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Kalosara and Christian Education as a Cultural-Theological Framework for Transformational Leadership in Fostering Peace and Social Harmony in the Tolaki Community

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Rico Yohanes Sammy[1], Haris Danial[2]
[1]Hasanuddin University, Jalan Perintis Kemerdekaan No.KM.10, Makassar 90245, Indonesia
[2]Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Jalan Jend. Sudirman No.6, Gorontalo 96128, Indonesia

Abstract

This study examines the integration of Kalosara—a Tolaki cultural value system emphasizing unity, justice, and cooperation—with Christian education principles of servant leadership, social justice, and reconciliation as a cultural-theological framework for transformational leadership in fostering peace and social harmony in the Tolaki community of Southeast Sulawesi. Using a qualitative ethno-theological case study, data were collected through in-depth interviews with traditional and church leaders, Christian educators, youth leaders, and Tolaki students; participatory observation of Kalosara rituals and Christian education programs; and analysis of customary manuscripts, Christian curriculum materials, and public speeches. Thematic analysis with value-based coding identified three intersecting dimensions: communal unity, restorative justice, and collective stewardship. These shared values inform a cultural-theological leadership model that enhances social cohesion, strengthens cross-cultural legitimacy, and mitigates horizontal conflict. The study's novelty lies in proposing an academically grounded model of transformational leadership rooted in both indigenous wisdom and Christian theological ethics, a framework not previously documented in the Tolaki context. This model bridges local culture and religious education within modern leadership theory, offering practical and policy-relevant insights while contributing to peace studies through an ethno-theological perspective applicable to other multicultural societies.

Keywords: *Christian Education, Collective Stewardship, Communal Unity, Cultural-Theological Framework, Kalosara*

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Article Info:

Correspondence E-Mail:
ricoyohanessammy@gmail.com

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E-mail:
selectaedukasigrup.journal@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The Tolaki people of Southeast Sulawesi live within a multicultural and multi-religious social landscape, where cross-identity interactions occur on a daily basis. Within this social order, the cultural value of *Kalosara* holds a central position as a symbol of unity, justice, and collective cooperation. *Kalosara* functions not only as a cultural identity but also as a mechanism for conflict resolution and as a binding force for social cohesion (Diab et al., 2022; Haq et al., 2024; Kamaruddin et al., 2023). On the other hand, Christian education—rooted in the principles of servant leadership, social justice, and reconciliation—has the potential to align with the spirit of *Kalosara* (Alifuddin & Amir, 2022). However, despite this potential harmony, the social reality of the Tolaki community remains marked by the possibility of

horizontal tensions, social inequality, and the erosion of social cohesion, driven by socio-economic changes and local political dynamics (Febrianti et al., 2024; Ridha, 2023).

Previous studies on leadership in the context of Indonesian culture have highlighted the importance of integrating local values into building effective leadership models. For example, research by Febrianti et al. (2024) and Sahertian (2024) demonstrates that leaders who accommodate local wisdom are able to build strong moral legitimacy in the eyes of the community. In the context of Southeast Sulawesi, several studies have examined *Kalosara* as an instrument of customary conflict resolution (Hasdin Yadin, 2024; Kamaruddin et al., 2023) and as a symbol of unity (Bachrong & Ansar, 2021; Pairin et al., 2024). However, such studies generally stop at the customary aspect, without exploring its integration with religious values. Meanwhile, literature on Christian education emphasizes its role in shaping character, ethical leadership, and community service (Esti Regina Boiliu, 2025; Nuryadi et al., 2025; Zalukhu, 2025). For instance, Sugihyono (2025) asserts that Christian education is effective in instilling transformational leadership values, particularly in communities experiencing social pressures.

Approaches that combine local cultural values and religious principles have been proposed in the peacebuilding literature. Esho (2024) stresses that the success of long-term peacebuilding requires a strong cultural and spiritual foundation. In the Indonesian context, studies by Manuputty et al. (2024) and Vlachová & Hamplová (2023) show that integrating customary and religious values can reduce the potential for conflict and strengthen a community's social capital. However, research that explicitly links *Kalosara* with Christian educational principles within a transformational leadership framework remains rare, even though both share significant common ground in values such as unity, restorative justice, and collective responsibility.

Several cross-cultural studies indicate that transformational leadership can serve as a bridge among diverse communities. Becker et al. (2022) and Wijaya et al. (2023) explain that transformational leadership not only motivates individuals but also builds a collective vision. In multicultural communities, this model can enhance social cohesion when combined with cultural legitimacy (Lansing et al., 2023; Lewa et al., 2022). Studies in West Africa by Manu (2022) and in the Philippines by Shatila et al. (2023) show that leadership grounded in both local and religious values can foster greater social resilience. These findings open opportunities for application in the Tolaki context, where *Kalosara* and Christian education can serve as both an ethical and cultural foundation for leading communities toward harmony.

Although various studies have addressed leadership based on either cultural or religious values, very few have placed these two elements within a single, unified conceptual framework—particularly for the Tolaki community. Most of the literature treats them separately: *Kalosara* as a cultural domain and Christian education as a theological domain. It is rare to find research that integrates both to form a contextual transformational leadership model, even though in Tolaki social life, they intersect in daily practice. This is precisely where the present study positions itself—bringing together two different yet compatible sources of values, filling a gap in the literature, and offering a framework relevant to the local socio-

political dynamics.

This research aims to develop a transformational leadership framework based on *Kalosara* and Christian education, one that can strengthen social cohesion, build cross-cultural and interfaith legitimacy, and reduce the potential for conflict within the Tolaki community. The resulting model is expected to contribute not only to leadership theory in the social and political sciences but also to provide practical guidance for local leaders, religious institutions, and regional governments in designing sustainable peacebuilding strategies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with an ethno-theological case study design. This approach was chosen because the focus lies in developing a deep understanding of the meaning and interaction between the cultural values of *Kalosara* and the principles of Christian education in the practice of transformational leadership within the Tolaki community. According to Priya (2021), qualitative research allows researchers to capture the nuances of meaning, values, and symbols that cannot be measured quantitatively, while an ethno-theological case study approach provides the space to examine phenomena from both cultural and theological perspectives. This method was also selected to meet the need for a contextual, reflective, and holistic understanding of the Tolaki's social life.

The research was conducted in several Tolaki villages in Southeast Sulawesi with a significant Christian population. These locations were purposively chosen as they represent tangible points of intersection between *Kalosara*'s customary values and Christian educational principles. They also reflect the social diversity of the Tolaki community, which exists within a multicultural and multi-religious dynamic—providing a rich context for exploring the integration of cultural and religious values.

Research participants were selected using purposive sampling, targeting those considered to have deep knowledge and direct involvement in the practice of *Kalosara* traditions and Christian education. A total of 20 informants participated, consisting of Tolaki customary leaders, church leaders, Christian educators, youth community leaders, and Tolaki university students. These groups were chosen on the basis that they are key actors in both preserving values and driving leadership within the community. Their diverse backgrounds allowed for capturing varied yet complementary perspectives.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were chosen to explore personal experiences, narratives, and ethical perspectives of informants concerning the integration of *Kalosara* and Christian education, as suggested by Alam (2020) for revealing deep subjective meanings. Participant observation was carried out during *Kalosara* customary rituals and Christian educational programs to understand value practices in the field as well as the accompanying social interactions. Document analysis included customary manuscripts, Christian education curriculum materials, and public speeches by customary and church leaders, which provided contextual data and reinforced field findings.

Triangulation was implemented across methodology, sources, and researchers to increase the validity of findings. Data from interviews, observations, and documents were compared to identify consistency and divergence. Perspectives from different types of informants were cross-examined, while field notes were verified through research team discussions to minimize interpretive bias (Kekeya, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Integration of *Kalosara* Values and Christian Education in Transformational Leadership

The research findings show that *Kalosara*, as the traditional value system of the Tolaki people, and Christian education have significant points of convergence in three main dimensions: communal unity, restorative justice, and collective stewardship. Although rooted in different traditions and theological sources, both reinforce each other in forming an ethical framework for transformational leadership in the Tolaki community. In this context, Ladkin & Patrick (2022) emphasize the importance of adapting local and religious values to strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of leadership in multicultural societies.

At the value level, *Kalosara* teaches that all members of the community are part of an interconnected circle of life. The *Kalosara* circle is physically manifested in the form of a circular rattan ring, a symbol of unending unity, carrying the message that unity and justice must be upheld by all parties. On the other hand, Christian education emphasizes the principle of servant leadership, in which the leader sees themselves as a servant tasked with maintaining and restoring relationships among community members. When these two principles are integrated, a form of leadership emerges that not only leads from the front but also embraces from within, prioritizing collective well-being over personal interests.

Interviews with a traditional leader (IY) reinforced this view. He stated that when a leader understands *Kalosara* not merely as a cultural symbol, but as a moral calling to serve all groups, their leadership will be more widely accepted—even by those of different faiths. Similarly, a Christian educator (MT) explained that teaching values of love, justice, and forgiveness to the younger generation of Tolaki becomes more effective when linked to the *Kalosara* philosophy they have known since childhood. This integration creates a moral language understood by all parties, without forcing a single identity.

Field observations provided concrete illustrations of how this integration manifests in practice. At a mosalaki (peace-making) traditional ceremony, the researcher observed the *Kalosara* circle placed in the center of the village hall, surrounded by traditional leaders and church leaders seated at the same level. The church leader opened with a prayer, followed by a speech from a traditional leader emphasizing the importance of maintaining unity. The presence of both cultural symbols and Christian prayer in one forum demonstrated that leadership legitimacy no longer derives from a single tradition, but from cross-identity recognition. The atmosphere was warm; participants greeted and shook hands, even those who had previously been in conflict. This aligns with Ladkin & Patrick's (2022) findings that transformational leadership in multicultural communities is effective when it bridges symbols and rituals from diverse traditions.

The dimension of communal unity serves as the first foundation of this value integration. From the *Kalosara* perspective, unity is not just passive harmony but active involvement in maintaining social balance. Christian education reinforces this dimension with the teaching "love your neighbor," encouraging leaders to build inclusive relationship networks. Data analysis shows that leaders who internalize both principles can transform relationships among residents from mere coexistence to productive cooperation. As stated by a young leader (AL), "When we talk about unity, it's not just sitting together, but working together for the good of all." This statement reflects that the intended unity is functional and productive, consistent with transformational leadership concepts that encourage community members to reach their highest potential (Gom et al., 2021).

The second dimension is restorative justice. *Kalosara* teaches that every conflict must be resolved by restoring balance, not merely by imposing punishment. This intersects with the principle of reconciliation in Christian education, which emphasizes restoring relationships through forgiveness and understanding. Observations at a land dispute resolution forum showed that the traditional leader began by inviting all parties to sit in a circle, while the church leader stressed the importance of mutual forgiveness before discussing compensation. This process reflects Parameswaran et al.'s (2024) argument that restorative leadership in multicultural contexts requires combining customary mechanisms with spiritual values to achieve sustainable peace.

The third dimension is collective stewardship. In *Kalosara*, the responsibility for community well-being lies not only with leaders but with all members. Christian education adds the perspective of service and sustainable stewardship of creation. An interview with a pastor (SR) revealed that their interfaith community garden program was inspired by the *Kalosara* philosophy of sharing harvests, as well as the Christian teaching of giving to those in need. Observations in one such garden showed residents from various backgrounds working together, exchanging stories while picking vegetables. Activities like this strengthen social capital and create spaces for positive interaction, aligning with Goold's (2024) finding that value-based collective leadership strengthens community resilience against conflict.

Analysis of these three dimensions shows that integrating *Kalosara* values and Christian education produces not just symbolic synchronization but also a concrete ethical framework for transformational leadership. Leaders who adopt both value sources gain dual legitimacy: cultural legitimacy from Tolaki traditions and moral legitimacy from Christian theological principles. This legitimacy has been shown to increase cross-group acceptance and facilitate social mobilization for common goals. As emphasized by Ridha (2023), adapting local and religious values in transformational leadership builds bridges of trust that are difficult to achieve with a single approach.

This integration can be seen as a social innovation emerging from within the community, not from external pressure. It works because it speaks in a value language understood by all Tolaki residents, while also providing moral inspiration that drives positive change. In multicultural contexts prone to friction, a culture-theology-based model of transformational leadership like this can serve as a solid foundation for building sustainable peace.

Communal Unity as the Foundation of Social Cohesion

In the Tolaki community, communal unity serves as an important foundation that strengthens social cohesion, combining the cultural values of *Kalosara* with the teachings of Christian education. This unity is not confined to an abstract concept but is tangibly present in daily life through traditional ceremonies, joint religious celebrations, and the active involvement of traditional and church leaders in public forums. *Kalosara*, with its rattan circle symbol, conveys unity, order, and harmony, while also serving as a social metaphor aligned with the Christian teachings of love, togetherness, and reconciliation. These findings are consistent with Jayakody et al. (2022), who assert that a shared identity can reduce the potential for horizontal conflict in plural societies, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and solidarity across identities.

In Tolaki custom, *Kalosara* contains moral meaning that binds all community members to maintain harmony. Its circular shape represents unbroken interconnectedness, where each individual is an integral part of the whole. Field observations showed that this symbol is placed in the center of traditional meetings, with all participants seated in a circle regardless of religion. Interviews with a traditional leader revealed that whenever *Kalosara* is presented, all parties are reminded that they are one big family despite differing beliefs. The presence of this symbol serves as a collective reminder of the commitment to unity.

The values contained in *Kalosara* resonate with Christian education, which emphasizes love, humility, and openness to all people. In Tolaki culture, this aligns with the concept of mosalangkinae, meaning mutual respect and refraining from belittling others. Christian schools in the area often link the teachings of Jesus' love with the *Kalosara* philosophy, helping students understand that religious and cultural values are not in conflict but complement each other. This approach builds bridges of cross-identity understanding from an early age.

Communal unity is also reflected in celebrations that combine traditional and religious elements. For example, during the harvest festival, the event begins with a traditional ritual led by elders, followed by thanksgiving prayers alternately led by a pastor and an ustaz. All residents attend without division, sharing meals and enjoying traditional entertainment together. The *Kalosara* symbol, placed alongside the cross and crescent moon, becomes a visual representation of unity, while the warm and joyful atmosphere proves that differences in belief do not hinder social solidarity.

The roles of traditional and church leaders are key pillars in maintaining this cohesion. In village deliberations, they sit side by side discussing development plans, including the allocation of land for places of worship and social activities. Such collaboration sends a strong message that local leadership prioritizes the common good over sectarian interests. As one pastor noted, when leaders can sit together, the community feels safe and believes that differences are wealth, not threats.

Social cohesion in Tolaki is clearly reflected in the three components mentioned by Qi et al. (2024): social connectedness, collective identity, and cooperative action. Social connectedness is evident in daily interactions among residents of different religions, whether

in formal events or in mutual cooperation to build houses and cultivate fields. Collective identity is shaped through *Kalosara* and the teachings of love, while cooperative action is manifested in the collaboration of traditional and church leaders for developmental goals. This synergy creates social resilience—the community's ability to withstand and recover from potential conflicts.

Field observations also show that public spaces, such as village halls and open fields, are used for cross-community gatherings. Children play together without regard to religious symbols, while adults engage in warm conversations in mixed groups. Photos displayed in the village hall—ranging from joint clean-up activities to Christmas and Eid celebrations—reinforce the narrative that communal unity is not just a slogan but a lived and maintained reality.

Nevertheless, challenges remain. Modernization and social media sometimes trigger identity polarization. However, the fusion of *Kalosara* values and Christian education provides an ethical framework for mitigating such tensions. Strengthening can be achieved through expanding interfaith interaction forums, integrating unity narratives into local curricula, and reviving inclusive traditions. As Qi et al. (2024) remind us, social cohesion is not a static condition but must be maintained through continuous interaction and the renewal of meaning.

Restorative Justice in Customary and Ecclesiastical Conflict Resolution

Restorative justice in Tolaki Village integrates the local wisdom of *Kalosara*—as a symbol of peace and the restoration of social relationships—with the Christian educational teaching of reconciliation, which emphasizes love, forgiveness, and the renewal of relationships. This approach does not focus solely on resolving violations or disputes through legal channels but rather on restoring social bonds fractured by conflict, whether personal or communal.

According to *Kalosara* principles, peaceful resolution is achieved through open deliberation, acknowledgment of wrongdoing, and the granting of forgiveness. The *Kalosara* symbol, a rattan circle tied with three cords, serves as a metaphor for unity and mutual agreement: the circle represents the wholeness of the community, while the three ties represent brotherhood, friendship, and togetherness. This value aligns with Christian reconciliation principles, which emphasize the command to "love your neighbor as yourself" and to "forgive seventy times seven," resulting in a unique cultural-religious synthesis.

The theory of *Restorative Leadership for Peacebuilding* developed by Goold (2024) explains that restorative leadership in multicultural communities emphasizes the role of leaders in rebuilding trust, facilitating open dialogue, and seeking solutions that strengthen social cohesion. In Tolaki Village, these values are realized through collaboration between customary leaders and church leaders in joint deliberation forums.

A concrete example can be seen in a dispute between residents involving religious differences. Several years ago, a land dispute caused tension between Christian and Muslim families. Instead of taking the case directly to the formal legal system, the customary leader invited both parties to sit in the *Kalosara* circle. The church leader also attended, acting as a

moral mediator, while the customary leader guided the proceedings according to customary regulations.

From interviews with Mr. S., a senior customary leader, it was learned that the deliberation process did not begin by confronting the problem directly but started with a simple customary ritual involving the offering of betel nut. According to him, this step aimed to "cool down heated hearts" and open space for calm dialogue. This approach aligns with restorative justice principles that prioritize empathetic dialogue over formal legal confrontation (Fulham et al., 2023; Lodi et al., 2021).

The church leader, Rev. M., emphasized during the forum that true reconciliation requires "the courage to see one's own mistakes and the humility to forgive others' mistakes." Although framed within the Christian faith, this statement was well received by Muslim participants because it was presented in universal human terms. Direct observation in the Tolaki Village Hall showed that the customary deliberation space is arranged in a circle. At the center lies a *Kalosara* made of natural rattan, about 50 cm in diameter, decorated with three bark cords. The *Kalosara* is placed on a woven pandan mat, alongside betel nut, plain water, and sometimes sweet tea.

The forum is attended by representatives of both parties, customary leaders, church leaders, and several respected community members. There are no high chairs or podiums indicating hierarchy; everyone sits on the floor at the same level as a symbol of equality. The process is generally calm, occasionally interspersed with light laughter when a mediator inserts humor to ease the tension.

The author noted that although the forum lasted until late at night, there were no signs of significant emotional fatigue. Instead, a sense of togetherness grew as the dialogue progressed. The outcome was a peaceful agreement, a fair division of land rights, and a jointly signed written statement, concluded with a communal meal.

The integration of *Kalosara* values and Christian teachings in conflict resolution in Tolaki Village demonstrates a pattern of intercultural peacebuilding. *Kalosara* serves as a religiously neutral symbolic space that can be accepted across faiths, while Christian reconciliation principles provide a moral framework that strengthens the commitment to peace.

Mr. L., a young man once involved in inter-village conflict, admitted that he was initially skeptical of this customary process. However, after participating in the deliberations facilitated by customary and church leaders, he felt "more respected as a human being" compared to if his case had gone straight to the police. This story illustrates that restorative justice not only resolves problems but also restores the dignity of the parties involved.

Theoretically, this aligns with Goold's (2024) view that restorative leadership prioritizes relationship restoration and community empowerment, rather than merely imposing sanctions. This approach also strengthens bonding social capital, whereby internal community ties are reinforced through collective dialogue practices.

Nevertheless, the application of restorative justice in Tolaki Village is not always smooth. Challenges arise when one party refuses to attend, believing that customary

processes lack formal legal authority. There are also cases where the losing party feels "forced" to accept the decision to preserve family honor. In such cases, customary and church leaders play a crucial role in ensuring that agreements are reached voluntarily and without coercion. Strengthening participatory principles is key so that restorative justice does not become a mere cultural formality.

Referring to Goold's (2024) perspective, leadership dynamics in Tolaki Village show that restorative leadership rests on three main elements. First, active empathy, reflected in the leader's willingness to genuinely listen to all parties without prejudice, ensuring that every voice has space to be acknowledged. Second, a safe space for dialogue, realized through a circular seating arrangement that removes hierarchical boundaries, places all participants in equal positions, and fosters mutual respect. Third, both symbolic and practical restoration, achieved through the use of *Kalosara* as a symbol of unity and justice, accompanied by a written agreement celebrated with a communal meal as a concrete act of reconciliation. This practice aligns with the circle process concept in restorative justice as described by Lodi et al. (2021), where the circle is not only a seating arrangement but also a manifestation of inclusion, equality, and connection binding each individual in the community.

Collective Stewardship in Resource and Social Capital Management

The third finding of this research highlights the importance of collective stewardship in maintaining shared well-being, which, in the Tolaki community context, is deeply rooted in *Kalosara* principles. *Kalosara*, as a customary philosophy rich in meaning, teaches that all community members have an active role in preserving values, protecting natural resources, and ensuring social harmony. This principle harmonizes with Christian education, which emphasizes the call to serve others and sustainably manage God's creation (sustainable creation care). The synergy between the two gives rise to a collective leadership pattern that prioritizes interfaith collaboration, social solidarity, and participatory-based resource management.

Collective stewardship can be understood as a leadership process not centered on a single individual but distributed among community members to achieve shared goals. In this model, the management of resources and social capital is viewed as a shared moral responsibility that requires dialogue, participation, and long-term commitment. This is particularly relevant in the Tolaki community, where interfaith and intergroup cooperation forms the foundation for sustainable communal life.

In practice, *Kalosara* is not just a customary symbol but also an ethical system that guides collective behavior. It asserts that no member of the community may ignore shared issues. For example, if farmland is damaged by floods, its repair is not only the landowner's responsibility but the concern of the entire community. One customary leader encountered in the field (B., 62 years old) explained that the Tolaki people have long understood life as "meambo meseratu"—a life in which all are bound together, where one person's survival depends on everyone's survival. This view reinforces that collective stewardship is a fundamental, non-negotiable value.

Christian teachings, particularly from the perspective of ecological theology, affirm that humans are called not only to enjoy creation but also to manage it responsibly. The stewardship principle teaches that nature is God's trust to be preserved for present and future generations. In the plural context of the Tolaki community, this teaching provides a spiritual framework for understanding that protecting rivers, forests, and land is not only an ecological duty but also an act of worship and loving service to others. A pastor involved in the village's environmental education program revealed that community clean-ups of rivers involving both Muslims and Christians are not extraordinary events but part of faith witness expressed through concrete action.

In Tolaki Village, interfaith *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) is a highly visible practice. Field observations in June 2024 recorded a road repair activity involving more than 50 residents, both Muslim and Christian. The men worked to compact the soil and lay stones, while the women prepared food for all the workers. There was no division of labor along religious lines; everyone worked together under the coordination of customary and church leaders.

Cross-community education programs also stand as tangible evidence of this collective responsibility. The village's public elementary school invites educators from various religious backgrounds to provide skills training such as organic farming, handicrafts, and appropriate technology. This shows that social capital management focuses not only on material aspects but also on human capacity development.

Joint land management is also evident in the *lako morini* system—the sharing of harvest yields between landowners, workers, and the community treasury. This system ensures that even those without land can benefit from the village's agricultural output. One farmer, T. (47 years old), explained that through this system, no resident falls into extreme poverty because the community always has mechanisms for sharing.

Observations also noted that in the village hall there is a large board displaying the schedule of community activities, both customary and church-related. Interestingly, the schedule includes not only religious celebrations but also *gotong royong* events, tree planting, and entrepreneurship training. At the bottom of the board is a phrase often repeated by residents: "One heart, one village, one responsibility."

The village environment is relatively clean, with green plants lining the main road—an outcome of monthly tree-planting programs. Public spaces are organized with a collective awareness of maintaining shared comfort, from environmental cleanliness to nighttime security. Night patrols are conducted on a rotating basis, involving all age groups, often accompanied by light discussions that become opportunities for exchanging ideas for village development.

Using Caza et al.'s (2021) framework, practices in Tolaki Village show that collective responsibility functions not only as a social norm but also as a form of collective leadership that drives active participation. In Shatila et al.'s (2023) model, collective leadership is built on five elements: shared vision, active participation, role distribution, shared learning, and sustainability. All these elements are visible in Tolaki: the shared vision is embodied in

Kalosara principles and Christian service teachings; active participation occurs in interfaith *gotong royong*; role distribution is evident in equitable work allocation; shared learning appears in cross-community education programs; and sustainability is maintained through the *lako morini* system.

Furthermore, the concept of social capital is highly relevant. The high level of social capital in Tolaki—in the form of trust, norms, and social networks—makes interfaith and interethnic collaboration a natural occurrence. This social capital is reinforced by the symbols and rituals of *Kalosara*, which visually and emotionally bind residents to the value of shared responsibility.

Cultural-Theological Leadership Model for Sustainable Peace

The cultural-theological leadership model proposed in this study emerges from the synthesis of three main dimensions identified in the field: a shared value base, cross-identity legitimacy, and the principles of restorative justice. These three dimensions interact to form a transformational leadership framework that not only accommodates diversity but also optimizes cultural and theological values as instruments for sustainable peace.

In the context of the Tolaki community, this model positions local wisdom such as *Kalosara*—a symbol of unity and collective ethics—alongside moral-spiritual teachings drawn from Christian education as well as Islamic values. The model is designed to operate inclusively, adaptively, and with a participatory basis, enabling it to bridge potential differences that often trigger social friction in multicultural settings.

The foundation of this model lies in the recognition that every community, regardless of religious or ethnic background, shares core values such as justice, care, and collective responsibility. Based on field observations in L. Village, it was evident that the *Kalosara* symbol is often placed at the center of a communal hall during interfaith deliberations. This object is not merely an artifact but serves as a reminder that all parties are bound within the same circle of values.

A traditional leader, B., in an informal conversation, stated that these values "do not see who adheres to which religion, but bind everyone in a promise to protect one another." This reinforces Sari et al.'s (2021) view on the importance of moral imagination—the ability to build a shared vision that transcends formal identity differences.

This approach aligns with Kaftanski's (2024) theory, which emphasizes that leadership legitimacy grows from the alignment between a leader's values and those of the community. In the Tolaki context, a leader who can integrate the *Kalosara* ethos with theological principles such as *love* (in Christianity) or *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (in Islam) will be more broadly accepted. The next step in this model is to build cross-identity legitimacy through active presence in various social, religious, and customary spaces. This legitimacy is not gained instantly but is cultivated through consistent actions, moral example, and the ability to foster a sense of security for all groups.

Interviews with I., a senior teacher in an interfaith school, revealed that leaders who regularly attend interfaith community events are perceived as having "a positive double face"—meaning they can position themselves as belonging to all groups. I. emphasized that

during several instances of tension among youth, interfaith-respected figures were more readily listened to than formal authorities.

These findings support Caza et al.'s (2021) idea that legitimacy in multicultural societies does not come solely from position but from the collective perception that the leader is a moral representative for all. Field observations also show that in several important meetings, the chairs of traditional leaders and religious figures are deliberately placed side-by-side, not hierarchically, to convey the message of role equality.

This leadership model incorporates the principle of restorative justice as a conflict resolution mechanism. Instead of prioritizing punishment, this approach emphasizes the restoration of relationships and social repair. In practice, a cultural-theological leader would initiate mediation forums that combine customary rituals (such as mosalaki or communal meals) with interfaith prayers.

In one land dispute case in the village, the researcher observed how the community leader invited both conflicting parties to dine together in the traditional house. The process began with a Christian prayer and ended with the recitation of a Qur'anic verse—symbolizing that both spiritual traditions could coexist. Informant A., who participated in the process, stated that "the sense of shame before cultural symbols and God is greater than the desire to win alone." This aligns with Goold's (2024) idea that restorative justice is effective when its process activates constructive shame that motivates relationship repair.

The final stage of this model is to develop collective collaboration strategies for sustaining peace. These include interfaith *gotong royong* (mutual assistance), intercommunity education programs, and joint resource management.

Field observations indicate that during planting season, Tolaki residents—both Muslim and Christian—work together in the fields without questioning ritual differences. Even during major religious holidays, harvests are often shared without regard to the recipient's faith. This practice embodies the concept of a solidarity economy that prioritizes collective welfare over individual accumulation.

Additionally, there is an interfaith youth leadership training program facilitated by a local school with support from both church and mosque. This program aims to instill skills in negotiation, conflict management, and consensus-based decision-making—key competencies for sustaining the cultural-theological leadership model. While rooted in the Tolaki context, this model has the potential to be adapted to other multicultural regions. Its foundation lies in the ability to combine universal values (justice, love, care) with local instruments (rituals, symbols, indigenous language), making it flexible for modification according to specific socio-cultural characteristics.

In regions such as Maluku or Papua, where religious and ethnic tensions occasionally arise, this model could serve as a mediation framework that prioritizes the equal role of traditional and religious leaders. The strength of this model lies in its humanistic orientation—prioritizing interpersonal relationships over structural interests—and its courage to embrace diversity as a strength, not a threat.

This cultural-theological leadership model is not merely a conflict management strategy but a leadership philosophy rooted in shared values, nurtured through cross-identity legitimacy, reinforced by restorative justice, and realized through collective collaboration. Field observations, interviews, and relevant theories show that this model works because it fosters a sense of belonging that transcends religious and cultural boundaries. The model's success in the Tolaki community demonstrates that sustainable peace can only be achieved when leadership is carried out as a social process that integrates cultural heritage with inclusive theological ethics.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study affirms that integrating *Kalosara* values with Christian educational principles forms a transformational leadership framework rooted in a cultural-theological foundation, effectively fostering peace and social harmony within the Tolaki community. This model functions not only as a normative approach but also as a leadership praxis grounded in shared values—communal unity, restorative justice, and collective stewardship—recognized across identities, thereby building social legitimacy in both customary and church domains. This approach is relevant not only to the Tolaki context but also offers theoretical and practical contributions to leadership development in other multicultural societies, given its success in bridging local wisdom with Christian theological ethics while addressing modern leadership challenges. The findings serve as evidence that leadership rooted in the intersection of culture and theology can be a transformative force to reduce horizontal conflict, strengthen social cohesion, and promote sustainable peace—making this research the first academic documentation to systematically formulate such a model within the Tolaki context.

ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles, including informed consent, protection of informants' confidentiality, and respect for local cultural values. Special consideration was given to participants from vulnerable groups to ensure their safety, comfort, and equal rights to participate. No external funding was received, and the authors declare no conflict of interest. All data and information presented were collected through valid research methods and have been verified to ensure their accuracy and reliability. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) was limited to technical assistance for writing and language editing, without influencing the scientific substance of the work. The authors express their gratitude to the informants for their valuable insights, and to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content and conclusions of this article.

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