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Culturally Responsive History Learning Through Pong Tiku's Leadership Values

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Abstract: Culturally responsive history learning plays an important role in strengthening students' cultural identity, historical awareness, and citizenship values in contemporary education. However, history learning in schools is often dominated by generalized historical narratives and less connected to students' local cultural contexts and indigenous heritage. This study aimed to analyze the implementation of culturally responsive history learning through Pong Tiku's leadership values at SMA Negeri 3 Toraja Utara, Indonesia. The study employed a qualitative descriptive design using historical and ethnopedagogical approaches. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation studies involving history teachers, students, and supporting informants. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking, while data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that Pong Tiku's leadership values, particularly kina na manarang (strategic thinking), sugi' na barani (courage), bida' (commitment), and karapasan (peace and social harmony), were integrated into history learning through biographical texts, ethnopedagogical approaches, interactive discussions, and project-based learning activities. The implementation of culturally responsive learning contributed positively to students' historical awareness, character development, critical thinking, cultural identity, and civic responsibility. The study further indicates that integrating indigenous leadership values into history learning supports transformative education and the sustainability of local wisdom in the modern educational context. These findings highlight the importance of culturally grounded and ethnopedagogical approaches in developing meaningful, contextual, and sustainability-oriented history education.
Keywords: Culturally Responsive Learning; History Education; Pong Tiku; Ethnopedagogy; Local Wisdom; Citizenship Education.

INTRODUCTION

History education plays a strategic role in shaping students' historical awareness, civic responsibility, cultural identity, and critical understanding of social transformation within society (Burgos-Videla et al., 2025; Mbura & Wiyanarti, 2024). Beyond memorizing historical events, contemporary history learning is expected to encourage students to interpret historical experiences critically and connect them with present-day social realities. In the twenty-first century, history education has increasingly been positioned as an important medium for fostering democratic values, cultural sustainability, ethical leadership, and responsible citizenship in multicultural societies (Kalogerogianni, 2025; Karakatsani & Pliogou, 2026; Mbura & Wiyanarti, 2024). Consequently,

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history learning should not only emphasize factual knowledge but also develop reflective, transformative, and culturally responsive learning experiences that are relevant to students' local contexts and identities.

One of the major challenges in contemporary education is the gradual erosion of local cultural values and historical awareness among younger generations due to globalization, digital transformation, and the dominance of standardized educational content (Amir & Zulkarnain, 2024; Fauzan, 2025; Poddar, 2024). Global cultural flows often marginalize indigenous knowledge systems, local wisdom, and traditional leadership values that historically functioned as important foundations of community identity and social cohesion. In this context, culturally responsive education becomes increasingly important because it connects learning processes with students' sociocultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and local heritage (Amir & Zulkarnain, 2024; Pang et al., 2021). Educational approaches grounded in local wisdom not only strengthen students' sense of belonging and cultural identity but also contribute to the preservation of cultural sustainability and social resilience.

Within history education, ethnopedagogy has emerged as an important approach for integrating indigenous knowledge, cultural traditions, and local historical narratives into classroom learning. Ethnopedagogical learning emphasizes the use of local cultural values as meaningful learning resources that support character formation and contextual understanding (Sándor, 2019; Yana et al., 2023). Through this approach, students are encouraged to recognize and appreciate their own cultural heritage while developing critical and reflective perspectives toward social and historical issues (Mohd Hashim et al., 2026; Sukhov, 2021). Several studies have shown that integrating local wisdom into history learning contributes positively to students' cultural awareness, moral development, civic engagement, and critical thinking abilities (Apdelmi et al., 2025; Firmansyah et al., 2025; Wijayanti et al., 2025). Therefore, culturally responsive history learning represents an important strategy for creating meaningful and transformative educational experiences in diverse cultural contexts.

Indonesia possesses rich local historical traditions and indigenous leadership values that can serve as powerful educational resources in history learning. One important historical figure from Tana Toraja, South Sulawesi, is Pong Tiku, a national hero recognized for his resistance against Dutch colonialism in the early twentieth century. Pong Tiku's struggle reflects not only anti-colonial resistance but also leadership values deeply rooted in Torajan local wisdom and cultural philosophy. His leadership embodied principles of courage, commitment, strategic thinking, perseverance, social responsibility, and collective solidarity. These values are reflected in the Torajan philosophy of Tallu Baka, which includes kina na manarang (strategy and wisdom), sugi' na barani (courage), and bida' (commitment), as well as the principle of karapasan emphasizing peace, tolerance, and social harmony.

The integration of Pong Tiku's leadership values into history learning offers opportunities to connect local historical narratives with contemporary character education and citizenship development. Historical learning based on local heroes enables students to understand history not merely as past events but as sources of moral reflection, cultural identity, and social inspiration (Firmansyah et al., 2025; Wijayanti et al., 2025). In culturally responsive classrooms, students are encouraged to critically examine historical struggles, ethical leadership, and social values that remain relevant in modern society. Such learning environments can foster empathy, responsibility, collaboration, and civic awareness among students while strengthening appreciation for local cultural heritage (Ahmar & Azzajjad, 2025; Zalli, 2024).

Preliminary observations conducted at SMA Negeri 3 Toraja Utara revealed that history learning had incorporated local historical content related to Pong Tiku's resistance against Dutch colonialism within the Merdeka Curriculum framework, particularly in the topic discussing Indonesian resistance movements against European colonialism. Teachers integrated local historical narratives through biographical texts, discussions, ethnopedagogical activities, project-based learning, and reflective classroom interactions. Interviews with history teachers further indicated that Pong Tiku's leadership values were considered relevant for fostering students' character development, historical awareness, leadership attitudes, and cultural pride. Students were encouraged not only to understand historical events cognitively but also to internalize leadership values applicable in contemporary social life.

However, despite increasing interest in local wisdom-based learning and character education, studies specifically examining culturally responsive history learning through indigenous leadership values remain relatively limited, particularly within Indonesian secondary education contexts. Previous

studies have primarily focused on historical content delivery, local history documentation, or general character education without deeply exploring how indigenous leadership values can function as transformative pedagogical resources in culturally responsive history classrooms. Moreover, research connecting local hero-based learning, ethnopedagogy, and transformative citizenship education is still underexplored in contemporary history education literature.

This study addresses this gap by examining the implementation of culturally responsive history learning through Pong Tiku's leadership values at SMA Negeri 3 Toraja Utara. The study focuses on how local leadership values are integrated into history learning processes, the forms of ethnopedagogical practices implemented in classrooms, and the educational benefits generated for students' character development, historical awareness, and civic attitudes. The integration of local historical values into classroom learning is expected to support not only cultural preservation but also transformative educational practices that strengthen students' identity, social responsibility, and appreciation for indigenous heritage.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of culturally responsive history learning through Pong Tiku's leadership values in history education at SMA Negeri 3 Toraja Utara. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to culturally responsive pedagogy, ethnopedagogical history education, and transformative citizenship learning, while practically providing insights for teachers and schools in developing meaningful, contextual, and sustainability-oriented history learning practices based on local wisdom and indigenous leadership values.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design with an ethnopedagogical and historical approach. The qualitative approach was selected because the study aimed to explore and interpret the implementation of Pong Tiku's leadership values within culturally responsive history learning practices at SMA Negeri 3 Toraja Utara. The research focused on understanding educational processes, classroom interactions, local cultural integration, and participants' perspectives regarding the incorporation of indigenous leadership values into history education.

The historical approach was utilized to examine the historical background, cultural significance, and leadership values of Pong Tiku as a national hero and local historical figure in Torajan society. Meanwhile, the ethnopedagogical perspective was applied to analyze how local wisdom and indigenous values were integrated into learning activities to support culturally responsive and transformative educational practices.

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at SMA Negeri 3 Toraja Utara, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The school was purposively selected because it actively integrates local historical content and Torajan cultural values into history learning within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. The school is also geographically and culturally connected to several historical sites associated with Pong Tiku's struggle against Dutch colonialism, including the Sa'dan River area and other historical locations in Tana Toraja.

The participants of this study consisted of history teachers, eleventh-grade students, and several supporting informants who possessed relevant knowledge regarding local history and cultural values. The participants were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on their involvement and understanding of culturally responsive history learning practices. History teachers were selected because they directly implemented local wisdom-based learning activities, while students were involved as learners experiencing the integration of Pong Tiku's leadership values in classroom learning.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation studies to obtain comprehensive information regarding the implementation of culturally responsive history learning. Classroom observations were conducted to examine learning activities, teacher-student interactions, ethnopedagogical practices, and students' participation during history learning sessions. The observations focused particularly on how Pong Tiku's leadership values were introduced, discussed, and internalized within classroom activities.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with history teachers and selected students to explore their perceptions, experiences, and understanding regarding the integration of Pong Tiku's leadership values into history learning. Interviews with teachers focused on instructional strategies, learning objectives, and educational benefits, while interviews with students explored their learning experiences, character development, and cultural awareness after participating in the learning process. Documentation techniques were used to collect supporting data related to the implementation of culturally responsive history learning. The collected documents included lesson plans, teaching materials, photographs of classroom activities, students' assignments, school curriculum documents, and historical sources related to Pong Tiku's struggle and leadership values.

Data Validation Techniques

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed several data validation techniques, including source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different participants, including teachers, students, and supporting informants. This process aimed to verify the consistency and accuracy of the collected data regarding the implementation of Pong Tiku's leadership values in history learning.

Technique triangulation was applied by comparing findings obtained through different data collection methods, namely observations, interviews, and documentation studies. The integration of multiple techniques enabled the researchers to strengthen the validity of the research findings and minimize subjectivity during interpretation. Member checking was conducted by reconfirming several interview findings and interpretations with participants to ensure that the collected information accurately represented their perspectives and experiences.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis model adapted from Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. At this stage, the researchers selected, categorized, and simplified relevant data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. The process focused on identifying themes related to culturally responsive learning, ethnopedagogy, leadership values, character education, and historical awareness.

The organized data were subsequently presented in descriptive narrative forms, thematic categories, and interpretative explanations to facilitate analysis and understanding of the research findings. The final stage involved interpreting the findings and drawing conclusions regarding the implementation and educational significance of Pong Tiku's leadership values in culturally responsive history learning. Throughout the analysis process, conclusions were continuously verified using triangulation techniques to ensure consistency and credibility.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting the research, permission was obtained from the school administration and relevant educational authorities. All participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study after receiving explanations regarding the research objectives and procedures. Participants' identities and personal information were kept confidential to protect their privacy and ensure ethical research practices. The collected data were used exclusively for academic purposes and reported objectively without manipulation or misrepresentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Forms of Pong Tiku's Leadership Values in History Learning

The findings revealed that the implementation of culturally responsive history learning at SMA Negeri 3 Toraja Utara integrated several indigenous leadership values derived from the historical struggle of Pong Tiku. These values were embedded within history learning activities through local historical narratives, ethnopedagogical approaches, reflective discussions, and project-based learning activities.

One of the major cultural values identified in the learning process was the philosophy of Tallu Baka, which consists of three core principles: kina na manarang (strategic thinking and wisdom), sugi' na barani (courage), and bida' (commitment and determination). Teachers integrated these values into history lessons discussing Pong Tiku's resistance against Dutch colonialism. Students were encouraged to analyze how Pong Tiku demonstrated strategic leadership, bravery, and commitment during his struggle to defend Torajan society and local sovereignty.

In addition to Tallu Baka, the principle of karapasan was also emphasized in classroom learning activities. Karapasan represents peace, tolerance, social harmony, and collective solidarity within Torajan culture. Teachers explained that Pong Tiku's leadership was not merely associated with military resistance but also reflected efforts to maintain social unity and communal responsibility during periods of conflict and colonial oppression.

The integration of these local wisdom values enabled students to connect historical events with contemporary social and moral issues. Through classroom discussions and reflective learning activities, students identified leadership values relevant to their daily lives, including perseverance, responsibility, cooperation, empathy, and social awareness.

Implementation of Culturally Responsive History Learning

The implementation of culturally responsive history learning was carried out through various ethnopedagogical strategies and interactive learning activities. Teachers employed multiple instructional methods to facilitate students' understanding of local historical narratives and indigenous leadership values. Teachers introduced students to Pong Tiku's historical struggle using biographical texts, local historical documents, and supporting literature. Through these materials, students explored Pong Tiku's role as a Torajan leader resisting Dutch colonial domination and analyzed the ethical and leadership dimensions reflected in his actions.

The ethnopedagogical approach became an important component of classroom learning. Teachers connected historical content with local cultural values and students' sociocultural experiences. Learning activities encouraged students to reflect on Torajan traditions, indigenous philosophies, and local identity as integral aspects of history learning. Classroom activities included cultural discussions, reflective dialogue, collaborative analysis, and contextual interpretation of leadership values within contemporary social situations. Students actively participated in discussions regarding how local wisdom values could contribute to social harmony, responsible leadership, and community resilience.

The findings also showed that teachers implemented interactive learning methods such as classroom discussions, question-and-answer sessions, collaborative group work, and project-based learning. Students were assigned to conduct local historical investigations, prepare presentations, and write reflective essays concerning Pong Tiku's leadership values and their relevance to present-day society. Several students conducted small-scale historical projects related to local historical sites, traditional values, and community memories associated with Pong Tiku's resistance movement. These activities encouraged students to actively engage with local historical sources and cultural heritage within their surrounding environment.

Teachers utilized various instructional media to support learning activities, including textbooks, historical maps, documentary videos, digital presentation tools, and visual learning materials. Digital applications such as Canva and Quizizz were occasionally used to increase student engagement and create more interactive classroom experiences. The integration of digital learning tools with local historical content contributed to more meaningful and student-centered learning experiences while simultaneously supporting students' motivation and participation in classroom activities.

Educational Benefits of Integrating Pong Tiku's Leadership Values

The implementation of culturally responsive history learning through Pong Tiku's leadership values generated several educational benefits for students. Students demonstrated increased awareness and appreciation toward local history and indigenous cultural heritage. The learning process helped students recognize the significance of Torajan historical struggles within broader national historical narratives. The integration of leadership values contributed positively to students' character formation. Students reported improved understanding regarding responsibility, perseverance, courage, discipline, empathy, and social cooperation. Classroom activities encouraged students to internalize these values as part of their personal and social identity.

Interactive and contextual learning activities increased students' participation and enthusiasm during history learning sessions. Students became more actively involved in discussions, collaborative projects, and reflective learning activities compared to conventional teacher-centered instruction. Students also developed stronger analytical and reflective thinking abilities through discussions, historical interpretation activities, and project-based learning. They learned to critically analyze historical events, leadership strategies, and social values associated with Pong Tiku's struggle. The findings further indicated that culturally responsive learning strengthened students' sense of cultural identity and pride in local heritage. Students expressed greater appreciation for Torajan traditions, indigenous philosophies, and local historical figures after participating in the learning activities.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that culturally responsive history learning through Pong Tiku's leadership values contributes significantly to the development of students' historical awareness, character formation, cultural identity, and civic understanding. The integration of local wisdom and indigenous leadership values into classroom learning created meaningful educational experiences that connected historical knowledge with students' sociocultural realities and contemporary social challenges.

One important finding is that ethnopedagogical learning practices enabled students to perceive history not merely as a collection of past events but as a source of ethical reflection, cultural meaning, and social inspiration. The incorporation of Tallu Baka and karapasan philosophies into classroom activities allowed students to understand leadership from indigenous cultural perspectives emphasizing courage, wisdom, commitment, peace, and collective responsibility. This finding supports culturally responsive pedagogy theory, which emphasizes the importance of integrating students' cultural backgrounds and local experiences into educational processes to enhance learning relevance and identity formation (Howard, 2021; Pirbhai-Illich et al., 2017).

The strengthening of students' cultural identity observed in this study also reflects the broader role of history education in preserving local wisdom and cultural sustainability. In contemporary educational contexts influenced by globalization and digital cultural homogenization, local historical narratives often become marginalized within standardized curricula. The integration of Pong Tiku's leadership values therefore functioned not only as historical learning content but also as a strategy for maintaining cultural continuity and indigenous identity among younger generations. This finding aligns with sustainability-oriented educational perspectives emphasizing the importance of preserving cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge systems as essential components of sustainable societal developmentc(Rieckmann, 2018; UNESCO, 2020).

The implementation of project-based and interactive learning activities further contributed to transformative learning experiences among students. Through collaborative discussions, reflective writing, and local historical investigations, students actively reconstructed historical meanings and connected them with present-day social realities. Transformative learning theory suggests that meaningful learning occurs when learners critically reflect upon experiences, assumptions, and social values to construct new perspectives and social understandings (Mezirow, 2023). In this study, students did not only memorize historical facts about Pong Tiku but also interpreted his leadership values within contemporary contexts such as responsibility, social solidarity, perseverance, and ethical citizenship.

Another important finding concerns the contribution of culturally responsive history learning to citizenship education and civic engagement. The leadership values embodied by Pong Tiku encouraged students to develop social awareness, empathy, cooperation, and collective responsibility toward their communities. Through reflective classroom discussions, students recognized that leadership involves ethical commitment and responsibility toward society rather than merely authority or power. This finding supports previous studies arguing that history education can function as an important medium for developing democratic citizenship, civic participation, and social responsibility among students (Kuş & Mert, 2023; Pang et al., 2021; Wijayanti et al., 2025; Zulkarnain et al., 2025).

The use of ethnopedagogical approaches also contributed positively to students' engagement and participation during classroom learning. Learning activities connected to local history and students' cultural backgrounds increased students' emotional connection to learning materials and encouraged active classroom participation. This result confirms that culturally contextualized learning

environments enhance motivation, participation, and meaningful learning experiences because students perceive learning as relevant to their identity and lived experiences (Wijayanti et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the integration of digital learning media alongside local historical content demonstrates that culturally responsive learning does not reject educational modernization but rather adapts local wisdom within contemporary educational environments. The use of digital applications such as Canva and Quizizz helped create interactive learning experiences while maintaining the authenticity of local historical narratives. This finding indicates that indigenous knowledge and digital transformation can coexist productively within innovative educational practices.

Despite these positive findings, this study has several limitations. The research was conducted within a single school context and primarily involved qualitative interpretations of learning practices and participants' experiences. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent broader educational contexts across different cultural regions. Future studies are recommended to explore comparative implementations of ethnopedagogical history learning in various local communities and examine its impact quantitatively on students' citizenship competencies, intercultural understanding, and sustainability awareness.

Overall, this study confirms that culturally responsive history learning through Pong Tiku's leadership values provides meaningful contributions to transformative education, citizenship development, and cultural sustainability. The integration of local wisdom, indigenous leadership values, and ethnopedagogical approaches enables history learning to become more contextual, reflective, and socially relevant for contemporary learners. Such learning practices are essential for fostering culturally grounded, socially responsible, and critically aware generations capable of preserving local heritage while actively participating in modern democratic society.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The findings of this study demonstrate that culturally responsive history learning through Pong Tiku's leadership values contributes positively to students' historical awareness, character development, cultural identity, and civic understanding at SMA Negeri 3 Toraja Utara. The integration of indigenous leadership values such as kina na manarang (strategic thinking), sugi' na barani (courage), bida' (commitment), and karapasan (peace and social harmony) into history learning created meaningful and contextual educational experiences for students. Through ethnopedagogical approaches, students were not only introduced to local historical narratives but also encouraged to internalize ethical leadership values relevant to contemporary social life.

The implementation of interactive and project-based learning activities further supported transformative learning processes by promoting students' active participation, critical reflection, collaborative learning, and emotional engagement with local history. The study also indicates that integrating local wisdom into history education strengthens students' appreciation for indigenous heritage and cultural sustainability amidst the challenges of globalization and cultural homogenization. In addition, the incorporation of local hero-based learning contributed to the development of responsible citizenship attitudes, empathy, social awareness, and community-oriented values among students.

This study implies that history education should move beyond conventional content transmission toward more culturally grounded and transformative learning practices that connect historical knowledge with students' lived experiences and local cultural contexts. The integration of local leadership values through culturally responsive pedagogy may therefore serve as an effective strategy for preserving cultural heritage while simultaneously fostering critical, reflective, and socially responsible learners in contemporary education.

However, this study was limited to one educational setting and primarily focused on qualitative exploration of learning practices and participants' experiences. Future research is recommended to investigate the implementation of ethnopedagogical history learning in broader educational contexts and different cultural communities. Further studies may also employ mixed-method or quantitative approaches to examine the effects of culturally responsive history learning on students' citizenship competencies, intercultural understanding, critical historical thinking, and sustainability awareness. Additionally, future educational innovations could explore the integration of digital storytelling, virtual

heritage learning, and community-based historical projects to strengthen culturally responsive and sustainability-oriented history education in the digital era.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI SOURCES

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used generative AI-assisted technology, namely ChatGPT by OpenAI, for language refinement, grammar improvement, academic writing assistance, and manuscript organization. All generated content was carefully reviewed, revised, and validated by the author(s). The author(s) take full responsibility for the final content and interpretation presented in this manuscript.

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