

Community-Based Karawitan Education and Cultural Sustainability: The Rosa Mustika Laras Community at Saint John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Kudus

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ABSTRACT

The sustainability of Javanese karawitan is increasingly challenged by cultural transformation and declining youth participation. While previous studies have examined karawitan in educational settings, limited attention has been given to its development within religious communities as a model of arts education and cultural preservation. This study investigates community-based karawitan education implemented by Rosa Mustika Laras at Saint John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Kudus, Central Java. A qualitative case study was employed using participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Data were analyzed through an interactive model, with credibility ensured by triangulation and member checking. The findings reveal that Rosa Mustika Laras integrates musical instruction, cultural transmission, and liturgical inculturation through regular ensemble practice and intergenerational learning. Beyond supporting Catholic liturgy, the community actively promotes cultural sustainability through public performances, educational outreach, and institutional collaboration. These activities strengthen cultural identity, encourage community participation, and support the regeneration of karawitan practitioners. This study demonstrates that religious communities can serve as effective spaces for community-based arts education while functioning as agents of intangible cultural heritage preservation.

INTRODUCTION

The development of globalization and modernization has brought significant changes to the sustainability of various forms of traditional cultural heritage in many countries. The dominance of popular culture, the advancement of digital media, and changing preferences among younger generations have caused many traditional arts to face challenges in the processes of regeneration and preservation. These conditions position arts education and community participation as important factors in maintaining the sustainability of cultural heritage so that it remains relevant amid social change.

Indonesia is one of the countries possessing an exceptionally rich diversity of traditions and cultures. This diversity reflects the national identity formed by various local cultural values that coexist within the framework of the national culture (Marta & Rieuwpassa, 2018). Among these cultural traditions, Javanese culture occupies an important position because it not only represents the values, norms, and traditions of Javanese society but is also expressed through various forms of traditional arts, one of which is *karawitan*.

Karawitan is a traditional Javanese musical art that embodies aesthetic, historical, philosophical, social, moral, and spiritual values that have developed alongside the lives of Javanese people (Julianto, 2017). As part of cultural identity, *karawitan* has been transmitted from generation to generation through formal, non-formal, and community-based educational processes. The importance of gamelan as part of the world's cultural heritage was further affirmed through UNESCO's recognition of gamelan as an Intangible Cultural Heritage on December 15, 2021 (UNESCO, 2021). This recognition demonstrates that the sustainability of *karawitan* is not only the responsibility of the Javanese community but also forms part of global efforts to preserve cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, this international recognition has not fully addressed the various challenges faced by *karawitan* at the local level. The rapid development of modern music has influenced the interest of younger generations in traditional arts, resulting in a decline in participation in *karawitan* activities (Nurhasanah et al., 2021). Some young people perceive traditional arts as being less compatible with modern lifestyles and therefore prefer popular culture, which is considered more appealing (Irianto, 2017). These challenges become even more complex when *karawitan* education is conducted with participants from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, making adaptive and contextual learning approaches necessary (Setyoko & Pratama, 2021). These conditions indicate that the sustainability of *karawitan* depends not only on the presence of artists but also on various social communities capable of serving as spaces for education as well as cultural preservation.

One form of such preservation has developed through faith-based communities. This phenomenon is noteworthy because it demonstrates that religious institutions function not only as spaces for spiritual formation but also as spaces for preserving local culture through the process of inculturation. One example found in Kudus Regency, Central Java, is Rosa Mustika Laras *Karawitan*, which is based at Saint John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Kudus. Before the community was established, the church had already owned a complete set of gamelan instruments purchased from parishioners in 1998. Subsequently, Rosa Mustika Laras *Karawitan* was officially recognized by the Department of Culture and Tourism of Kudus Regency on February 23, 2011. The existence of this community demonstrates the process of integrating Javanese culture into the life of the Catholic Church through the use of *karawitan* as part of the liturgical ministry as well as a medium for cultural preservation within a pluralistic society.

Previous studies have demonstrated that *karawitan* plays an important role in both education and cultural preservation. Research on extracurricular *karawitan* activities has shown that *karawitan* learning is capable of developing students' talents and creativity while simultaneously instilling the values of cultural preservation (Nakagawa, 2000). In a different context, Apriansyah & Nadroh (2024) demonstrated that the inculturation of Javanese culture within the Catholic Church can be realized through the integration of local cultural elements into church life. Meanwhile, (Heldisari, 2022) demonstrated that *karawitan* education can also be implemented inclusively for children with mild intellectual disabilities, indicating that gamelan serves as a learning medium capable of reaching diverse groups within society. Another study on the development of the *Karawitan* Arts Program at State Vocational High School 8 Surakarta showed that *karawitan* education contributes to character building and strengthening students' cultural identity.

However, these studies have continued to examine *karawitan* education, cultural preservation, and inculturation as separate areas of inquiry. Studies on *karawitan* communities that have developed within the Catholic Church as spaces for arts education as well as media for cultural preservation remain relatively limited. Consequently, only a limited number of studies have explained how *karawitan* education is carried out within religious communities and how this process contributes to the existence of *karawitan* groups and the sustainability of Javanese culture in society. This research gap provides the primary rationale for the present study. Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the educational process implemented within Rosa Mustika Laras *Karawitan* at Saint John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Kudus, including the history of the community, the instruments used, the characteristics of its members, and the educational methods applied during rehearsals. In addition, this study aims to analyze how the existence of Rosa Mustika Laras *Karawitan* contributes to the preservation of Javanese culture within the Kudus community.

This study employs two principal conceptual foundations. First, the concept of cultural inculturation is used to explain the process of adapting and integrating Catholic values with local Javanese culture in the practice of *karawitan* within the church environment (Apriansyah & Nadroh, 2024). Second, the theories of cultural existence and preservation are employed to understand that cultural sustainability depends not only on efforts to maintain traditions but also on the community's ability to develop culture creatively so that it remains relevant in responding to social change (Irhandayaningsih, 2018). Through these two perspectives, this study is expected to contribute to the development of community-based music education studies, enrich research on cultural inculturation within religious institutions, and broaden the understanding of strategies for preserving *karawitan* as a living heritage of Javanese culture within society.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the *karawitan* education process and the existence of the Rosa Mustika Laras *Karawitan* Community in the context of preserving Javanese culture within Saint John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Kudus. A qualitative approach was selected because it is capable of revealing meanings, experiences, and socio-cultural dynamics that cannot be explained through quantitative approaches (Rijali, 2019). A case study design was employed because the Rosa Mustika Laras *Karawitan* Community possesses unique characteristics as a church-based *karawitan* group that integrates arts education, liturgical practice, and cultural preservation within a single social setting (Prihatsanti et al., 2018). The research flow is presented in Figure 1.

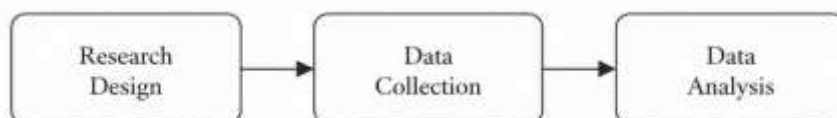


Figure 1. Research Flow
(Source: Adapted from Miles et al., 2014)

The study was conducted at Saint John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Kudus Regency, Central Java, as the primary location for the activities of the Rosa Mustika Laras *Karawitan* Community. This site was purposively selected because it serves as the center for regular rehearsals, gamelan-based liturgical services, and various cultural activities involving the local community. Data were collected through three complementary data collection techniques. First, participant observation was conducted by directly participating in rehearsals, liturgical services, and the community's cultural activities to understand the *karawitan* education process in its natural setting. Second, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with purposively selected informants consisting of community administrators, instructors, *karawitan* members, and the management of Saint John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Kudus. The selection of informants was based on their active involvement and knowledge regarding the history of the community, the learning process, and the role of the Rosa Mustika Laras *Karawitan* Community in the life of both the church and the wider community. Third, a documentation study was conducted using organizational archives, activity photographs, video recordings, *gending* notations, and documents related to the cultural inculturation policy within the church environment (Nurahma & Hendriani, 2021).

Data analysis followed the interactive analysis model developed through four stages: data collection, data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions (Mekarisce, 2020). These four stages were conducted cyclically, allowing the analysis process to be carried out continuously from the beginning of data collection until the completion of the study. The results of observations, interviews, and documentation were repeatedly compared to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the *karawitan* education process and the existence of the

community. The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through the application of source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different informants, while technique triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. Member checking was performed by reconfirming the interpreted findings with several key informants to ensure consistency between the research findings and the experiences they reported (Alfansyur, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that the Rosa Mustika Laras Karawitan Community employs the *pelog* tuning system as the most dominant musical system in both the rehearsal process and liturgical services at Saint John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Kudus. The selection of this tuning system is based not only on musical considerations but also serves as part of an educational strategy that facilitates community members in learning the gamelan repertoire. Most of the repertoire used to accompany the Eucharistic Celebration is composed in the *pelog* tuning system because its tonal characteristics are more easily understood by members who come from Western music backgrounds or who have no prior experience in playing gamelan.

In the Javanese *karawitan* tradition, the musical system is built upon two principal tuning systems, namely *slendro* and *pelog*, each possessing different interval structures and sonic characteristics (Susanto et al., 2017). The *pelog* tuning system consists of seven pitches within one *gembyang*, namely 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 (*ji, ro, lu, pat, mo, nem, pi*). This interval structure bears similarities to the diatonic scale, making it relatively easier to recognize for individuals who are accustomed to the Western musical system. Nevertheless, the *pelog* tuning system retains its distinctive musical character with a calm, respectful, and sacred sonic atmosphere in every *gending* performance (Purnomo et al., 2022). In contrast, the *slendro* tuning system uses only five pitches, namely 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 (*ji, ro, lu, mo, nem*), with relatively even intervals, thereby requiring greater auditory sensitivity in gamelan performance. The characteristics of these two tuning systems are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Musical Scales in Javanese Karawitan

Musical Scale	Pitch Sequence
Pelog	1-2-3-4-5-6-7 (<i>ji-ro-lu-pat-mo-nem-pi</i>)
Slendro	1-2-3-5-6 (<i>ji-ro-lu-mo-nem</i>)

(Source: Nugraha & Sejati, 2026)

The fundamental difference between the two tuning systems lies in their pitch intervals. The *slendro* tuning system has relatively equal intervals, whereas the *pelog* tuning system exhibits alternating wide and narrow interval patterns, resulting in distinct tonal characteristics (Setiawan, 2021). This difference makes the *pelog* tuning system easier for beginner performers to

learn, while the *slendro* tuning system requires a more intensive process of auditory adaptation. The findings indicate that this consideration is one of the reasons why the Rosa Mustika Laras Karawitan Community predominantly employs the *pelog* tuning system in both the educational process and the presentation of liturgical music.

The interview results with community administrators and instructors indicate that the similarity between the tonal structure of the *pelog* tuning system and the diatonic system, namely *do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-si* (1-2-3-4-5-6-7), facilitates community members in understanding notation and performing the liturgical repertoire. In addition to facilitating the learning process, the solemn and tranquil sonic character of the *pelog* tuning system is also considered appropriate for the atmosphere of the Eucharistic Celebration, thereby strengthening the spiritual ambience of worship. An example of the musical score used in the liturgical service is presented in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Musical Score Used in the Liturgical Liturgy
 (Source: Archive of the Church Karawitan Committee, 2026)

These findings indicate that the selection of the tuning system in the Rosa Mustika Laras Karawitan Community is not merely based on considerations of musical aesthetics but also represents a pedagogical strategy that supports the *karawitan* education process within the church environment. Aligning the characteristics of the tuning system with the participants' initial abilities enables the learning process to become more inclusive without diminishing the musical values of Javanese *karawitan*. Thus, the tuning system functions not only as a musical element but also as an essential component in fostering the sustainability of arts education while maintaining the existence of *karawitan* as a living cultural heritage within society.

Karawitan Education in the Rosa Mustika Laras Community

The findings indicate that the sustainability of the Rosa Mustika Laras Karawitan Community is supported not only by its performances but also by a continuous educational process that transmits musical knowledge, Javanese cultural values, and liturgical practices to its members. This process integrates the community's history, gamelan instruments, and systematic training methods, shaping its identity as a church-based arts community. The study further

reveals that these historical, pedagogical, and musical aspects are closely interconnected. The community's history reflects the inculturation of Javanese culture within Saint John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Kudus, while the selection of gamelan instruments and training methods serves as an educational strategy that supports continuous member regeneration. The integration of these elements enables the community to sustain its existence while contributing to the preservation of Javanese culture amid ongoing social change.

1. Community-Based Karawitan Education

The findings show that *karawitan* education in the Rosa Mustika Laras Community functions as a community-based music education model that integrates arts education, cultural preservation, and liturgical service. Unlike formal school instruction, learning occurs through regular rehearsals, active participation, and direct involvement in church music ministry, enabling the continuous transmission of musical knowledge, Javanese cultural values, and religious experience.

The learning process emphasizes not only gamelan performance skills but also character development through collective music-making. Members cultivate discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and musical coordination, reflecting the Javanese *karawitan* values of harmony, communality, and mutual cooperation. From an ethnopedagogical perspective, this process promotes cultural transmission while fostering musical competence, social responsibility, and an understanding of the philosophical values embedded in gamelan traditions (Wardani et al., 2025). Training is conducted regularly with members of diverse ages, professions, and experience levels. Each session includes gamelan performance techniques, *gending* notation, vocal practice, and the musical functions of the Catholic liturgy, providing contextual learning through authentic performance experiences.

The establishment of the Rosa Mustika Laras Community was closely linked to the cultural inculturation process at Saint John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Kudus. As only a few parishioners were initially able to play the church's gamelan instruments, the church council organized structured *karawitan* training to expand participation in liturgical services while preserving Javanese culture. Consequently, *karawitan* education serves not only to develop musical competence but also to ensure the regeneration of gamelan performers. Overall, the community demonstrates how religious institutions can function as effective spaces for arts education while sustaining intangible cultural heritage through continuous community-based learning.

2. Community Development and Cultural Inculturation

The findings indicate that the development of the Rosa Mustika Laras Karawitan Community is closely linked to the process of cultural inculturation at Saint John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Kudus. The community originated after the church acquired a complete set of

gamelan instruments in 1998 from a parishioner facing financial difficulties. The church subsequently organized regular *karawitan* training with professional instructors, leading to the establishment of the Rosa Mustika Laras Community. This development demonstrates that the community was built through institutional support that positioned traditional arts as an integral part of both religious and cultural life.

The study further shows that the community was established as a strategy to integrate Javanese culture into Catholic liturgical practice without diminishing religious identity. *Karawitan* functions not only as musical accompaniment for the Eucharistic Celebration but also as a medium that connects spiritual values with local cultural identity. This finding is consistent with Pandor et al. (2025), who argue that the use of gamelan in the liturgy enriches religious expression while strengthening the ongoing process of cultural inculturation. From a sociology of art perspective, this practice also reinforces collective identity by connecting community members through shared values, experiences, and goals (Hudayana, 2021).

A distinctive characteristic of the Rosa Mustika Laras Community is its openness to members from different religious backgrounds. Although based within a Catholic church, membership is not restricted by religious affiliation, allowing individuals of various faiths to participate in both learning and performance activities. This demonstrates that traditional arts serve as an inclusive space for social dialogue, consistent with the findings of Emen & Hendi (2021), while also expanding social networks through cross-community collaboration (Sulu et al., 2024). The community's institutional development was further strengthened through its official recognition by the Department of Tourism and Culture of Kudus Regency on February 23, 2011. This recognition affirmed the community's contribution to regional cultural preservation and increased its opportunities to participate in cultural events. Evidence of the official recognition is presented in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Official Recognition Certificate of the Rosa Mustika *Karawitan* Community
 (Source: Archive of the Rosa Mustika Karawitan Committee, 2011)

The findings also reveal that the community faced significant challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, when all rehearsals and liturgical music activities were suspended from 2020. Nevertheless, the community resumed its activities in 2022 through the recruitment of new members and the gradual restoration of regular rehearsals. This recovery demonstrates strong organizational resilience, supported by members' commitment, effective leadership, and a strong sense of solidarity established since the community's formation. This finding supports the concept of community resilience proposed by Sunarno & Sulistyowati (2021), emphasizing a community's capacity to anticipate, adapt to, and recover from crises by utilizing its social resources.

Overall, the development of the Rosa Mustika Laras Karawitan Community demonstrates that the sustainability of an arts community depends not only on musical performance quality but also on its ability to build effective educational systems, strengthen collective identity, develop inclusive social networks, and adapt to social change. These factors have enabled the community to sustain its existence as both a center for arts education and an agent of Javanese cultural preservation in Kudus Regency.

3. Musical Organization in Karawitan Education

The findings indicate that *karawitan* education in the Rosa Mustika Laras Community is built upon an understanding of the function of each gamelan instrument as part of an integrated musical system. Members learn not only the techniques of playing individual instruments (*ricikan*) but also the relationships among instruments in shaping the structure of a *gending*. This approach develops musical awareness by emphasizing gamelan performance as a collective practice requiring coordination, balance, and mutual support. Observations show that the gamelan ensemble consists of the gong, bonang, demung, saron, slenthem, kenong, gender, ketuk, kempyang, and gambang. Functionally, these instruments are classified into three groups: structural *ricikan*, *balungan*, and *garap*. This classification facilitates learning while helping members understand the role of each instrument within the musical system.

The structural *ricikan*—gong, kenong, ketuk, and kempyang—define the *gending* structure (*colotomic structure*) by marking musical cycles and formal divisions (Setiawan, 2021). The *balungan* instruments—demung, saron, and slenthem—perform the core melody that serves as the foundation for all other instruments (Kartiman & Rokhani, 2025). Meanwhile, the *garap* instruments—bonang, gender, and gambang—develop the *balungan* through melodic variation, rhythm, and ornamentation, creating a more dynamic and expressive musical character (Setiawan, 2021).

Table 2. Classification of Gamelan Instruments in the Rosa Mustika Laras *Karawitan* Community

Instrument Group	Instruments
Structural	Gong, Kenong, Ketuk, Kempyang
Balungan	Demung, Saron, Slenthem
Garap	Bonang, Gender, Gambang

(Source: Nugraha & Sejati, 2026)

These findings demonstrate that instrument learning is directed not merely toward individual technical mastery but toward understanding the interdependent functions of each *ricikan* in creating musical harmony. Consequently, the organization of gamelan instruments plays a vital role in developing musical competence while fostering the values of cooperation, coordination, and collective responsibility that characterize community-based *karawitan* education.

4. Learning Strategies and Cultural Transmission

The findings indicate that the learning strategy in the Rosa Mustika Laras Community combines traditional approaches with adaptive practices that accommodate members from diverse backgrounds. This model supports continuous regeneration without limiting participation based on musical experience or social identity. In practice, the learning process retains the traditional teacher-student model of *karawitan* education. Instructors serve not only as technical trainers but also as facilitators who transmit cultural values, the philosophy of *gending*, and the ethics of Javanese musical practice. Each rehearsal includes instrumental techniques, notation reading, interpretation of song lyrics, and the liturgical context of the repertoire. Thus, the educational process extends beyond musical skill development to include cultural understanding. This finding is consistent with Setyoko & Pratama (2021), who emphasize that successful *karawitan* education depends on instructors' ability to adapt teaching methods to participants' cultural backgrounds and learning readiness.

The study also shows that the Rosa Mustika Laras Community applies an inclusive learning approach. The community welcomes anyone regardless of prior gamelan experience. New members receive gradual guidance through observation, hands-on practice, and mentoring from instructors and senior members, creating a collaborative, participatory, and supportive learning environment. This inclusive model supports the findings of (Heldisari, 2022), who demonstrated that *karawitan* education can be effectively implemented for learners with diverse characteristics when appropriate teaching strategies are applied. In the Rosa Mustika Laras Community, inclusivity reflects not only openness to varying musical abilities but also the values of togetherness embedded in Javanese culture and aligned with the spirit of Catholic service. The learning strategy demonstrates that successful *karawitan* education depends not only on the effective transfer of gamelan performance skills but also on the community's ability to create a collaborative, inclusive, and culturally oriented learning environment. Through this approach,

the community develops not only competent gamelan performers but also individuals who understand the cultural meanings and social values embedded in the Javanese *karawitan* tradition.

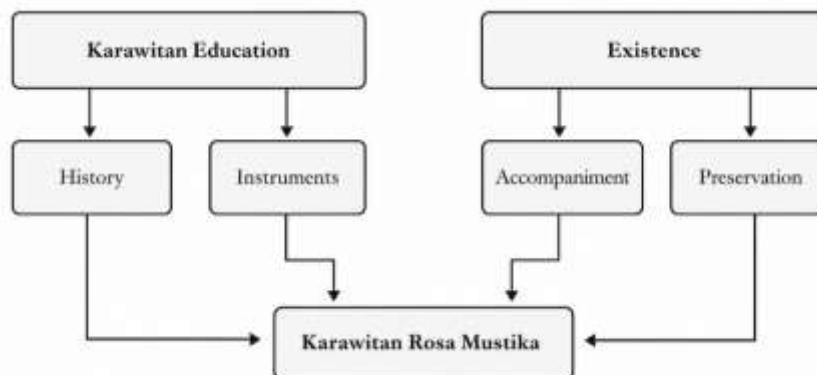


Figure 4. Conceptual Framework of The Discussion
 (Source: Author's Conceptual Model, 2026)

Cultural Sustainability through the *Karawitan* Community

1. Liturgical Inculturation and Cultural Identity

The findings indicate that the existence of the Rosa Mustika Laras Karawitan Community is founded on the integration of two primary functions: serving as musical accompaniment for Catholic liturgy and as a medium for preserving Javanese culture. These functions are closely interconnected, shaping a community identity that combines religious and cultural dimensions. The community regularly accompanies the Eucharistic Celebration, special Masses, and other religious services using Javanese *gending* adapted to liturgical needs. Observations and interviews reveal that repertoire adaptation involves aligning the musical characteristics of gamelan with the structure of the Catholic liturgy. The selection of *gending* considers the musical atmosphere, the meaning of the liturgical texts, and the function of each part of the celebration. The *slendro* tuning system is generally used for reflective and contemplative sections, while the *pelog* tuning system is more commonly used for celebratory sections expressing joy. These findings demonstrate that the use of gamelan in the liturgy not only preserves traditional music but also creates a contextual form of worship rooted in Javanese culture.

From the perspective of the theology of inculturation, this practice reflects the integration of the Christian faith with local culture. Martasudjita (2021) explains that inculturation presents the values of faith through local cultural expressions, positioning local culture as an integral part of the religious experience rather than merely a complement to the liturgy. Accordingly, the use of *karawitan* in the Rosa Mustika Laras liturgy demonstrates how Javanese musical traditions can be adapted without diminishing either their theological meaning or cultural character. This interpretation is supported by Saraswati (2020), who found that culturally based liturgical music enhances congregational participation while strengthening cultural expression within Catholic worship in Indonesia. The findings further indicate that the involvement of the *karawitan*

community not only improves the musical quality of the liturgy but also fosters a sense of ownership of the local church's cultural identity. The presence of gamelan in the liturgy symbolizes the equal place of Javanese culture within the religious life of the Catholic community.

Furthermore, the study shows that the practice of inculturation contributes to the formation of the congregation's cultural identity. Active participation by community members in playing gamelan and by the congregation in Javanese-language liturgy strengthens the relationship between religious and cultural identities. This finding is consistent with the study by Usmanij & Akbar (2020) on Ganjuran Catholic Church, which demonstrated that cultural inculturation strengthens both religious experience and appreciation of local culture. In the Rosa Mustika Laras Community, this process not only sustains karawitan as a liturgical medium but also demonstrates that traditional arts can serve as a means of fostering a sustainable cultural identity. Overall, the findings show that the existence of the Rosa Mustika Laras Community depends not only on the continuity of its musical activities but also on its ability to integrate religious and cultural functions into a continuous practice. Through the process of inculturation, the community has maintained the relevance of karawitan within the church while reinforcing the position of gamelan as a living heritage of Javanese culture in contemporary society.

2. Community as an Agent of Cultural Preservation

The findings indicate that the Rosa Mustika Laras Karawitan Community performs a role beyond serving as a liturgical music ensemble. The community actively contributes to the preservation of Javanese culture through educational activities, public performances, and participation in cultural programs in Kudus Regency. These activities demonstrate that the sustainability of karawitan is maintained not only through the transmission of musical skills within the community but also through continuous engagement with society. The study shows that the community's preservation practices align with the concept of living heritage, which views cultural heritage as a social practice continuously sustained by its supporting community (Safitri & Adishakti, 2023). In this perspective, karawitan is not regarded as a static cultural artifact but as a living tradition whose meaning is sustained through practice, learning, and continuous regeneration. This finding is consistent with the World Bank (2024), which emphasizes the strategic role of intangible cultural heritage communities in sustaining cultural expressions through active participation. Accordingly, the sustainability of karawitan in the Rosa Mustika Laras Community depends on its continued commitment to performing, teaching, and transmitting the tradition to future generations.

From the perspective of social organization, the findings indicate that the Rosa Mustika Laras Community exhibits the characteristics of a Community of Practice. Its shared domain of expertise, active member interactions, and regular rehearsals and liturgical services create a collective learning mechanism that supports continuous cultural transmission (Prasetyawan, 2018). In addition to strengthening members' musical competence, this mechanism reinforces

collective identity and social cohesion, which are essential for the community's sustainability. This interpretation is consistent with Hudayana (2021), who argues that arts communities maintaining consistent cultural activities are better equipped to adapt to social change.

The findings also show that the community's preservation efforts extend beyond the Catholic Church. Rosa Mustika Laras actively participates in public cultural activities, including karawitan performances and educational programs at Masehi Elementary School in Kudus Regency. These activities introduce students to gamelan through instrument demonstrations, explanations of the functions of each *ricikan*, and discussions of the cultural values embodied in *gending*. This participatory approach demonstrates that the community functions not only as a performing arts group but also as a facilitator of cultural education for younger generations. This interpretation is supported by Al-Mubarak & Bastian (2024), who found that community involvement in children's karawitan education enhances cultural awareness while strengthening the regeneration of traditional artists. Ahmad & Laksono (2023) likewise emphasize that karawitan communities active in public spaces contribute significantly to cultural advancement by connecting local traditions with broader society. In this study, the educational activities conducted by Rosa Mustika Laras demonstrate that cultural preservation is achieved through direct, contextual, and regeneration-oriented learning.

The findings further indicate that the community's public activities foster inclusive social interaction. The participation of people from diverse backgrounds demonstrates that traditional arts can function as a space for cultural dialogue that brings together different social groups. In the multicultural context of Kudus Regency, karawitan strengthens social relationships through shared cultural experiences. This finding supports the argument of Setyaningrum (2018), who states that arts communities active in public spaces play a strategic role in connecting social groups while expanding cultural preservation at the local level. This role is further reinforced by the involvement of the Catholic Church as a space for the development of local culture. (Apriyani, 2026) explains that the church plays an important role in preserving the Javanese language and culture through religious and social activities. In this study, the Rosa Mustika Laras Community demonstrates that religious institutions can become strategic partners in sustaining traditional arts, particularly as opportunities for cultural preservation decline due to social change and shifting interests among younger generations.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the community's educational involvement contributes to the regeneration of karawitan practitioners. Through interactions with students and the broader community, the group creates learning opportunities that foster interest in gamelan from an early age. This finding supports Hidayah & Ajhuri (2026), who argue that community-based arts education for school-aged children is an important strategy for sustaining cultural heritage. Therefore, the performance and educational activities of Rosa Mustika Laras function not only as a means of artistic appreciation but also as a strategy for cultural regeneration and long-term sustainability. The findings demonstrate that the Rosa Mustika Laras Community

serves as an agent of cultural preservation by integrating education, performance, and community engagement. The community illustrates that the sustainability of karawitan depends not only on the continuation of musical traditions but also on its ability to create inclusive learning environments, strengthen social networks, and transmit cultural values to future generations. Consequently, Rosa Mustika Laras represents a community-based model of cultural preservation that supports the sustainability of intangible cultural heritage amid ongoing social change.



Figure 5. QR Code Linking to the Rosa Mustika *Karawitan* Performance Video
(Source: Author's Documentation, 2026)

Uniqueness of the Rosa Mustika Laras Model and its Contributions to Theory

The Rosa Mustika Laras Community presents a distinctive model of community-based *karawitan* education that differs from other *karawitan* communities in several fundamental aspects. First, unlike *karawitan* communities developed within formal educational institutions or general cultural organizations, Rosa Mustika Laras operates within a religious institution that integrates *karawitan* into Catholic liturgical practice. This integration creates a dual function – artistic and spiritual – that is rarely found in other communities, which typically focus primarily on performance or cultural preservation (Ahmad & Laksono, 2023; Al-Mubarak & Bastian, 2024). Second, the community demonstrates an inclusive membership model that transcends religious boundaries, opening participation to individuals of diverse faiths and reflecting the multicultural context of Kudus Regency. Third, the pedagogical strategy employing the *pelog* tuning system as the primary learning medium represents an adaptive response to members' diverse musical backgrounds, extending previous research on *karawitan* education (Setyoko & Pratama, 2021; Heldisari, 2022).

From a theoretical perspective, this model contributes to community-based music education in three ways. It demonstrates that religious communities can function simultaneously as spaces for arts education and cultural preservation, extending the concept of community music education beyond formal institutions (Wardani et al., 2025). It illustrates how liturgical inculturation can serve as a strategy for sustaining intangible cultural heritage – a contribution that bridges music education, cultural preservation, and religious studies (Pandor et al., 2025; Martasudjita, 2021). Finally, the community's resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic shows that the sustainability of arts communities depends not only on musical quality but also on

organizational capacity, social networks, and adaptive leadership—factors underemphasized in previous studies (Sunarno & Sulistyowati, 2021). The interrelationship among educational process, liturgical inculturation, and community engagement creates a sustainable cycle of cultural preservation: education produces competent performers who sustain liturgical music, liturgical practice strengthens cultural identity and motivates public performance, and public engagement expands social networks, attracts new members, and ensures continuous regeneration of *karawitan* practitioners. This model has potential applicability to other traditional arts communities facing similar challenges of regeneration and cultural transformation, demonstrating that religious institutions—often overlooked as sites of cultural preservation—can become strategic partners in sustaining intangible cultural heritage.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Rosa Mustika Laras *Karawitan* Community represents a community-based *karawitan* education model that integrates arts education, liturgical inculturation, and the preservation of Javanese culture into a sustainable practice. The educational process is carried out through regular rehearsals that combine gamelan performance techniques, an understanding of musical structure, and the internalization of cultural and religious values. This learning model develops not only musical competence but also character, social cohesion, and the regeneration of *karawitan* practitioners through a community-based learning mechanism.

The findings further reveal that the existence of the Rosa Mustika Laras Community is sustained through the practice of inculturation, integrating Javanese gamelan into the Catholic liturgy without diminishing either its cultural character or religious meaning. *Karawitan* functions as a medium for strengthening the congregation's cultural identity while providing a contextual form of liturgical expression. Beyond the church, the community serves as an agent of cultural preservation through educational activities, public performances, and collaboration with various social institutions. These activities demonstrate that the sustainability of intangible cultural heritage depends not only on documentation or preservation policies but, more importantly, on communities that continuously practice, transmit, and develop traditions in everyday life.

The contribution of this study lies in proposing a conceptual model demonstrating that religious communities can function simultaneously as spaces for arts education and as community-based institutions for cultural preservation. The findings extend the literature on community-based music education, cultural inculturation, and the sustainability of intangible cultural heritage by illustrating how these three dimensions interact within an adaptive social ecosystem.

This study is limited to a single *karawitan* community within a Catholic church; therefore, its findings cannot be generalized to other traditional arts communities. Future research is

recommended to conduct comparative studies of *karawitan* communities across religious institutions, educational settings, and cultural organizations in different regions to develop a more comprehensive understanding of community-based education models and strategies for sustaining intangible cultural heritage in diverse social contexts.

Recommendations

Religious institutions are encouraged to integrate traditional arts into liturgical practices as a cultural preservation strategy, while local governments should provide institutional support through formal recognition, funding, and performance platforms. Schools can collaborate with *karawitan* communities to introduce gamelan through extracurricular programs, and communities facing regeneration challenges should adopt inclusive membership and intergenerational learning approaches to attract new members. Policymakers should facilitate cross-sector collaboration between religious institutions, arts communities, and educational organizations to create sustainable cultural ecosystems, while recognizing non-formal education models as legitimate forms of cultural transmission. Future comparative studies across religious institutions, educational settings, and cultural organizations in different regions are recommended to develop a more comprehensive understanding of community-based education models and strategies for sustaining intangible cultural heritage.

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