

Institutional Transformation Strategy for Local Culture-Based Community Empowerment: A Case Study of Kuntau Harimau Muda

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Keywords:	Abstract
Community Empowerment; Local Culture; Kuntau Harimau Muda; SWOT Analysis; Institutional Transformation.	Contemporary shifts in development paradigms toward people-centered development have increasingly positioned local culture as a strategic asset for sustainable social empowerment, particularly at the grassroots level. However, grassroots cultural organizations often face managerial challenges that threaten their long-term institutional sustainability. This study examined the existing conditions, identified relevant internal and external factors, and formulated a strategy for local culture-based community empowerment through the traditional martial art of Kuntau at the Harimau Muda Community in Mandarsari, Banjar Regency. Guided by Edi Suharto's empowerment dimensions (participation, access, control, and benefit) and employing SWOT matrix analysis to formulate strategic priorities, this qualitative study was conducted through sustained participatory observation, in-depth interviews with key informants (the Chairman, active members, community leaders, and the Head of Culture of the Banjar Regency Disbudporapar), and supporting documentation review. The findings revealed a significant managerial paradox: although the community has consistently achieved high and widely recognized regional accomplishments, its administrative operations remain largely informal, relying heavily on memory-based scheduling rather than documented management systems and depending on individual figures rather than institutional structures. The novelty of this research lies in demonstrating that institutional transformation—from figure-centered to system-centered governance—is a critical prerequisite for achieving sustainable culture-based community empowerment. The strategic formulation emphasizes the urgency of digitalizing administrative systems and formalizing institutional structures to strengthen the community's bridging social capital with regional governments and formal economic networks. This study contributes to the development of institutional strengthening models for traditional martial arts communities and provides practical guidance for culture-based empowerment programs.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary development requires a fundamental paradigm shift from a physical-economic orientation toward strengthening social capacity, positioning communities as active subjects of development. This transformation is based on the recognition that sustainable development cannot be achieved solely through infrastructure development and economic growth but also requires meaningful community participation in determining development pathways. The shift toward people-centered development emphasizes the importance of strengthening local capacities, building social capital, and empowering communities to become agents of change rather than passive recipients of development programs (Ahmad & Islam,

2024; de Oliveira Gonçalves et al., 2025; James, 2025; Kamal et al., 2025; Petriello et al., 2025).

Within this framework, local culture emerges as a strategic resource containing social, educational, and economic values that are adaptive to community needs. Local culture is not merely a symbolic identity or heritage that must be preserved but a living system of knowledge, practices, and values that can be utilized to address contemporary development challenges. Culture-based development approaches recognize that communities are embedded within cultural contexts that shape their worldviews, social relationships, and economic activities, making cultural resources essential components of sustainable and meaningful development (Chigbu et al., 2017; Dharmasiri et al., 2025; Duxbury et al., 2024; Morishige et al., 2018; Pascua et al., 2017).

However, the potential of local culture is often not optimally integrated into regional development strategies. Rather than being recognized as a dynamic resource for community empowerment, local culture is frequently treated narrowly as an object of preservation or symbolic identity. This limited perspective restricts the transformative potential of cultural resources and overlooks their contribution to strengthening social cohesion, promoting economic innovation, and increasing community resilience (Järvelä, 2023; Qu & Zollet, 2023; Zabulis et al., 2025). Therefore, a shift is needed from a culture-as-heritage approach toward a culture-as-resource approach that integrates cultural values into broader development strategies (O'Connor, 2020).

One manifestation of local culture that remains active in Banjar Regency, South Kalimantan Province, is Kuntau, a traditional martial art passed down through generations. Kuntau is not merely a physical combat technique but also embodies philosophical values, spiritual teachings, and social norms that contribute to character development among younger generations. The practice of Kuntau promotes discipline, solidarity, self-control, and social cohesion, making it a potential instrument for youth development and community strengthening. In Mandarsari Village, Kertak Hanyar District, this cultural practice is represented by the Kuntau Harimau Muda Community, established in 2017 with approximately 30 active members.

The Kuntau Harimau Muda Community has achieved various accomplishments in accredited regional competitions, demonstrating its technical capabilities and competitive potential. These achievements include Rank IV at the South Kalimantan Provincial Kuntau Arts Festival (2019), Best III at the South Kalimantan Cultural Silat Festival (2022), Best I at the 72nd Anniversary of South Kalimantan Province Traditional Sports Festival (2022), and Best Hope III in the Pairs Category at the South Kalimantan Youth and Sports Office event (2023). These achievements indicate substantial potential that can be further developed to support broader community empowerment initiatives.

Despite this achievement record, the internal capacity of the community organization demonstrates significant managerial challenges. Organizational activities continue to operate informally without systematic administrative documentation or structured work program planning. The scheduling of important activities remains dependent on collective memory among administrators, resulting in missed participation opportunities due to overlooked invitations or incomplete information management. Although this informal management reflects the community's organic character, it creates risks for organizational sustainability and

future development. Furthermore, the organization's financial sustainability remains vulnerable because it relies primarily on voluntary member contributions collected during regular training sessions held every Tuesday and Friday evening.

At the macro level, the development of traditional Kuntau faces institutional challenges due to unclear policy positioning. Coordination with the Banjar Regency Disbudporapar places Kuntau under the Arts Council as a cultural performance activity rather than as an achievement-oriented sport supported by structured competition systems and formal regional budget allocation. This classification creates uncertainty regarding the strategic direction of Kuntau development, whether as cultural preservation or competitive sport development, resulting in fragmented institutional support. Consequently, data management, development programs, and coaching systems for Kuntau communities in Banjar Regency remain limited and insufficiently integrated, reducing access to government resources and formal recognition.

Previous studies on local wisdom-based empowerment have generally focused on environmental conservation through cultural practices, strengthening social cohesion through traditional values, and rural tourism development based on local cultural potential. Rahminda et al. (2025) examined community empowerment through strengthening local culture and environmental preservation, while Salim (2020) explored community empowerment based on local traditions in relation to social cohesion. Safitri (2025) investigated community empowerment through tourism development and local cultural potential in village contexts. However, limited research has examined how traditional martial arts communities with strong internal social capital can address institutional capacity challenges and transform themselves into sustainable instruments of community empowerment.

The research gap identified in this study concerns the limited attention given to institutional transformation as a prerequisite for sustainable culture-based empowerment. Previous studies have primarily emphasized cultural preservation and economic development but have not sufficiently addressed organizational capacity challenges that determine the long-term sustainability of cultural communities. This gap is particularly relevant because many traditional cultural organizations operate through informal structures that are vulnerable to leadership succession problems, administrative weaknesses, and external pressures. Understanding how these organizations can transition from figure-centered management toward system-centered governance is essential for developing more effective empowerment strategies.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to preserve and strengthen traditional martial arts as living cultural heritage with significant social and economic potential. Rapid modernization and globalization have created challenges for traditional practices such as Kuntau, particularly due to changing youth interests and entertainment preferences. Younger generations increasingly engage with digital entertainment and global cultural products, creating risks related to the decline of traditional knowledge transmission and cultural practices. Previous studies on traditional martial arts in modern society have identified challenges, including weakened inheritance systems, reduced cultural meaning, declining social attention, and unclear positioning within broader cultural communication.

The novelty of this research does not primarily arise from the use of SWOT analysis or the cultural object itself but from the theoretical and practical finding that institutional transformation—from figure-centered management patterns to system-centered governance—

is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable local wisdom-based empowerment. This research introduces institutional transformation as a bridge between social capital and sustainable empowerment, emphasizing that strong bonding social capital alone is insufficient without institutional structures capable of developing bridging social capital. The transition from figure-centered to system-centered governance represents a fundamental organizational transformation, shifting dependence from individual leaders toward stronger institutional mechanisms.

This study aimed to analyze the existing conditions of community empowerment within the Kuntau Harimau Muda Community, identify internal and external factors through SWOT analysis, and formulate effective and structured empowerment strategies. By examining the organizational dynamics of this community, this research contributes to a broader understanding of how cultural organizations can strengthen institutional capacity while maintaining cultural authenticity. The findings provide practical guidance for similar cultural communities in Indonesia seeking to improve organizational capacity and achieve sustainable empowerment.

The contribution of this research lies in developing an institutional transformation model applicable to traditional cultural communities. This model includes strategies for administrative digitalization, institutional formalization, and bridging social capital development that can be adapted to various cultural contexts. The benefits of this research extend to community organizers, policymakers, and development practitioners working with traditional cultural groups by providing theoretical insights and practical recommendations for strengthening cultural organizations.

The objective of this research was to develop a comprehensive understanding of the empowerment conditions of the Kuntau Harimau Muda Community and formulate actionable strategies for sustainable development. This included analyzing organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; identifying institutional transformation requirements; and developing practical recommendations for strengthening organizational capacity. Ultimately, this research demonstrates how cultural communities can transform their organizational structures to achieve sustainable empowerment while preserving their cultural values.

The Concept of Community Empowerment Based on Local Culture

Community empowerment is a planned process to improve the ability and independence of the community through strengthening knowledge, skills, attitudes, and institutions so that they are able to manage resources and determine the direction of their own development (Mardikanto & Soebiato, 2017). This approach reverses conventional top-down power relations into participatory ones, recognizing that sustainable development requires community ownership and agency.

In analyzing the effectiveness of tradition-based empowerment, this study operationally uses four dimensions of empowerment according to Edi Suharto (2010):

1. Participation: Measuring the active involvement of the community/members in the process of planning, routine training, management, and performing arts.
2. Access: Assessing community opportunities in acquiring and utilizing resources, knowledge transfer of local wisdom, strengthening networks, and creative economy opportunities.

3. Control: Analyzing the level of involvement of community members in tactical decision-making, scheduling, and determining the direction of internal organizational policies.
4. Benefits: Evaluating the real impact of empowerment results in the form of improving social cohesion, youth character building, institutional strengthening, and financial added value.

These dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating empowerment outcomes and identifying areas requiring intervention. Participation measures the extent to which community members are actively engaged in organizational activities, reflecting the democratic and inclusive nature of the organization. Access assesses the community's ability to acquire resources and opportunities, indicating the organization's openness to external support. Control examines decision-making processes, revealing power dynamics and institutional maturity. Benefits evaluate tangible and intangible outcomes, demonstrating the value of organizational activities to members and the broader community.

Culture as Social Capital

Local culture acts as the main foundation for the formation of social capital that includes the value of trust, social norms, and social networks that facilitate collective action for a common goal (Putnam, 2000). Social capital theory provides a valuable lens for understanding how cultural communities function and sustain themselves over time. Trust enables cooperation without extensive formal contracts; norms establish expectations for behavior; and networks facilitate information flow and resource sharing.

Robert Putnam distinguishes social capital into two main types:

1. Bonding Social Capital: Refers to very strong social bonds within homogeneous groups. In the Kuntau community, this is reflected in the extreme loyalty between teachers and students and solidarity between members. Bonding capital is essential for group cohesion and mutual support, providing emotional and practical resources that sustain members through challenges.
2. Bridging Social Capital: Refers to social relationships that cross group boundaries and connect communities with outside parties, such as government, private, and market institutions. The limitations of bridging capital can lead to an indigenous community being isolated from access to regular funding and formal legality. Bridging capital is crucial for accessing external resources and opportunities that enable organizational growth and sustainability.

Coleman (1988) further elaborated on social capital as a resource inherent in social structures that facilitates productive activity. Social capital in the Kuntau community manifests in the strong relationships between teachers and students, the network of mutual obligation, and the shared identity that enables collective action. However, social capital can also become a liability when strong bonding ties limit openness to external relationships and new ideas.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive case study method to examine the institutional transformation of the Kuntau Harimau Muda Community. This approach was selected to explore organizational dynamics, management practices, and transformation processes within the community's social and cultural context. The research was conducted at the Kuntau Harimau Muda College in Mandarsari Village, Kertak Hanyar District,

Banjar Regency, which was selected due to its active role as a traditional cultural community with documented achievements and identifiable institutional challenges.

The research participants consisted of stakeholders involved in the Kuntau Harimau Muda College, including management members, active members, alumni, community leaders, and government representatives. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement relevant to the research objectives

The informants included the Chairman/Trainer of the Kuntau Harimau Muda College, active members, community leaders of Mandarsari Village, and the Head of Culture of Banjar Regency Disbudporapar. This multi-informant approach provided diverse perspectives regarding organizational conditions, internal capabilities, external challenges, and empowerment opportunities.

The research instruments consisted of semi-structured interview guides, observation guidelines, and document review protocols. The interview guidelines were used to explore organizational history, management practices, member experiences, and external relationships. Observation was conducted to examine training activities, organizational interactions, and community involvement, while document analysis was used to review organizational records, achievement certificates, and relevant policy documents. Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation by comparing information obtained from different informants and data collection techniques. Data reliability was strengthened through systematic documentation, detailed field notes, and continuous review of research findings.

Data collection was conducted in March 2026 through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Participatory observation was carried out during regular training activities held on Tuesday and Friday evenings to examine member participation, training processes, and organizational dynamics. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected informants to obtain information regarding institutional management, organizational development, government relations, and community experiences. Documentation analysis was performed by reviewing achievement records, training documents, competition certificates, and relevant institutional materials. Additional contextual information was obtained through informal discussions and observations of community activities.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion verification. The collected data were categorized and interpreted to identify patterns related to institutional conditions and empowerment challenges. The findings were further analyzed using SWOT analysis by identifying internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) to formulate strategic priorities for institutional transformation. NVivo software was utilized to support qualitative data coding and thematic analysis. Member checking was also conducted by presenting preliminary findings to selected informants to verify the accuracy and credibility of the research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the Actual Conditions of Empowerment through the Kuntau Community
The evaluation of the actual condition of Kuntau Harimau Muda is analyzed using four indicators of the empowerment dimension of Edi Suharto. The analysis reveals a complex picture of strengths and challenges that characterize this traditional martial arts community.

The level of participation of members is very high and consistent, as evidenced by the implementation of regular exercises every Tuesday and Friday night attended by approximately 30 local youths. This consistent attendance reflects strong member commitment and the community's ability to mobilize members for routine activities. Community involvement also appears to be high when the college fulfills performance invitations, with members readily available to represent the community in public events. This high participation rate demonstrates the effectiveness of bonding social capital in maintaining member engagement and the value members place on Kuntau training for personal development and social connection.

The community opens up access for the younger generation to acquire the transfer of knowledge of character, discipline, social solidarity, and traditional martial skills. Young people in Mandarsari Village have access to training that not only develops physical skills but also instills important values of respect, discipline, and self-control. However, access to managerial capacity building, government policy information, and access to formal funding from external parties is still very limited. The community lacks systematic connections to training programs that could strengthen organizational management, information about government programs and policies, and financial resources that could support organizational sustainability. This limited access represents a significant constraint on the community's development potential.

Decision-making control is centralistic and relies entirely on a single figure of the main coach/senior figure. The organizational structure has not been democratic-functional, so the division of administrative tasks is not fully realized. While this centralization may ensure consistency and efficiency in the short term, it creates vulnerability to leadership succession crises and limits the development of organizational capacity among members. The lack of formal organizational structure and division of responsibilities means that the community is heavily dependent on the knowledge, skills, and commitment of a single individual.

The social and cultural benefits are strongly felt by members and the surrounding community, especially as a positive forum for antidote to juvenile delinquency. Kuntau provides constructive activities for youth, channeling their energy into positive pursuits and building character through discipline and respect. However, the benefits of the creative economy-based economy (such as the commercialization of structured performances or the sale of Kuntau attributes) have not been optimally exploited. The community has not developed systematic approaches to generating income from their cultural activities, limiting their ability to sustain and grow their programs.

Analysis of the Actual Conditions of Empowerment through the Kuntau Community

The evaluation of the actual condition of Kuntau Harimau Muda was analyzed using four indicators of the empowerment dimension of Edi Suharto (pp. 20, 24):

1. **Participation:** The level of participation of members is very high and consistent, as evidenced by the implementation of regular exercises every Tuesday night and Friday night attended by about 30 local youths (pp. 2-3). Community involvement also appears to be high when the university fulfills the performance invitation (p. 3).
2. **Access:** The community opens up access for the younger generation to acquire the transfer of knowledge of character, discipline, social solidarity, and traditional martial skills (pp. 1, 42). However, access to managerial capacity building, government policy information, and access to formal funding from external parties is still very limited (pp. 2, 34).

3. **Control:** Decision-making control is centralistic and relies entirely on a single figure of the main coach/senior figure (pp. 5, 8). The organizational structure has not been democratic-functional, so the division of administrative tasks is not realized (pp. 2, 20).
4. **Benefits:** The social and cultural benefits are strongly felt by members and the surrounding community, especially as a positive forum for antidote to juvenile delinquency (pp. 1, 40). However, the benefits of the creative economy-based economy (such as the commercialization of structured performances or the sale of Kuntau attributes) have not been optimally exploited (pp. 5, 41).

Analysis of Internal and External Factors (SWOT Matrix)

Based on the primary and secondary data processed, the following are the results of the identification of components of the internal environment (Strengths & Weaknesses) and the external environment (Opportunities & Threats) of the university (pp. 2-3, 6):

Faktor Internal (Internal Factors)

1. Strengths (S):

- a. It has 30 active members with a high level of discipline (p. 2).
- b. A regular and consistent weekly training schedule (Tuesday and Friday nights) (p. 3).
- c. Has a strong reputation and formal achievements at the South Kalimantan Provincial level (p. 2).
- d. The value of trust and solidarity (bonding social capital) that are firmly rooted (pp. 16, 33).

2. Weaknesses (W):

- a. Organizational administration is informal and has not been systematically documented (pp. 2, 4).
- b. The activity scheduling system relies on collective memory, causing a risk of forgetting (missed events) (pp. 2-3).
- c. The organizational structure is fragile due to its absolute dependence on the main coach figure (pp. 5, 8).
- d. Financial management is uncertain because it only relies on voluntary contributions (pp. 2, 4).

External Factors

1. Peluang (Opportunities - O):

- a. The opening of cultural-based creative economy markets, such as tourism festivals and art performances (pp. 5, 41).
- b. The use of digital technology platforms for promotional, documentation, and network expansion media (p. 41).
- c. Integration opportunities into formal village community empowerment work programs (p. 4).

2. Threats (T):

- a. The trend of modernization and globalization of digital entertainment erodes the interest of the younger generation in traditional culture (pp. 4-5).
- b. Ambiguity of regional policies (policy gap) in the classification of Kuntau coaching (sports vs arts) (pp. 6-7).
- c. Partial data collection of the Kuntau community by related agencies hinders the distribution of stimulus assistance (p. 6).

Formulation of Institution-Based Empowerment Strategies

The integration of SWOT components is analyzed to produce four clusters of tactical strategies for Kuntau Harimau Muda (pp. 7, 20):

1. SO (Strengths - Opportunities) Strategy: Development of a Culture-Based Creative Economy

This strategy maximizes the reputation of achievement and high involvement of active members to capture creative economy market opportunities (pp. 2, 5). Universities must package Kuntau performing arts into a cultural tourism performing arts commodity that has a selling value without reducing its original noble value (pp. 36, 41). This activity expands **the economic access** and welfare of traditional art actors (pp. 37, 42).

2. WO Strategy (Weaknesses - Opportunities): Digitalization of Organizational Governance

This strategy is aimed at minimizing internal weaknesses in the form of informal administration by utilizing digital technology instruments (pp. 3, 41). Organizational management must migrate from a memory-based management system to a structured digital scheduling system utilizing shared-calendar applications or free project management (pp. 2-3). This is important to ensure that no more invitations to regional competitions or performances are missed (pp. 2-3).

3. ST Strategy (Strengths - Threats): Standardization of Trainer Regeneration System

Strength in the form of the value of discipline and solidarity (bonding capital) must be used as the main bulwark of defense in the face of the penetration of modern entertainment that erodes the interest of youth (pp. 4, 33). Universities need to develop a structured youth coach regeneration program (pp. 5, 20). This step ensures the sustainability of leadership regeneration so that the organization does not collapse when the main coach figure is unable to attend (pp. 5, 8).

4. WT Strategy (Weaknesses - Threats): Formalization of Community Law and Strengthening Bridging Capital

To minimize managerial weaknesses and eliminate threats due to regional policy ambiguity, universities are obliged to formalize institutions (pp. 2, 6). The community needs to formulate a formal Articles of Association and Bylaws (AD/ART) and register the group's legal entity with the Banjar Regency Disbudporapar (pp. 2, 6). This formalization step converts internal social capital (bonding) into a legitimate bridging social capital, so that the community has a bargaining position to be included in regional data collection and access APBD grants (pp. 4, 34).

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that local culture-based community empowerment through the Kuntau Harimau Muda College in Mandarsari Village was supported by strong community participation and achievement foundations. The community demonstrated high member commitment, consistent training participation, and significant competitive achievements that strengthened its legitimacy and development potential. However, this potential faced challenges due to managerial weaknesses, including informal administrative systems, memory-based schedule management, and excessive dependence on individual trainer figures. These internal limitations, combined with external challenges such as declining youth interest,

regional policy ambiguity, and incomplete government data collection, posed risks to the long-term sustainability of the organization.

The SWOT analysis results indicated that an effective empowerment strategy should not only focus on preserving martial arts practices but also prioritize institutional capacity strengthening. Institutional transformation from figure-centered governance toward system-centered governance through improved administrative management, digitalized scheduling systems, and institutional formalization became essential for achieving independent, competitive, and sustainable local culture-based community empowerment. The proposed strategies, including creative economy development, governance digitalization, regeneration standardization, and legal formalization of the community organization, provided an integrated approach to strengthening institutional capacity while maintaining cultural values. This research contributed to a broader understanding of how traditional cultural communities could transform their organizational structures to achieve sustainable empowerment and provided theoretical insights and practical recommendations for similar communities in Indonesia and other regions.

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