman, (2019) and Hamzah et al., (2020) Art can move the heart and shape morals through beauty. In the context of youth, Islamic arts have proven effective in fostering creativity, cooperation, and leadership. Interestingly, this Islamic art also serves as a social bridge between the Muslim and non-Muslim communities in Sorong. The presence of Christians supporting or watching Islamic art performances demonstrates the existence of interfaith interaction. This reinforces the values of religious moderation promoted by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, namely a balanced and tolerant religious attitude, as well as respect for diversity. Thus, the BKM strategy not only produces Islamic leaders but also agents of peace in a multicultural society.

Synergy between Mentors, Facilities, and the Social Environment

Another factor contributing to the success of the BKM strategy is the involvement of professional mentors and the support of modern facilities. Ustadz (teachers of Islamic studies), art coaches, and community leaders who accompany the youth act as mentors and role models. This aligns with social learning theory (Xhomara & Shkembi, 2020; and Suherman et al., 2023), which states that youth learn through observation and imitation of authoritative figures.

The presence of mentors makes the learning process more focused, while modern facilities such as sound systems and audio-visual equipment make activities more engaging and effective. Sorong's pluralistic social environment also adds a unique flavor. The existing religious and cultural diversity is not a barrier, but rather an opportunity to cultivate an inclusive attitude. The positive interfaith interactions created through Islamic art demonstrate that mosques can serve as centers of civilization, connecting religion, culture, and society.

Relevance to Previous Studies

These findings corroborate the research findings, which stated that mosques function as centers of non-formal education in shaping the Islamic character of the younger generation. Furthermore, research by Ahmad Amir Aziz & Miftahul Huda, (2024) aligns with these findings, stating that youth involvement in mosque organizational leadership enhances a sense of responsibility and spiritual commitment. However, this study adds a new dimension, namely how Islamic arts and culture can be an effective strategy for fostering youth leadership while strengthening social tolerance in multicultural areas like Sorong.

The Mosque as a Centre for Education and Civilization

Overall, the Nurul Bahri Mosque's Community Development (BKM) strategy demonstrates that the mosque is not only a place of ritual worship, but also a center for character education, cultural preservation, and strengthening social cohesion. This integrative development model, which combines spirituality, organizational skills, arts and culture, and religious moderation, is worthy of being an example for other mosques in Papua and Indonesia. Thus, the mosque can emerge as a center of civilization, preparing a young generation with an Islamic character and capable of living harmoniously in a pluralistic society.

Conclusion

This study is limited by its single-case design in Sorong; future studies should compare multi-site mosque youth models across Papua or Eastern Indonesia. This study found that the Nurul Bahri Mosque Welfare Agency (BKM) in Sorong City's strategy for fostering Islamic leadership among youth is implemented in an integrative, adaptive, and sustainable manner. The development does not stop at spiritual aspects but extends to organizational experience, Islamic arts and culture, and strengthening social cohesion in a multicultural society.

Spiritual development serves as a primary foundation for strengthening the youth's faith and morals. Building on this foundation, the BKM provides opportunities for organizational experience that trains youth in leading meetings, managing events, and making decisions. Islamic arts and culture serve as a creative strategy that builds courage, creativity, and self-confidence among youth, while also serving as a means of down-to-earth da'wah (Islamic outreach). Another unique feature is the involvement of interfaith communities that support Islamic arts activities, resulting in youth development not only producing Islamic leaders but also agents of social peace.

Thus, it can be concluded that the BKM's strategy for the Nurul Bahri Mosque has successfully developed a model for fostering youth leadership that combines spiritual education, practical skills, and the preservation of Islamic culture. It also contributes significantly to strengthening social harmony in Sorong City.

Recommendations

The recommendations are: *first*, regional governments, the Ministry of Educational Affairs, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs need to appoint or distribute Islamic Religious Education teachers with a background in religious education and training in special education. *Second*, the development of sensory, visual, and technology-based teaching media that are relevant to students with intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments, and other special needs is needed. Methods such as practice-based learning and simulations can strengthen

student understanding. *Third*, the classroom teachers and special education teachers currently handling Islamic Religious Education need to receive training in religious pedagogy to deliver religious material with an inclusive approach. *Fourth*, an Islamic religious education curriculum specifically designed for children with special needs is needed, taking into account their cognitive, social, and affective levels. *Fifth*, similar research is recommended in other special schools in various regions to obtain a broader picture and compare with the best approaches to Islamic Religious Education teaching for children with special needs.

Acknowledgments

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