Local Cultural Values as a Foundation of Ethical Leadership: A Quantitative-Driven Mixed Methods Study

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ABSTRACT:
This study examines the role of local cultural values as a moral foundation of ethical leadership in higher education, particularly at Universitas Baliem Papua, Indonesia. It was motivated by the growing recognition that leadership ethics cannot be separated from the cultural environment in which it operates. In regions where leadership is deeply intertwined with indigenous traditions and communal harmony, such as Papua, understanding the intersection between culture and ethics is crucial for building sustainable academic integrity and moral governance. The study employed a quantitative-driven, mixed-methods approach with a sequential explanatory design. The quantitative phase involved a survey of 150 respondents, including university leaders, lecturers, staff, and students. The data from this phase were analyzed using Pearson correlation and simple linear regression in SPSS 26.0. The qualitative phase involved 15 selected key informants who participated in in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The data were analyzed using NVivo 12 Plus through thematic coding. The quantitative findings revealed a strong and significant positive correlation between local cultural values and ethical leadership ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.01$), with 45% of the variance in ethical leadership explained by perceptions of local cultural values. The qualitative results deepened this understanding, showing that ethical leaders in the Papuan context are perceived as open, fair, and sincere, and that cultural symbols, such as noken, embody collective responsibility and social solidarity. The study concludes that ethical leadership in Papua is inherently contextual and culture-based, rooted in communal values of harmony, fairness, and moral accountability.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Indigenous Leadership, Local Cultural Values, Mixed Method, Baliem University Papua..

1. Introduction

In the last two decades, the issue of ethical leadership and local cultural values has become an increasingly important global topic amid crises of integrity, social inequality, and moral disruption in public and educational organizations. Research at the global level confirms that ethical leadership plays an important role in building trust, fairness, and

organizational well-being (Haar et al., 2019). However, the dominant universal ethical leadership model is often not entirely relevant to the local cultural context in developing countries such as Indonesia (Coates et al., 2024). Cross-cultural research indicates that dimensions, such as collectivism, spirituality, and social balance, shape ethical behavior in Asia and the Pacific (Truong et al., 2016). Globally, UNESCO and the OECD (2023) also highlight the importance of indigenous knowledge systems in shaping the character of equitable, inclusive, and sustainable leadership in higher education institutions.

The urgency of this research stems from the need to understand how local cultural values can serve as the moral foundation for ethical leadership in the context of Eastern Indonesia, particularly in Papua, where social and customary diversity holds significant normative power. A study confirms that bureaucratic culture and ethical leadership have a significant impact on the performance of educational institutions in Indonesia (Nuswantoro et al., 2023 & Tistasari, 2023). Meanwhile, indigenous leadership in the Kajang community plays a vital role in preserving ecology and spiritual values (Yulika et al., 2025). In the midst of increasing ethical challenges in the world of higher education, such as conflicts of interest, abuse of authority, and social inequality, the integration of local cultural values into leadership models is a strategic solution to strengthen the moral governance and social legitimacy of academic institutions.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between cultural values and leadership ethics, but most have focused on bureaucratic or corporate contexts, rather than higher education. Sahertian and Jawas (2021) found that cultural values and ethnic backgrounds strongly influence superior leadership in Indonesia. On the other hand, Islamic and Hindu values shape spirituality-based leadership in religious universities (Kultsum et al., 2023). However, there has been little research exploring the context of Papua as a region with strong socio-cultural uniqueness, which has not been optimally integrated into the national ethical leadership literature.

The novelty of this research lies in the integration of local Papuan cultural values, such as noken, deliberation, cooperation, and social balance, into a conceptual model of ethical leadership in higher education. In contrast to the Western model of ethical leadership, which emphasizes individualistic moral rules, this model views ethics as a collective phenomenon that stems from the social and spiritual responsibilities of society. This approach is in line with the Indigenous Leadership Theory introduced by Coates et al. (2024) in Australia, and supports the findings of Hartley and Jarvis (2022) on the importance of indigenous peoples' participation in the higher education system to build inclusive leadership. Thus, this research contributes to the development of leadership theories grounded in indigenous knowledge systems within the context of Eastern Indonesia.

This study aims to analyze the relationship between the perception of local cultural values and the level of ethical leadership within the University of Baliem Papua, as well as to explore how indigenous values are internalized in academic leadership practices. It also develops a conceptual model of ethical leadership rooted in local culture that can be applied in the context of Indonesian higher education. Using a quantitative-driven mixed methods approach, this study seeks to combine the power of statistical analysis with narrative depth in understanding the social and moral context of local leadership.

The results of this research are expected to make both academic and practical contributions to the development of ethical leadership theories and practices grounded in local cultural values. Academically, the results strengthen the cultural-contextual leadership theory with empirical evidence from the context of Eastern Indonesia. In practical terms, these results can serve as a foundation for universities and higher education institutions to design leadership training, ethics-based curricula, and governance policies that align with local cultural values. Additionally, this research is expected to

serve as a policy reference for local governments and educational institutions in promoting sustainable and culturally relevant ethical leadership models.

Overall, this research seeks to bridge the gap between global ethical leadership theory and leadership practices rooted in local cultural values. By focusing on the Papuan context, this research not only offers a new perspective on ethical leadership but also contributes to strengthening moral and social identity in academic leadership in Indonesia. An approach based on local wisdom is a strategic pathway for building leadership that is not only intellectually competent but also ethical, rooted in collective values, and oriented towards social harmony and moral sustainability of the nation.

2. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative-driven mixed-methods approach with a sequential explanatory design to examine the relationship between local cultural values and ethical leadership within the academic environment of Universitas Baliem Papua. The quantitative phase was conducted first to identify the statistical relationship between variables, followed by a qualitative phase to explain and deepen the interpretation of the quantitative findings. This design enables the integration of numerical evidence with contextual and cultural narratives, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Ivankova et al., 2006; Liem, 2018).

In the quantitative stage, data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising 20 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The questionnaire was developed based on the concepts of Ethical Leadership Theory (Brown et al., 2005) and Cultural Values Theory, which were adapted to the Papuan socio-cultural context. The independent variable, Local Cultural Values, consisted of 10 items covering four dimensions: *gotong royong* (collectivism and cooperation), *musyawarah* (participatory deliberation), openness (transparency and honesty), and social justice (fairness and equality).The dependent variable, Ethical Leadership, also consisted of 10 items adapted from Brown et al. (2005) and Kalshoven et al. (2011), including the dimensions of fairness, integrity, power sharing, people orientation, and ethical guidance. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression to examine the influence of local cultural values on ethical leadership.

The qualitative phase was conducted after the statistical analysis and hypothesis testing to further explore and explain the quantitative findings. Specifically, the interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were designed to investigate how local cultural values are interpreted and practiced in leadership interactions within the university environment. The qualitative inquiry focused on exploring the meanings behind cultural concepts such as *noken* as a symbol of collective responsibility, the role of *musyawarah* in participatory decision-making, and perceptions of ethical leaders as open, fair, and community-oriented figures. Fifteen selected informants—including university leaders, lecturers, administrative staff, and students—were purposively chosen based on their experience and involvement in campus leadership and cultural activities. This stage aimed to extend the statistical findings by uncovering contextual explanations, cultural meanings, and lived experiences that could not be fully captured through survey data alone (Othman et al., 2020).Integrating quantitative and qualitative findings provides a more empirically grounded and culturally contextualized understanding of ethical leadership in the Papuan higher education setting.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all members of the academic community at Universitas Baliem Papua, including university leaders (rector, vice rectors, deans, and heads of study programs), lecturers, administrative staff, and active students, thereby allowing the study to capture diverse perspectives regarding local

cultural values and ethical leadership practices in the campus environment. The quantitative phase involved 150 respondents, selected using a stratified sampling technique to ensure proportional representation from each academic group within the university. Prior to data collection, the adequacy of the sample size was evaluated statistically. Referring to Cohen's (1992) recommendation for regression analysis, a minimum sample of 107 respondents is sufficient to detect a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$) with a significance level of 0.05 and statistical power of 0.80. Therefore, the sample size of 150 respondents in this study was considered adequate and statistically representative for conducting correlation and regression analyses.

Following the quantitative phase and statistical analysis, the qualitative phase was conducted to further explain and deepen the interpretation of the quantitative findings. Fifteen informants were selected from the 150 respondents using a purposive sampling strategy based on the principle of information-rich cases (Patton, 2015). These participants were intentionally chosen because they demonstrated strong engagement with campus leadership activities, organizational participation, and local cultural practices, as reflected in both their survey responses and institutional roles. These participants were selected from the quantitative sample to ensure continuity and coherence between the two phases of the study, allowing the qualitative findings to directly elaborate and contextualize the statistical results obtained in the first phase.

The 15 selected informants represented different groups within the university community, including university leaders, lecturers, administrative staff, and student representatives actively involved in academic and organizational activities. This selection ensured variation in perspectives while maintaining relevance to the research objectives. Through in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), the qualitative phase explored how local cultural values—such as *gotong royong*, *musyawarah*, openness, fairness, and the symbolic meaning of *noken*—are interpreted and practiced within ethical leadership interactions at the university. Involving participants from the quantitative phase in the qualitative inquiry strengthened the study's methodological triangulation and enhanced the credibility and contextual validity of the findings.

Table 1. Profile of Research Participants

Category	Position/Role	Gender (M/F)	Age Range (Years)	Education Level	Number of Participants
University Leaders	Rector, Vice Rector, Dean, Head of Study Program	6 M / 2 F	40–60	Master's / Doctorate	8
Administrative Staff	Academic and Administrative Personnel	10 M / 10 F	25–50	Bachelor's	10
Lecturers	Senior and Junior Lecturers	7 M / 8 F	30–55	Master's / Doctorate	15
Students	Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students	52 M / 55 F	18–30	Bachelor's in Progress	87

As Table 1 indicates, this study involved 150 respondents who proportionally represented

all elements of the academic community of the University of Baliem, Papua. The gender composition is balanced (50% male and 50% female), indicating diversity and inclusivity in research participation. The largest group consisted of students (71.3%), followed by lecturers (13.3%), administrative staff (10%), and university leaders (5.3%). The qualitative stage involved 15 key informants who were carefully selected through purposive sampling, ensuring representation of all elements of the campus. These informants played a crucial role in exploring the dimensions of local cultural values, such as *noken* (social responsibility), *musyawarah* (deliberation), and *gotong royong* (solidarity), that form the basis for ethical leadership practices in the academic environment. This approach ensures that the research findings are not only quantitative and descriptive, but also reflective of the socio-cultural realities of the Papuan people.

Research Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study is a structured questionnaire designed to measure two key variables: perception of local cultural values (independent variable) and ethical leadership (dependent variable). The questionnaire items were developed based on a synthesis of Cultural Values Theory (Hofstede, 2001) and Ethical Leadership Theory (Brown et al., 2005), which were then adapted to the Papuan cultural context. Each statement item was prepared in the form of a closed statement using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) to measure the level of perception and tendency of respondents towards each indicator.

The research instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire consisting of 20 items, designed to measure two main variables: Local Cultural Values (independent variable) and Ethical Leadership (dependent variable). All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The questionnaire was developed based on the theoretical framework of Cultural Values Theory and Ethical Leadership Theory, with contextual adaptation to the socio-cultural characteristics of Papua.

The variable of Local Cultural Values was measured using 10 items representing four dimensions: *gotong royong* (collectivity and cooperation), *musyawarah*/deliberation (participation in collective decision-making), openness (transparency and honesty), and social justice (fairness and respect for individual rights). Example items included statements related to collaborative participation, openness in communication, and fairness in organizational interactions. Meanwhile, the variable of Ethical Leadership was measured using 10 items adapted from Brown et al. (2005) and Kalshoven et al. (2011), encompassing five dimensions: fairness, integrity, power sharing, people orientation, and ethical guidance. These items assessed respondents' perceptions of leaders' ethical behavior, transparency, moral consistency, and participatory leadership practices within the university environment.

Prior to the main data collection, the questionnaire was pilot-tested on 30 respondents to evaluate the clarity of language, readability, and contextual relevance of each indicator. Instrument validity was assessed using the Corrected Item–Total Correlation method. All 20 items were found to be valid, with correlation coefficients greater than 0.30 and significance values below 0.05 (Kline, 1999; Raykov & Marcoulides, 2011). Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha produced coefficients of 0.91 for the Local Cultural Values variable and 0.94 for the Ethical Leadership variable, indicating excellent internal consistency and reliability. Furthermore, the construct validity of the instrument was strengthened through factor analysis, with a Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value of 0.89 and a significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < 0.001$), confirming that the dataset was suitable for factor analysis and that the instrument adequately represented the intended constructs. Follow-up reliability tests were conducted on the primary research data (N = 150) and demonstrated similar consistency of results. Therefore, this research instrument meets the standards of validity and reliability for

measuring perceptions of local cultural values and ethical leadership within the academic environment.

Data Collection

Data collection in this study was conducted in two main stages. The first stage (quantitative) involved the distribution of a structured questionnaire to 150 respondents, consisting of university leaders, lecturers, administrative staff, and students at the University of Baliem Papua. The questionnaire was distributed both in person and online (via an online form) during July and August 2025 to ensure a broad and representative sample of respondents. Prior to the main distribution, a pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents to assess the clarity of language, content validity, and internal consistency of the instrument.

The second (qualitative) phase was conducted in September 2025, using in-depth interviews with 15 key informants purposively selected based on their involvement in and understanding of local cultural values and ethical leadership practices. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, guided by topics that included Papuan cultural values, such as *gotong royong, musyawarah,* and *noken,* and their application in campus leadership practices. All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic coding techniques to identify patterns of meaning and interpretation consistent with the quantitative findings. A triangulation approach was employed to ensure the validity of the findings by systematically comparing the results of surveys, interviews, and group discussions.

Analyzing the Data

The data analysis in this study was conducted in stages to obtain comprehensive results, beginning with descriptive analysis, followed by regression assumption tests, and concluding with inferential analysis. Quantitative data were processed using SPSS software version 26.0, while qualitative data were analyzed using the NVivo application to support the narrative and contextual interpretation of the findings. Descriptive analysis was conducted to characterize the respondents, examine the distribution of responses, and calculate the mean and standard deviation for each indicator of the research variables. This stage provides a foundation for understanding the general tendencies of the academic community at the University of Baliem Papua regarding local cultural values and ethical leadership, prior to conducting a more in-depth analysis of the relationships between variables.

Before conducting regression analysis, a series of statistical prerequisite tests was carried out to ensure the validity of the model. A normality test using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test was performed to ensure that the data distribution met the normality assumption. In contrast, the linearity test (ANOVA Linearity Test) was used to check whether the relationship between independent and dependent variables was linear. In addition, a multicollinearity test was conducted by examining the values of the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance to ensure that there was no high correlation between the independent variables. A homogeneous heteroscedasticity test via Scatterplot (ZPRED vs ZRESID) was also performed to check whether residual variance is constant across the entire range of predictive values. The results of the four tests indicate that the data meet all classical assumptions, allowing for linear regression analysis to be performed with a high level of confidence.

The next stage is inferential analysis, which includes the Pearson correlation test(r) and simple linear regression analysis. The correlation test was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the perception of local cultural values and ethical leadership, with r-values ranging from -1 to +1. A simple linear regression analysis was used to examine the impact of local cultural values on ethical leadership, employing the general equation $Y = a + bX + e$, where Y represents ethical leadership, X denotes the local cultural value, a is a constant, and b is the regression coefficient. The results of this analysis include R,

R^2, F-test (ANOVA), t-test, and p-value (α = 0.05) to identify the significance of the influence between variables. Meanwhile, at the qualitative stage, interview data and FGD were analyzed with a thematic analysis approach through three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. This process yields key themes that elucidate the symbolic meaning of local cultural values, such as *noken*, deliberation, and cooperation, in the context of ethical leadership practice. This combined approach enables cross-validation between numerical and narrative data, ensuring that the research results are not only empirical but also reflect the social and cultural realities of life in Papua.

3. Results

This section presents the results of data analysis that includes a prerequisite test, a Pearson correlation analysis, and a simple linear regression between the variables of local cultural values (X) and ethical leadership (Y). Validity and reliability tests, as well as prerequisite tests, were conducted to ensure that the data met classical assumptions before regression analysis was performed. The results of the validity and reliability tests are as follows: For validity, all 20 items were deemed valid, as the Corrected Item–Total Correlation (r) value for each item exceeded the critical value of 0.159 and was significant at the 99% confidence level ($p < 0.01$). This indicates that each question item can measure aspects that correspond to the established constructs of variables, both for local cultural values and ethical leadership. The reliability of the local cultural value variable (X) was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a value of 0.914, and the ethical leadership variable (Y) obtained a value of 0.927. The overall alpha value reached 0.939, which is well above the minimum limit of 0.7 as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). This indicates that the research instrument possesses a high level of reliability and can be effectively used in a broader population. Thus, this research instrument has been proven to be valid and reliable, and feasible for use in measuring the relationship between local cultural values and ethical leadership in the context of Baliem University in Papua.

The results of the regression prerequisite test indicated that all classical assumptions in linear regression analysis were met. The normality test using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov method showed that both the variables of local cultural values ($p = 0.882$) and ethical leadership ($p = 0.947$) had significance values greater than 0.05. The data of both variables are normally distributed and meet the normality assumptions. Furthermore, the results of the linearity test, conducted through ANOVA analysis, showed an F-value of 137.869 with a significance level of $p = 0.000$ (< 0.05), indicating a significant linear relationship between the variables of local cultural values and ethical leadership. Meanwhile, the results of the multicollinearity test showed a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value of 1,000, which is still far below the tolerance limit of 10. This value indicates that there is no problem of multicollinearity among the free variables. Thus, the results of this prerequisite test confirm that the research data meet all the basic assumptions required to proceed to the stage of linear regression and Pearson correlation analysis.

Once all the initial prerequisite tests were met, the next step was testing the stability of the residual variance through a homoscedasticity test. A scatterplot between predictive and residual values (ZPRED vs. ZRESID) was used to determine if the data spread is random or exhibits a particular pattern.

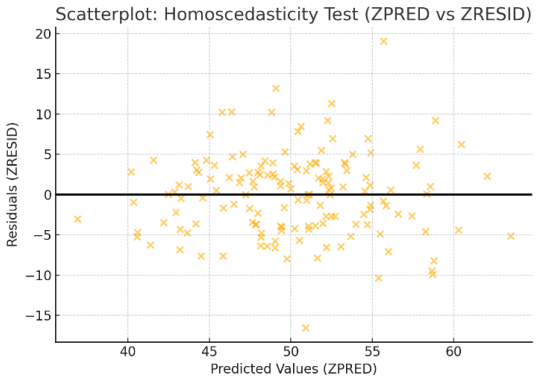

Figure 1. Dissemination of predictive and residual value data

Figure 1 shows the results of the

homoscedasticity test through a scatterplot between the predicted (ZPRED) and residual (ZRESID) values. Based on the pattern of point distribution on the graph, it can be seen that the residual points are randomly scattered around the zero-horizontal line without forming a specific pattern, either conical or widening. This random distribution pattern indicates that the residual variance remains constant across the entire range of predicted values, suggesting that the research data meet the assumption of homoskedasticity. In other words, there is no indication of heteroscedasticity in the regression model, indicating that it is stable, unbiased, and suitable for subsequent hypothesis testing. These results reinforce the validity of a model that examines the relationship between local cultural values and ethical leadership in the context of research at the University of Baliem, Papua.

Once all regression assumptions were met, the analysis proceeded with Pearson's correlation test and linear regression to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between local cultural value variables and ethical leadership.

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Results

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Local Cultural Values (X)	150	75.12	8.03	–	–
Ethical Leadership (Y)	150	62.47	9.25	0.67	< 0.01

Table 1 presents the results of Pearson's correlation analysis, which examines the strength and direction of the relationship between local cultural values and Ethical Leadership. The results show a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.67$ with a significance level of $p < 0.01$, based on 150 respondents. This indicates a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between the two variables. In other words, as academic members' perception and internalization of local cultural values increase, their understanding of ethical leadership practices also increases. This suggests that the local culture—characterized by communalism, respect, and shared responsibility—forms an important foundation for ethical behavior and leadership integrity within the university environment.

Table 2. Regression Model Summary

Model Summary	Value
R	0.67
R Square	0.45
Adjusted R Square	0.44
Std. Error of the Estimate	4.98
N	150

Table 2 presents a summary of the regression model, providing an overview of how well local cultural values predict Ethical Leadership. A value of $R = 0.67$ confirms a strong linear relationship, while R-squared ($R^2 = 0.45$) suggests that about 45% of the variance in Ethical Leadership can be explained by differences in local cultural values. The adjusted R^2 value (0.44) further supports the stability of this relationship after taking into account the sample size. The standard error of the estimate (4.98) indicates a relatively low prediction error, suggesting that the regression model is well-suited for the data. This implies that local cultural values play an important role in shaping ethical leadership behavior among academic leaders at Baliem University, Papua.

Table 3. Coefficients (Regression Analysis)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
Constant	12.50	1.85	–	6.76	< 0.01
Local Cultural Values (X)	0.67	0.06	0.67	11.75	< 0.01

Table 3 provides the regression coefficients that define the predictive model for Ethical Leadership. The regression equation obtained was: Ethical Leadership = 12.5 + 0.67 (Local Cultural Values). An unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.67, $p < 0.01$) indicated that for every one-unit increase in local cultural values, ethical leadership increased by 0.67 units, while holding other factors constant. A positive and significant beta coefficient (β = 0.67) confirms that local cultural values exert a direct and substantial positive influence on ethical leadership. The constant value (12.5) represents a basic level of ethical leadership when local cultural values are minimal. These findings suggest that embracing and practicing local cultural values is not only symbolic, but statistically impactful in promoting ethical leadership across the academic community.

Table 4. ANOVA (Regression Significance Test)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3,420.57	1	3,420.57	137.87	< 0.01
Residual	4,201.43	148	28.39		
Total	7,622.00	149			

Table 4 presents the results of ANOVA, which tests the overall significance of the regression model. The analysis yielded an F value of 137.87 with a significance level of $p < 0.01$, indicating that the regression model was statistically significant. This means that local cultural values significantly contribute to predicting Ethical Leadership, and the relationships observed are not due to random coincidence. A large F-ratio indicates the high explanatory power of independent variables, suggesting that local cultural values meaningfully explain differences in levels of ethical leadership among respondents. Therefore, the regression model is valid and can be used with confidence to describe the influence of local culture on ethical leadership practices.

The results from Tables 1 to 4 collectively show that local cultural values have a strong and statistically significant influence on Ethical Leadership among academic leaders, staff, and students at the University of Baliem, Papua. Correlation analysis ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.01$) revealed a strong positive relationship, while regression results indicated that local cultural values accounted for 45% of the variance in ethical leadership. The regression coefficient (B = 0.67, $p < 0.01$) further showed that higher adherence to local cultural values was associated with a measurable improvement in ethical leadership behavior. The ANOVA test ($F = 137.87$, $p < 0.01$) confirms the significance of the model, showing that the relationship between these two variables is not random but substantial and systematic.

In summary, these findings highlight the importance of integrating local cultural

wisdom—such as *gotong royong, musyawarah* (collective decision-making), and respect for societal values—in developing ethical leadership within an academic context. This confirms that leadership rooted in local culture not only enhances moral integrity but also strengthens the social harmony and ethics of higher education organizations in Papua.

After obtaining quantitative results, indicating a positive and significant relationship between local cultural values and ethical leadership, a qualitative analysis was conducted to explore the deeper meaning behind the statistical findings. The in-depth interviews and focus group discussions involved 15 informants, comprising university leaders, lecturers, staff, and students from the University of Baliem Papua. A thematic approach was employed in the analysis to identify local cultural values that influence the development of ethical leadership behavior on campus. The results of this qualitative study indicate that ethical leadership at Baliem University is perceived as a form of leadership which emphasizes openness, justice, and social sensitivity. Traditional values such as *noken*—which represents togetherness and social responsibility—are often used as symbols as well as moral guidelines in decision-making and interaction between campus residents.

The concept of ethical leadership at Baliem University in Papua is not limited to being interpreted normatively as honesty or responsibility. However, it is also understood as a form of leadership rooted in human values and social relations typical of Papuan culture. Most informants describe ethical leaders as figures who listen with their hearts, are open to differences, and make fair decisions.

"A good leader is not the smartest talker, but the one who listens the most. Here, if a leader does not want to listen to his subordinates' voices, he is considered heartless, and that is not a good leader." (Informant 1)

This statement reflects the view that listening is not just a communication activity, but part of an important ethical and spiritual value in the Papuan social context, where dialogue and openness are a form of respect for the dignity of others. In addition to openness, fairness in decision-making also emerges as a key characteristic of ethical leadership.

"If a leader can be fair—not biased, and not partisan with only one group—then he can be said to be an ethical leader. Because in Papua, justice is not just a matter of law, but a matter of social balance." (Informant 2)

These findings suggest that the principle of justice in ethical leadership is not only understood in normative contexts (such as formal regulations) but also in the framework of social relations that maintain harmony between groups in the campus environment. Meanwhile, one student (Informant M3) added that an ethical leader is a leader who can be a role model, especially in terms of honesty and sincerity.

"We see an honest leader from his daily attitude. If he is honest, open, and willing to intervene, students will believe. That is just a leader who has value." (Informant 3)

Based on interviews with the informants, it can be concluded that the dimension of leadership ethics at the University of Baliem Papua is built on three central values, namely openness, fairness, and sincerity and honesty. Openness is reflected in the attitude of leaders who are willing to listen to various views and inputs from all parties. At the same time, fairness is seen in the leader's ability to maintain social balance and avoid partiality in decision-making. On the other hand, sincerity and honesty are seen as the moral foundation that makes the leader an example for his campus environment. Overall, these values demonstrate that ethical leadership at the University of Baliem Papua cannot be separated from the local cultural context, which emphasizes the importance of social balance (*harmony*), respect for others, and collective responsibility in maintaining peaceful social relationships.

In the social context of Baliem University in Papua, local cultural symbols hold deep meaning in shaping and representing ethical

leadership behavior. One of the symbols often mentioned in the interviews is *the noken*, a traditional Papuan bag made from natural fibers commonly used to carry various daily necessities. For most informants, *noken* not only has physical functions, but also a philosophical meaning that reflects togetherness, social responsibility, and sincerity in giving and receiving.

"For us here, noken is not just a bag. It symbolizes shared responsibility. An ethical leader is like a noken — strong in bearing many things, but still gentle and patient to bear the burden of others." (Informant 12)

This quote suggests that *noken* is viewed as a metaphor for leadership that entails bearing a collective burden, where the leader has a moral and social responsibility to protect, accommodate the aspirations, and prosper the people they lead. In this context, ethical leadership focuses not only on morally correct decision-making but also on the leader's ability to be a container of trust and care for their community. A similar view was also conveyed by one of the lecturers, who emphasized that the value of *noken* reflects a complementary relationship between leaders and communities.

"The leader here is not standing on top of others, but being part of them" (Informant 5)

From this perspective, *noken* serves as a symbol of inclusive and community-oriented leadership, where each individual is considered an important part of the campus's social network. This reinforces the concept of ethical leadership that is not hierarchical, but relational—placing leaders as a liaison between community members. Meanwhile, one of the students added a more reflective view regarding the meaning of *noken* in campus life.

"We often hear lecturers say that leaders are like noken. He must patiently accommodate many thoughts and differences from others. If he is easily angry or rejected, he cannot be a good leader." (Informant 10)

This statement illustrates how the cultural values internalized in the *noken* symbol are also part of the moral education on campus. This means that local cultural symbols are not only valued aesthetically but also used as ethical guidelines in interacting and making decisions. Furthermore, the meaning of *noken* emphasizes the connection between culture, spirituality, and leadership ethics. Some informants describe the *noken* as a symbol of the harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and God — a principle of balance that is also expected to be reflected in the leader's behavior. Thus, ethical leadership in the context of Papua cannot be separated from a value framework that unites social, moral, and spiritual aspects as a whole.

Overall, the symbolic meaning of *noken* illustrates that ethical leadership at the University of Baliem Papua is rooted in the collective principles of togetherness, social responsibility, and moral balance. *Noken* is not only a cultural artifact but also a leadership metaphor that contains the fundamental values of local ethics, such as patience, solidarity, and sincerity. These findings reinforce previous quantitative results that local cultural values have a significant influence on ethical leadership, while demonstrating how Papuan culture serves as a source of moral values that shape leadership patterns oriented towards community and shared well-being.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that indigenous Papuan cultural values function as a significant moral and conceptual foundation shaping and sustaining ethical leadership practices at Baliem University. This relationship is corroborated by quantitative analysis, which reveals a strong positive correlation between perceptions of indigenous cultural values and the level of ethical leadership ($r = 0.67$; $p < 0.01$), with cultural values accounting for approximately 45% of the variance in ethical leadership outcomes. These results are consistent with theoretical frameworks proposing that ethical leadership is inherently embedded within the cultural context of both leaders and their followers, whereby local cultural values shape leaders' moral orientations, perceptions of justice,

and interpersonal norms within social and educational settings (Muadzin & Sunarto, 2025). Furthermore, prior research has demonstrated that the integration of indigenous cultural values into leadership practice not only reinforces leaders' moral accountability but also fosters trust and strengthens social cohesion within organizational contexts (Arnaya & Wulandari, 2022). Collectively, these findings support the proposition that ethical leadership in culturally distinct settings, such as Papua, must be understood as a practice deeply rooted in the indigenous community's system of values rather than as a universally standardized construct.

The qualitative analysis conducted at Baliem University identifies specific indigenous cultural values — namely cooperation, deliberation, openness, justice, and sincerity — which are actively internalized in day-to-day leadership behavior. These values serve not merely as expressions of moral integrity but also as social foundations that reinforce participatory governance, organizational cohesion, and moral legitimacy within the academic environment (Shahab et al., 2021). These findings are further substantiated by cross-cultural research demonstrating that indigenous and traditional symbolic values exert a significant influence on leadership styles and their effectiveness, with culturally attuned leaders consistently exhibiting greater capacity for fostering harmonious, ethical, and inclusive organizational climates (Javidan et al., 2006). In the national context, converging evidence similarly indicates a positive association between ethical leadership and organizational culture in cultivating value-driven work behaviors collectively (Puspayanti et al., 2025; Werang et al., 2026), while simultaneously enhancing institutional trust within Indonesian higher education (Coates et al., 2024; Susanto et al., 2022). Taken together, these findings advance the empirical understanding that indigenous cultural values are not merely symbolic vestiges of tradition; rather, they constitute internalized moral foundations that are meaningfully manifested in ethical leadership within the Papuan academic context.

Ahmad and Pradhan (2025) emphasize that the ethical dimension in leadership cannot be separated from the cultural values that exist in society, because culture determines the perception of morality and social justice in the decision-making process. This view is reinforced by a study in Finland, which shows that social and cultural aspects are key elements in shaping the moral professionalism of educational leaders (Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021). Other studies have also highlighted the importance of Indigenous Institutional Theory-based leadership models, which enable leaders to maintain cultural integrity while navigating modern institutional systems (Coates et al., 2024). In line with that, research by Hoerudin (2024) emphasized that language and culture are forms of social capital that strengthen legitimacy and trust in local leaders. Similarly, research on the integration of community values, such as cooperation and togetherness, strengthens social cohesion and moral legitimacy of leaders in the context of educational organizations (Haris, 2017; Marjaya & Pasaribu, 2019; Muadzin & Sunarto, 2025). These findings reinforce the understanding that ethical leadership rooted in local culture can create a balance between morality, social solidarity, and organizational effectiveness.

This research makes an additional contribution through the specific context of Papua, where local values such as deliberation, *noken*, and the principle of social balance serve as the primary framework for understanding ethical leadership practices. This approach, based on an indigenous knowledge system, has also been recognized globally as a crucial strategy for strengthening the governance of culture-based educational institutions. (Shay & Miller, 2021). In addition, a study conducted by Goolmeer et al. (2024) confirms that indigenous community-based leadership plays an important role in the successful management of significant cultural and ecological entities . A similar context is also found in Southeast Asia, which reveals that the value of collectivism and power distance in Confucian culture influences school leadership practices in Vietnam (Truong et al., 2016). A similar study in

Indonesia also support the idea that local wisdom and cultural values can enhance leadership effectiveness and organizational performance by fostering the internalization of ethical and moral values (Sundari, 2023). Thus, this study expands on the previous literature by presenting a new perspective on ethical leadership rooted in local cultural value systems (Basilius Redan Werang, et all 2025), while demonstrating that indigenous leadership can serve as an alternative paradigm for a more humane, participatory, and sustainable global leadership model (Allen et al., 2021; Chengere & Bekele, 2024).

This study, through the integration of quantitative and qualitative approach, reveals that ethical leadership at Baliem University, Papua, results from a dialogue between universal moral principles and local cultural values that are integral to the society. Values such as cooperation, deliberation, and social balance have been proven not only statistically to influence the ethical behavior of leaders but also narratively to become moral guidelines in daily academic life. These findings reinforce the view that ethical leadership is contextual and cannot be separated from the cultural basis of society. In line with that, cultural values have a significant influence on superior leadership behavior in Indonesia (Rifad et al., 2023; Suleman & Ruliaty, 2016). Meanwhile, Setiyowati and Razak (2018) revealed that leadership in higher education is characterized by *Astabrata* values that reflect spiritual and symbolic elements in local culture. A study by Kultsum et al. (2023) strengthens these findings by demonstrating that spiritual and cultural values in leadership at Islamic and Hindu universities in Indonesia shape the moral character of leaders, emphasizing trust and justice. Meanwhile, in Vietnam, power distance and collectivism are dominant factors in school leadership practices, which are relevant to the context of Papuan communal culture. (Truong et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the results of this study align with various studies that emphasize the importance of integrating local cultural values into modern leadership theory. The role of indigenous leadership in maintaining the ecological and moral harmony of the *Kajang* community in South Sulawesi has been highlighted by Yulika et al. (2025), while Artina et al. (2020) affirm the relevance of Hofstede's cultural model in explaining the relationship between collectivist values, work ethics, and morality in Indonesian organizations. In the context of education, Hasyim Asy'ari's multicultural leadership model emphasizes the integration of moral and spiritual aspects in creating social harmony (Suhendi et al., 2025). A study by Yulius et al. (2019) on the leadership of Lonto Leok in Manggarai also demonstrated the effectiveness of local cultural values in shaping character and collective ethics in schools. Theoretically, understanding Hofstede's cultural dimensions in the Asian academic context highlights the importance of cultural adaptation in the educational environment (Moradi, 2024). Meanwhile, Ingram et al. (2021) emphasize that indigenous leadership frameworks are key to bridging global and local ethical values in higher education. Thus, this research makes a significant contribution to the literature on ethical leadership in Eastern Indonesia by presenting a conceptual model that integrates local cultural values of Papua into a sustainable and contextual ethical leadership framework.

This research has both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the results of this study reinforce the notion that local cultural values can serve as a primary source of leadership ethics and shape sustainable contextual leadership models. This approach supports a cultural-contextual leadership paradigm, emphasizing that the moral behavior of leaders must be rooted in the social and spiritual values of the local community (Sugiarti et al., 2024). Especially in Papua, values such as cooperation, deliberation, *noken*, and social responsibility form an ethical framework that fosters moral legitimacy and social harmony in the campus environment. These findings expand on global ethical leadership models that are oriented towards sustainability and spirituality (Kelvin, 2024). Practically, these results serve as a basis for

higher education institutions to integrate local cultural values into leadership curricula, managerial training, and academic governance policies (Husic, 202; Barron, 2002; Richards, 2001). Furthermore, this approach aligns with studies indicating that organizational leadership and commitment, supported by local culture, play a crucial role in enhancing the quality and competitiveness of universities in Eastern Indonesia (Amtu et al., 2021).

Based on the above implications, this study recommends that universities and higher education institutions in Indonesia, particularly in Papua, actively integrate local cultural values into sustainable ethical leadership development strategies. This strategic step includes three main aspects: (1) designing a leadership training program based on local wisdom that combines spiritual, social, and ecological values as applied in the *Kajang* community (Yulika et al., 2025); (2) adopting cultural symbols such as *noken* as a medium of ethics and social responsibility education; and (3) strengthening interdisciplinary research on the relationship between culture, ethics, and academic leadership. Research on leadership for sustainability confirms that sustainability-oriented leadership must be built on the values of spirituality, compassion, and social responsibility (Sbîrcea, 2023). In addition, studies in education sciences emphasize the importance of local wisdom in education, supporting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) through the integration of indigenous knowledge and ecological values (Zidny et al., 2021; Sangadah & Kartawidjaja, 2020). The implementation of the strategy is also relevant to other findings that emphasize the importance of traditional leadership models in higher education, as they can maintain cultural integrity and strengthen university governance (Iswan & Herwina, 2018; Nariastiti et al., 2014; Coates et al., 2024). Thus, strengthening local cultural values is not only a strategy for preserving local wisdom but also a moral and social investment in creating inclusive, visionary, and sustainable ethical leadership in Eastern Indonesia.

5. Conclusion

This research confirms that Papuan local cultural values play a crucial role as a moral and conceptual foundation in shaping ethical leadership in the higher education environment, particularly at Baliem University. The quantitative results reveal a positive and significant relationship between the perception of local cultural values and the level of ethical leadership. Meanwhile, the qualitative results demonstrate how values such as cooperation, deliberation, openness, and sincerity are embodied in real-life campus leadership practices. The integration of statistical data and narratives provides a more comprehensive understanding, demonstrating that ethical leadership is not universal but must be contextualized within the social and cultural values present in society. Thus, this research not only strengthens the theoretical basis of the relationship between culture and leadership ethics but also makes a practical contribution to the development of leadership models that are relevant to the social character of Papuan and Eastern Indonesian society in general. Despite the findings, this study has several limitations that need to be considered in future studies. Methodologically, this research is still limited to the scope of one university. Therefore, the generalization of results to other educational contexts in Indonesia needs to be done carefully. In addition, quantitative measurement still focuses on the relationships between variables without considering other mediating or moderating factors that may affect the dynamics of ethical leadership. The main advantage of this research lies in the integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches that provide depth of analysis and alignment with the values of local wisdom as a source of leadership ethics. With these strengths, this research presents opportunities for developing a sustainable leadership model rooted in local culture that is not only focused on organizational effectiveness but also on social harmony and moral responsibility within the academic environment.

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Author Declaration

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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