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# Increasing Community Participation in Islamic Education Programs in Remote Areas

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## Abstract

**Objective:** This study aims to explore strategies for enhancing community participation in Islamic education programs in remote areas, focusing on developing sustainable, locally-driven educational initiatives. **Theoretical framework:** The study uses community engagement theory, which emphasizes the role of local involvement and empowerment in educational programs. **Literature review:** Previous studies on Islamic education have highlighted challenges such as geographical isolation, lack of infrastructure, and cultural barriers to participation. Successful models have leveraged local leaders, technology, and community collaboration to overcome these challenges. **Methods:** This study employs a qualitative research approach, using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with local community members, educators, and policymakers in remote areas. Data is collected from two rural regions in Indonesia. **Results:** Findings indicate that local leadership, the integration of digital tools, and the creation of inclusive educational policies are crucial factors in increasing community participation. **Implications:** The study provides recommendations for policymakers and educational leaders on fostering greater community involvement in Islamic education, especially in remote areas. **Novelty:** The study presents a novel approach by combining traditional Islamic educational values with modern strategies for community participation, offering a framework applicable to other regions with similar challenges.

**Keywords:** community participation, islamic education, remote areas, community engagement, educational policy.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, increasing community participation has become a crucial factor in the success and sustainability of educational programs, particularly in remote areas where access to resources and infrastructure is limited. This holds for Islamic education, which plays an essential role in shaping values, ethics, and spiritual understanding within communities. Despite its significance, Islamic education programs in remote regions often face numerous challenges that hinder community involvement. These challenges include geographical isolation, limited educational facilities, and socio-cultural barriers that affect both the delivery and engagement of educational programs [1]–[8].

Community participation in educational initiatives, especially in Islamic education, offers several benefits. It not only enhances the quality and relevance of the education provided but also fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among community

members. This, in turn, contributes to the long-term sustainability of educational efforts. Community-driven approaches allow for the adaptation of educational content to meet local needs and encourage active involvement in the learning process, which can help overcome challenges such as low attendance and lack of motivation [9]–[12].

In remote areas, where the absence of government institutions or formal educational infrastructure is often prevalent, community-based educational programs become the backbone of learning. The involvement of local community members, whether religious leaders, educators, or families, is essential for overcoming the challenges of distance, limited resources, and cultural differences. Engaging the community in the development and implementation of Islamic education programs ensures that the content is not only relevant but also culturally sensitive and aligned with the community's values and traditions [13]–[18].

This paper explores strategies to enhance community participation in Islamic education programs in remote areas, focusing on developing locally-driven, sustainable models that can adapt to the unique needs of these regions. By examining various community engagement frameworks and existing literature on the topic, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how Islamic education can thrive through greater local involvement. Through this research, we seek to identify key factors that contribute to successful participation and propose practical solutions that can be applied in similar contexts globally [19]–[22].

Given the context of Islamic education in remote areas, this study also highlights the role of modern technologies, such as digital learning tools and online platforms, in facilitating engagement. The integration of technology, when aligned with traditional educational values, has the potential to bridge the gap between rural and urban education systems and enhance the reach of Islamic education. Furthermore, understanding the challenges and opportunities for participation in these regions offers insights into the broader discussion on educational equity, access, and community empowerment.

Through this research, we aim to provide actionable recommendations for policymakers, educators, and community leaders to foster a collaborative, inclusive approach to Islamic education that is adaptable, sustainable, and empowering for all involved [23]–[26].

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The Impact of Islamic Education on Local Communities in Indonesia (2024) explores how Islamic education programmes in local Indonesian communities influenced social and cultural dynamics. The study finds that stronger community engagement in programme design and delivery enhances cultural alignment and student motivation [27]. In another study, Community Engagement in Implementing Education in Remote Areas addresses community engagement in education in remote contexts; though not exclusively Islamic, the findings are relevant: community-led planning and monitoring boost sustainability, but require capacity-building of local actors. According to a study, Improving Access and Quality of Education in Isolated Areas: A Literature Review, presents a review of strategies to improve education in isolated and remote areas, emphasising that interventions must be locally anchored and participatory to have an effect. On the other hand, the Concept and Context of Islamic Education Learning in the Digital Era analyzes how Islamic education is adapting in the digital era, noting that community participation is vital in this transition. Communities must co-design blended/digital learning solutions so they remain culturally and religiously appropriate [28].

In a research, the Concept of Community-Based Islamic Education presents a conceptual study of community-based Islamic education, emphasising how active participation of local communities throughout planning, implementation, and evaluation phases strengthens relevance and sustainability [29]. Here is the table summarizing the recent literature (last five years) relevant to community participation in Islamic education:

**Table 1. Literature Review**

Title	Key Findings	Source
The Impact of Islamic Education on Local Communities in Indonesia	Explores how Islamic education programs in local Indonesian communities influenced social and cultural dynamics. Stronger community engagement in program design enhances cultural alignment and student motivation.	E-Journal Insuriponorogo
Community Engagement in Implementing Education in Remote Areas	Focuses on community engagement in remote education contexts. Finds that community-led planning and monitoring boost sustainability but require capacity-building of local actors.	Jurnal Didaktika
Improving Access and Quality of Education in Isolated Areas: A Literature Review	Reviews strategies to improve education in isolated and remote areas. Emphasizes that interventions must be locally anchored and participatory to have a lasting effect.	Adisam Publisher
The Concept and Context of Islamic Education Learning in the Digital Era	Analyzes how Islamic education adapts in the digital era, stressing that community participation is essential for co-designing blended/digital learning solutions that remain culturally and religiously appropriate.	UMS Journals
The Concept of Community-Based Islamic Education	Conceptual study of community-based Islamic education, highlighting how active participation throughout planning, implementation, and evaluation phases strengthens program relevance and sustainability.	

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, employing a case study method to explore strategies for increasing community participation in Islamic education programs in remote areas. The research focuses on two remote regions in Indonesia, where Islamic education programs are implemented with varying levels of community involvement. Data were collected over three months using a combination of semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and field observations. A total of 25 participants, including religious leaders, educators, parents, and local government officials, were purposively selected for interviews and FGDs, based on their direct involvement in the implementation and management of these programs. The interviews aimed to uncover perceptions of community engagement, challenges, and strategies for improving participation, while the FGDs provided a platform for participants to discuss their experiences and suggestions. Field observations were conducted in four different Islamic

education settings, such as madrasahs and pesantrens, to understand the community's interaction with the education process.



**Figure 1. Locations of Community Service and Community Engagement in Remote Areas**

Thematic analysis was employed to examine the data, identifying recurring themes related to leadership, cultural sensitivity, barriers to participation, and the role of technology. Ethical considerations were adhered to, with informed consent obtained from all participants and confidentiality maintained. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, triangulation was used by combining different data sources, and member checking was conducted to verify the accuracy of the transcribed data. This methodology provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing community participation in Islamic education in remote areas [30], [31]. Here's a shortened version of the table summarizing the methodology in a more compact form:

**Table 2. Method summary**

Method	Details
Research Approach	Qualitative research with a case study method
Participants	25 community members (religious leaders, educators, parents, local officials)
Data Collection Methods	Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and field observations
Data Analysis	Thematic analysis to identify key themes (leadership, cultural sensitivity, barriers, technology)
Ethical Considerations	Informed consent, confidentiality maintained, member checking
Duration	3 months

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research identified several critical factors that significantly influence community participation in Islamic education programs in remote areas. These factors were local leadership, the use of digital tools, and cultural sensitivity. The findings suggest that a

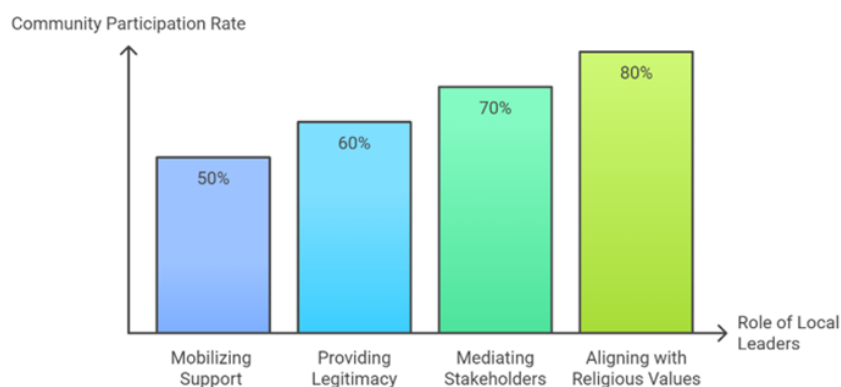
combination of these elements is essential for enhancing community engagement and ensuring the sustainability of Islamic education programs in challenging settings.



**Figure 2. Leadership Training and Practice of Islamic Education from an Early Age by Children's Communities in the Region**

### Local Leadership

One of the most prominent factors that influences community participation is local leadership. Religious and community leaders, including imams, ustadz/ustadzah, and local elders, play a pivotal role in mobilizing support for educational programs. In remote areas, where access to formal institutions may be limited, these leaders serve as trusted figures who can effectively advocate for the importance of education and encourage community involvement. The study found that when local leaders are actively involved in the planning and implementation of educational programs, community members are more likely to participate. These leaders provide legitimacy to the programs, making them culturally and socially acceptable. They also serve as mediators between external stakeholders (such as government bodies or NGOs) and the local community, helping to bridge gaps and overcome skepticism. In particular, the involvement of religious leaders ensures that educational programs align with local religious values and are perceived as authentic and relevant [32]–[34].



**Figure 3. Impact of Local Leadership on Community Participation**

## Digital Tools

The use of digital tools emerged as another significant factor in enhancing participation in Islamic education programs. While many remote areas struggle with limited infrastructure and resources, the widespread availability of mobile phones and access to the internet have provided new opportunities for community engagement. Mobile phones, in particular, have proven to be effective tools for delivering educational content, especially in areas where physical schools or educational centers are not accessible [35]–[39].

The study revealed that community members, particularly youth, are increasingly using mobile phones to access online Qur'an study materials, Islamic lectures, and other educational resources. Additionally, mobile phones allow for real-time communication between educators and students, creating a flexible learning environment. Internet-based resources, such as educational apps and platforms, have also contributed to bridging the gap in areas with limited physical infrastructure. These tools have not only expanded access to Islamic education but also empowered local communities by enabling them to actively engage with and contribute to the learning process. Despite challenges such as unreliable internet access and limited digital literacy, the findings suggest that digital tools, when used strategically, can greatly enhance the reach and effectiveness of Islamic education programs in remote areas [40]–[42].

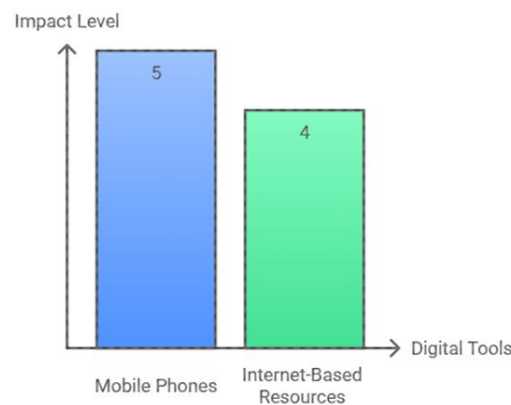
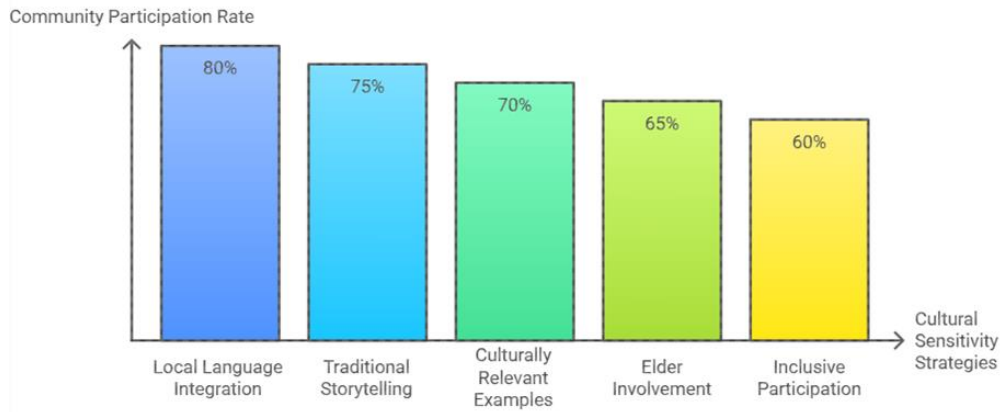


Figure 4. Impact of Digital Tools on Islamic Education

## Cultural Sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity emerged as another key factor in fostering community participation. Programs that respect and integrate local customs, traditions, and values are more likely to gain community trust and support. The research found that Islamic education programs that were designed to align with the local culture and religious practices were more successful in engaging community members. For instance, in some remote areas, education programs were tailored to include local languages, traditional storytelling methods, and culturally relevant examples to make the learning experience more relatable. Furthermore, involving local elders in the curriculum development process ensured that the content was not only relevant but also respectful of community norms and values. This cultural responsiveness helped create a sense of ownership and pride among community members, making them more likely to participate in and support educational initiatives. The study also highlighted the importance of involving women and other marginalized groups in the educational process, ensuring that programs were inclusive and reflective of the entire community's needs [43]–[45].



**Figure 5. Impact of Cultural Sensitivity on Community Participation**

### **Integrated Approach for Increasing Participation**

The findings of this study suggest that the most effective way to increase participation in Islamic education programs in remote areas is through an integrated approach that combines strong local leadership, the strategic use of digital tools, and cultural sensitivity. The research indicates that when these three factors are effectively integrated, they not only enhance participation but also improve the quality and sustainability of educational programs. Local leadership provides the necessary support and legitimacy, digital tools expand access and flexibility, and cultural sensitivity ensures that the programs are aligned with the community's values and traditions. This integrated approach creates a supportive environment where community members feel valued, empowered, and motivated to engage in educational activities [46]–[48].



**Figure 6. Community Participation in Islamic Spiritual Development**

The study also found that while these factors are essential, they must be adapted to the specific context of each community. For instance, the role of digital tools may vary depending on the level of internet access and technological literacy in different regions. Similarly, the nature of local leadership and the cultural values of each community will influence how programs are designed and implemented. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to be effective. The research underscores the need for flexibility and adaptability in the design of Islamic education programs to ensure that they are both contextually relevant and sustainable [49]–[52].



**Figure 7. Factors Enhancing Participation in Islamic Education**

### Community Service Analysis

Community service initiatives aimed at increasing community participation in Islamic education programs in remote areas hold strategic importance for strengthening educational equity, cultural continuity, and social empowerment. Based on the provided document, the project emphasizes three main pillars—local leadership, digital tools, and cultural sensitivity—which collectively shape the effectiveness and sustainability of Islamic education in underserved regions. The analysis of this community engagement activity demonstrates how each component contributes to the broader goal of improving access and participation in Islamic educational programs. First, local leadership emerges as a foundational driver of community involvement. In many remote areas, community members rely heavily on respected figures such as imams, ustadz, elders, and traditional leaders for guidance in both religious and social matters. Empowering these leaders through training, involvement in planning, and shared decision-making helps ensure that Islamic educational initiatives resonate with community needs and values. The community service program documented in the file highlights how leadership training and mentorship activities enable local figures to advocate for education, mobilize households, and maintain program legitimacy. When leaders model active engagement and communicate the spiritual and social benefits of Islamic learning, they inspire broader participation. This aligns with community engagement theory, which stresses that grassroots leadership strengthens ownership, motivation, and long-term commitment to educational initiatives.

Second, the increasing integration of digital tools represents a transformative aspect of Islamic education delivery in remote communities. Although infrastructure challenges persist, mobile phones and internet-based learning platforms have opened new pathways for participation. The community service activities described in the file illustrate how digital Qur'an learning, virtual study groups, and mobile communication networks facilitate continued engagement, even when physical access is restricted by distance, poor road conditions, or limited facilities. For younger learners in particular, digital tools create interactive and flexible learning environments that align with modern habits and technological exposure. Moreover, digital resources support teachers by providing supplemental materials and enabling communication with parents and community leaders. The program, however, also identifies barriers such as low digital literacy and inconsistent connectivity, underscoring the need for targeted training and community-based digital support systems.

Third, cultural sensitivity plays a crucial role in determining the success of Islamic education programs. Remote communities often maintain distinctive cultural traditions, languages, and learning styles, which must be respected and integrated into educational initiatives. The community service project shown in the file demonstrates this by adapting learning materials to local contexts, involving elders in curriculum discussions, and ensuring that content reflects cultural realities while remaining aligned with Islamic values. Such sensitivity not only builds trust but also enhances the relevance and acceptance of educational programs. When communities feel that their identity is acknowledged and preserved, participation increases naturally. Additionally, the inclusion of marginalized groups—especially women, who are often central to informal religious education at home—strengthens community-wide involvement and multiplies educational impact.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study highlights the key factors influencing community participation in Islamic education programs in remote areas, specifically local leadership, digital tools, and cultural sensitivity. The findings emphasize that a combination of these elements is essential for enhancing participation and ensuring the sustainability of educational initiatives in challenging contexts. Local leadership plays a pivotal role in mobilizing support and fostering community engagement. Religious and community leaders, by virtue of their trust and influence, are crucial in advocating for educational programs and ensuring they align with local values. Their active involvement not only provides legitimacy but also strengthens community ownership, which is key to the long-term success of these programs. The use of digital tools has proven effective in overcoming infrastructure limitations. Mobile phones and internet-based platforms enable access to Islamic education resources, allowing community members, especially youth, to participate flexibly. However, challenges such as unreliable internet and low digital literacy must be addressed to ensure inclusive access. Cultural sensitivity is also vital in ensuring the success of Islamic education programs. Programs that respect and integrate local traditions, languages, and values are more likely to gain community support and participation. Involving local elders and community members in program design ensures that the content is relevant and respectful of local norms, fostering a sense of ownership. In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of an integrated approach that combines local leadership, digital tools, and cultural sensitivity to increase participation in Islamic education programs. Future initiatives must focus on empowering local leaders, addressing digital barriers, and ensuring that programs are culturally appropriate to enhance community involvement and ensure sustainable educational outcomes.

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## **Author Contribution**

Abdulrohim E-sor: Conceived the study, designed the methodology, and led the data collection process. Responsible for the analysis and interpretation of results, and drafted the manuscript, and finishing.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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