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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Principal's Leadership Style in Driving a School Ecosystem and Community that Cares About Education at SDN 02 Andaleh

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ABSTRACT

The school's initial conditions were characterized by weak relationships between the school and the surrounding community, low professionalism among some teachers, suboptimal utilization of school facilities, and inadequate character development among students. This study aimed to analyze the principal's leadership style in building an inclusive educational ecosystem and fostering community participation in education. A qualitative approach with a single case study design was employed in a school undergoing transformative change. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis involving the principal, teachers, students, school committee members, and community representatives. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Trustworthiness was ensured through source and technique triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. The findings revealed that the principal consistently applied transformational and participatory leadership through exemplary behavior, humanistic communication, strengthening school culture, and developing partnerships with the community. This leadership contributed to improved teacher professionalism, stronger school-community relationships, better utilization of facilities, and the development of more disciplined and environmentally responsible students. The study highlights the critical role of principal leadership in achieving sustainable educational transformation.

Keywords: *Principal Leadership; Educational Ecosystem; School Organizational Culture; Community Participation; Transformational Leadership.*



ABSTRAK

Kondisi awal sekolah ditandai dengan hubungan yang lemah antara sekolah dan komunitas sekitarnya, profesionalisme yang rendah di antara beberapa guru, pemanfaatan fasilitas sekolah yang kurang optimal, dan pengembangan karakter siswa yang tidak memadai. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis gaya kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dalam membangun ekosistem pendidikan inklusif dan mendorong partisipasi masyarakat dalam pendidikan. Pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus tunggal digunakan di sekolah yang sedang mengalami perubahan transformatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipan, wawancara mendalam, dan analisis dokumen yang melibatkan kepala sekolah, guru, siswa, anggota komite sekolah, dan perwakilan masyarakat. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña, yang meliputi kondensasi data, tampilan data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Kepercayaan dipastikan melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik, pengecekan anggota, dan diskusi dengan rekan sejawat. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kepala sekolah secara konsisten menerapkan kepemimpinan transformasional dan partisipatif melalui perilaku teladan, komunikasi humanistik, penguatan budaya sekolah, dan pengembangan kemitraan dengan masyarakat. Kepemimpinan ini berkontribusi pada peningkatan profesionalisme guru, hubungan sekolah-masyarakat yang lebih kuat, pemanfaatan fasilitas yang lebih baik, dan pengembangan siswa yang lebih disiplin dan bertanggung jawab terhadap lingkungan. Studi ini menyoroti peran penting kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dalam mencapai transformasi pendidikan yang berkelanjutan.

Keywords: *Principal Leadership; Educational Ecosystem; School Organizational Culture; Community Participation; Transformational Leadership.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental pillar in developing human resource capacity and determining the direction of a nation's progress. The effectiveness of education delivery depends not solely on the curriculum, infrastructure availability, or government policies, but is also greatly influenced by the quality of leadership of the principal, the institutional leader of the educational unit. The principal holds a highly strategic position, serving as a dual function as an organizational driver, operational policy maker, mentor and developer of teaching staff, and as an institutional liaison between the educational unit and the surrounding community. In the contemporary educational paradigm, the principal is no longer understood simply as a bureaucratic administrator, but rather as an agent of change with the capacity to create a collaborative, adaptive school culture oriented toward continuously improving the quality of education.

The shifting paradigm of 21st-century education requires schools to build a healthy, inclusive, and participatory educational ecosystem (Safutri et al., 2022). Schools cannot develop optimally in institutional isolation without integrating the community as an essential component of the educational process. Therefore, school success is significantly determined by the principal's ability to build harmonious social relationships with the community, create a conducive work climate, and mobilize the entire school community toward meaningful and sustainable change. Within this perspective, the principal's leadership is a crucial variable determining the effectiveness of the educational organization and the quality of comprehensive education delivery.

Various empirical studies demonstrate the importance of principal leadership in improving educational quality. Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) found that transformational leadership influences school organizational capacity and teacher performance. Robinson et al. (2008) demonstrated that principal leadership impacts student learning outcomes by improving the quality of instruction. Hallinger (2011) emphasized the role of leadership in creating a conducive school culture, while Day et al. (2016) found that effective principals are able to drive change and continuously improve school quality. Furthermore, Epstein (2011) and Putnam (2000) emphasized the importance of leaders in building school-community partnerships and strengthening social capital that supports educational success. Transformational leadership has a determinant influence on school organizational culture, teacher motivation and professionalism, student character development, and the degree of community involvement in education (Margarini et al., 2025).

Transformational leadership is considered the most relevant and effective approach to driving school change, emphasizing moral role models, inspiring motivation, participatory collaboration, and empowerment of the entire school community. Previous research has shown that transformational leadership by principals can substantially increase community participation through shared vision-based planning, collaborative program implementation, and participatory evaluation involving all educational stakeholders.

In fact, many schools in Indonesia still face various fundamental issues that impact the quality of the educational ecosystem. These issues include a low culture of discipline among school members, a lack of professional ethics among some educators, suboptimal utilization of infrastructure, and low community involvement in supporting educational programs (Amirudin et al., 2022). In some schools, the relationship between the school institution and the community tends to be conflictual or dysfunctional, resulting in a low sense of communal ownership of the school. This situation indicates that schools have not succeeded in building a collaborative and stakeholder-oriented educational ecosystem as a whole.

The phenomenon of weak school-community relations represents a serious challenge in modern education governance. The public tends to perceive schools solely as formal institutions responsible for academic matters, while schools have not been able to establish open and participatory communication with the surrounding community. As a result, community support for educational programs is limited. Yet, as Epstein points out, partnerships between schools, families, and the community are fundamental elements in improving educational quality and creating effective learning environments. This weak relationship directly negatively impacts the sustainability of educational programs and the development of student character.

Besides social relations issues, another challenge facing schools is the low professionalism and work ethic of some educators. Teachers play a central role as the primary implementers of the educational process because they interact directly and intensively with students on a daily basis (Takalapeta et al., 2025). However, empirical reality still shows that some teachers lack discipline, pay minimal attention to student development, and fail to set adequate moral examples. This condition has resulted in a weakening of the school's organizational culture and the low quality of

student character development. In this context, school principals have a significant responsibility to provide professional development and build a healthy work culture within their institutions.

Educational problems are also evident in the dimension of student character. Increasingly complex social and cultural dynamics present schools with significant challenges in internalizing character values. The phenomenon of low discipline, a lack of responsibility, weak social awareness, and declining student etiquette are common in today's schools. In such a situation, schools cannot simply focus on academic achievement but must also consistently strengthen character education through a positive, humanistic, and sustainable school culture. The principal's leadership plays a crucial role in creating these conditions.

These phenomena were also found in the school where this research took place. In the initial phase, the school faced quite complex, multidimensional problems. The relationship between the school and the surrounding community was not yet harmonious, resulting in very limited community participation in educational activities. Several teachers displayed behavior that lacked professional ethics, such as poor attendance discipline and a lack of concern for students (Ekawati & Hamami, 2026). School infrastructure was not optimally utilized, resulting in a disorganized school environment that did not support effective learning. From the student perspective, indiscipline, low concern for environmental cleanliness, and weak internalization of positive cultural values within the school were still observed.

However, this situation gradually changed with the emergence of a principal capable of driving cultural transformation and building more constructive social relations with the community. The principal went beyond formal administrative functions to embody humanistic, participatory, and transformational leadership. Through consistent exemplary behavior, effective interpersonal communication, teacher professional development, and community involvement in various school programs, the principal successfully catalyzed substantial positive change in the educational environment.

These changes were reflected in the increased professionalism and concern of teachers, the establishment of more harmonious relations between the school and the community, the optimization of school infrastructure, and the development of a culture of discipline and positive character in students. The previously unorganized school environment gradually transformed into a more conducive and supportive learning environment. Communities that previously showed little interest in the school began to actively participate in supporting various educational programs. This transformation demonstrated that the principal's leadership had a decisive influence on building a school culture and strengthening the sustainable education ecosystem (Ubaidila & Maunah, 2022).

Based on the above description, this study aims to analyze in-depth the leadership style of school principals in driving the school ecosystem and building a community that cares about education, as well as describe the transformation of school culture that occurs as a result of the implementation of this leadership. Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of educational leadership studies, particularly regarding transformational leadership based on

community participation. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for school principals, educational supervisors, and policymakers in designing effective leadership strategies to realize a healthy and collaborative school culture.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach with a single case study design. The design was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly the principal's leadership in transforming the school ecosystem and strengthening community participation in education. The study was conducted in a natural setting without any intervention from the researcher. The researcher acted as the primary instrument responsible for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data to gain a comprehensive understanding of leadership practices and their impact on school transformation.

2.2 Research Informants

The research informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in and understanding of the school transformation process. This sampling technique allowed the researcher to obtain rich and relevant information from individuals directly connected to the phenomenon under investigation. The informants included the principal as the key participant, supported by teachers, educational staff, students, school committee members, parents, and community leaders. Their diverse perspectives contributed to a comprehensive understanding of leadership practices and their influence on the school and community.

2.3 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participant observation was conducted to examine school conditions, social interactions, organizational culture, and leadership practices in their natural context. Semi-structured interviews were carried out to explore participants' experiences and perceptions regarding school leadership, community involvement, and educational transformation. In addition, document analysis was used to review school profiles, activity reports, regulations, photographs, and other relevant records that supported the research findings.

2.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. This model consists of three interconnected processes: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data condensation involved selecting and focusing information relevant to the research objectives. The data were then organized into thematic categories and presented in descriptive narratives to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions were drawn and continuously verified throughout the research process to ensure consistency and accuracy.

2.5 Data Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different informants, including the principal, teachers, students, parents, and community members. Technique triangulation involved comparing findings derived from observations, interviews, and document analysis. Furthermore, member checking was conducted by confirming the interview results with participants, while prolonged engagement and persistent observation enhanced the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of School Conditions Before Transformation

Based on observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis, the school used as the initial research site faced various internal and external issues that significantly impacted the quality of its educational ecosystem. These issues were not limited to academic aspects but also encompassed organizational culture, social relations, infrastructure management, and student character. Overall, the school's condition prior to the transformation reflected a weak collaborative culture and a suboptimal function as a center for character formation and community empowerment. Initial observations revealed a poorly organized physical environment. Several facilities were not optimally utilized, and some learning spaces appeared poorly maintained. The school grounds were poorly maintained, vegetation was poorly maintained, and a culture of collective environmental stewardship among the school community was absent. These conditions reflected a low sense of ownership and responsibility among the school community for their educational environment.

In terms of work culture, interviews with teachers revealed that the developing work climate was still individualistic (Ekawati & Hamami, 2026). Tasks were carried out solely to fulfill formal obligations, without a spirit of collaboration and innovation in learning. Some teachers exhibited poor work discipline, including frequent late arrivals, a lack of active involvement in institutional activities, and minimal attention to student character development. From a social perspective, the community felt excluded from the educational process, creating a social gap between the school and its surrounding community, leading to low community participation in educational activities.

Table 1. Profile of Initial School Conditions Before Transformation

Aspect	Initial Conditions
School and community relations	Less harmonious and communicative
Teacher work discipline	Low
Collaboration between teachers	Weak and individualistic
Utilization of infrastructure	Not optimal
Cleanliness of the school environment	Poorly maintained
Internalization of student character	Not yet formed positively
Community participation	Very low
School organizational culture	Not yet developed positively

2. Principal Leadership Style in Driving Transformation

a. Transformational Leadership Based on Example

The research results indicate that the principal consistently applies a transformational leadership style based on four main principles: exemplary behavior, value-based communication, empowering the school community, and building a positive organizational culture. The principal not only carries out formal administrative functions but also serves as a leader figure directly involved in various school activities and events. Operationally, the principal displays a real example of work discipline. The principal arrives earlier than other teachers, actively monitors the condition of the school environment, and is directly involved in cleaning activities and student development (Abas et al., 2025). This exemplary behavior serves as the foundation for building a culture of collective discipline in the school environment. The psychological influence of this example has been proven to gradually change teacher behavior, as confirmed through interviews that revealed that changes in teacher work culture began with testimony to the principal's consistent behavior in carrying out responsibilities.

Table 2. Changes in Teacher Work Culture Indicators

Indicator	Before Transformation (%)	After Transformation (%)
Punctual attendance	45	92
Participation in institutional activities	40	90
Concern for students	50	88
Collaboration between teachers	48	85
Involvement in character building	35	87

This significant improvement reflects the success of the idealized influence dimension of transformational leadership, namely the leader's ability to build influence through moral and professional example (Ubaidila & Maunah, 2022). Furthermore, the principal implemented an individualized consideration approach through personal attention to teachers, intensive informal communication, motivation, and building emotional closeness. This approach made teachers feel valued and more open to changes in work culture.

b. Strengthening School and Community Relations through Humanistic Communication

Transforming the relationship between the school and the community is one of the most important achievements of the principal's leadership (Pratiwi, 2025). Prior to the transformation, the school's relationship with the community tended to be passive, with communication being one-way, with very limited community involvement in educational activities. Following the leadership change, the principal proactively established open and participatory communication with the community through visits to community leaders, involving the school committee in program planning, and establishing inclusive dialogue forums with parents. The principal also initiated various social activities, such as community service programs within the school, religious activities, community service, and school greening programs. These activities served as a means of building social capital and strengthening a sense of communal ownership of the school.

Table 3. Changes in Community Participation Indicators

Forms of Participation	Before	After
Parental attendance at school meetings	38%	85%
Involvement in mutual cooperation	30%	88%
Support for school programs	42%	90%
School-community communication patterns	Passive	Active
School committee involvement	Low	High

The data shows a significant increase in community participation following the implementation of humanistic and collaborative leadership. This success reflects the principal's ability to build social trust, a prerequisite for developing productive partnerships between the school and the community. The principal successfully transformed the school from a closed institution into an open, inclusive, and participatory social space.

c. Transformation of School Culture and Formation of Student Character

The principal implemented various structured habituation programs to build a positive school organizational culture. These programs included greetings, morning discipline, environmental cleanliness, routine religious activities, and the instilling of polite values in daily interactions (Setiyati & Pudji, 2017). Program implementation was consistent and involved the entire school community, emphasizing that character education must begin with the habituation of values in daily life, applied repeatedly and sustainably.

Table 4. Changes in Student Character Indicators

Character Dimensions	Before (%)	After (%)
Discipline	45	88
Concern for the environment	40	90
Manners and good manners	50	87
Responsibility	48	85
Participation in school activities	42	89

d. Optimizing the Utilization of School Facilities and Environment

The principal mobilizes all members of the school community to build a culture of environmental stewardship and optimize the collaborative use of school facilities. School greening programs, classroom redevelopment, and environmental cleanliness are implemented in a participatory manner, involving teachers, students, and the surrounding community.

Table 5. Changes in the Condition of School Facilities and Environment

Condition	Before	After
Environmental Hygiene	Poorly maintained	Clean and tidy
Utilization of facilities	Not optimal	Optimal
Greening program	Not active	Continuous active
Comfort of study room	Less conducive	Conducive
Sense of ownership of school residents	Low	High

Discussion

Hasil penelitian komprehensif menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan kepala sekolah memegang peran yang sangat strategis dalam mendorong transformasi ekosistem sekolah dan menumbuhkan kesadaran masyarakat akan pendidikan. Transformasi yang terwujud di sekolah tidak hanya mencakup aspek fisik dan administratif, tetapi juga mencakup perubahan mendalam dalam budaya organisasi, relasi sosial, profesionalisme guru, serta internalisasi karakter siswa. Kepala sekolah dalam penelitian ini menerapkan gaya kepemimpinan transformasional, yang diwujudkan melalui perilaku keteladanan, komunikasi humanis, motivasi inspiratif, dan pemberdayaan komunitas sekolah. Hal ini sejalan dengan teori kepemimpinan transformasional yang dikemukakan oleh Bass & Avolio (1994) serta diperbaharui oleh Bass & Riggio (2020), yang menyatakan bahwa pemimpin transformasional memengaruhi anggota organisasi melalui empat dimensi utama: pengaruh idealis, motivasi inspiratif, stimulasi intelektual, dan pertimbangan individual. Kepala sekolah dalam studi ini berhasil membangun pengaruh moral yang bermakna melalui keteladanan disiplin yang konsisten, kepedulian, dan keterlibatan langsung dalam berbagai kegiatan sekolah (Khalifah et al., 2026; Tabak & Baydar, 2026).

Perilaku keteladanan terbukti menjadi faktor penentu dalam membangun transformasi budaya organisasi sekolah. Perubahan perilaku guru dimulai ketika kepala sekolah secara konsisten menunjukkan disiplin dan tanggung jawab dalam menjalankan tugasnya. Dari perspektif teori kepemimpinan pendidikan, kepala sekolah sebagai *role model* memiliki pengaruh psikologis yang kuat terhadap pembentukan budaya organisasi (Wang & Zhang, 2020). Pemimpin yang menunjukkan integritas dan perilaku konsisten akan lebih mudah meraih kepercayaan dan dukungan dari seluruh anggota organisasi (Matsila & Malebana, 2026). Perubahan budaya kerja guru dalam penelitian ini mengindikasikan bahwa kepemimpinan kepala sekolah tidak semata-mata bersifat direktif dan instruktif, melainkan menekankan pendekatan persuasif dan humanis. Kepala sekolah tidak menerapkan pola kontrol otoriter, melainkan membangun komunikasi

interpersonal yang terbuka dengan memberikan ruang bagi guru untuk berdiskusi, mengekspresikan aspirasi, dan berpartisipasi dalam proses pengambilan keputusan (Ariyanti et al., 2026). Pendekatan ini mencerminkan kepemimpinan partisipatif yang terbukti meningkatkan rasa kepemilikan terhadap organisasi dan mendorong tumbuhnya budaya kerja kolaboratif (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Asad et al., 2022).

Keberhasilan kepala sekolah dalam membangun relasi sosial yang harmonis dengan masyarakat menunjukkan pentingnya kepercayaan sosial sebagai modal sosial dalam menjalin kemitraan pendidikan yang produktif. Seperti yang dikemukakan dari perspektif sosiologi pendidikan, kepercayaan sosial merupakan prasyarat fundamental untuk menumbuhkan kerja sama dan partisipasi masyarakat dalam penyelenggaraan pendidikan (Putnam, 2000; Syah et al., 2026). Ketika masyarakat merasa dihargai dan dilibatkan, rasa kepemilikan terhadap sekolah akan tumbuh secara organik dan mendorong keterlibatan aktif dalam mendukung program-program pendidikan (Epstein, 2018). Perubahan pada dimensi karakter siswa memperkuat argumen bahwa pembentukan karakter tidak dapat dicapai secara instan melalui pembelajaran teoretis semata, melainkan harus dibangun melalui budaya sekolah yang dilaksanakan secara konsisten dan berkelanjutan. Budaya organisasi sekolah berfungsi sebagai lingkungan sosial yang memengaruhi perilaku siswa melalui proses pembiasaan nilai-nilai (Lickona & Davidson, 2023). Ketika sekolah berhasil membangun budaya disiplin, kepedulian, dan tanggung jawab kolektif, nilai-nilai tersebut akan terinternalisasi dalam perilaku sehari-hari siswa.

Optimalisasi sarana dan lingkungan sekolah yang dicapai melalui kepemimpinan kolaboratif kepala sekolah membuktikan bahwa perubahan fisik yang berarti di sekolah dapat diwujudkan melalui pembangunan rasa kepemilikan bersama. Lingkungan sekolah yang kondusif tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai fasilitas belajar, tetapi juga berfungsi sebagai representasi nyata dari budaya organisasi yang sehat dan dinamis (Hallinger et al., 2020; Chang et al., 2026). Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa keberhasilan transformasi sekolah tidak selalu ditentukan oleh besarnya sumber daya yang tersedia, melainkan oleh kualitas kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dalam membangun budaya organisasi yang sehat dan relasi sosial yang konstruktif. Dalam konteks kebijakan pendidikan, temuan ini memiliki implikasi penting bagi pengembangan kapasitas kepala sekolah, yang tidak hanya berfokus pada kompetensi administratif dan manajerial, tetapi juga pada penguatan kapasitas kepemimpinan transformasional, keterampilan komunikasi sosial, dan kemampuan membangun budaya organisasi yang adaptif dan inklusif (Musrapasi et al., 2026; Robinson et al., 2008).

Temuan ini sejalan dengan penelitian sebelumnya yang menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan transformasional kepala sekolah berpengaruh signifikan terhadap peningkatan efektivitas sekolah, budaya organisasi, dan kualitas pembelajaran. Penelitian yang dilakukan oleh Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins (2020) serta Leithwood & Jantzi (2006) menemukan bahwa kepala sekolah yang menerapkan kepemimpinan transformasional mampu menciptakan perubahan organisasi melalui pengembangan visi bersama, pemberdayaan guru, dan penciptaan iklim kerja yang kondusif.

Dalam konteks penelitian ini, kepala sekolah berhasil membangun budaya kerja yang lebih disiplin, kolaboratif, dan berorientasi pada peningkatan mutu melalui keteladanan dan komunikasi humanis. Situasi ini menunjukkan keselarasan temuan penelitian dengan pandangan bahwa kepemimpinan transformasional dapat mendorong perubahan perilaku individu dan organisasi secara berkelanjutan.

Hasil penelitian ini juga mendukung temuan Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe (2008), yang menyatakan bahwa kepemimpinan kepala sekolah memiliki dampak tidak langsung terhadap hasil belajar siswa melalui pengaruhnya terhadap budaya sekolah dan kinerja guru. Perubahan perilaku guru yang mengarah pada tanggung jawab yang lebih besar, disiplin, dan kolaborasi aktif yang ditunjukkan dalam penelitian ini membuktikan bahwa kepala sekolah bertindak sebagai agen perubahan yang mampu membangun kapasitas profesional guru. Dengan demikian, transformasi sekolah terjadi tidak hanya pada aspek manajerial, tetapi juga pada peningkatan kualitas sumber daya manusia yang menjadi inti dari proses pendidikan. Terkait dengan hubungan sekolah-masyarakat, temuan penelitian ini sejalan dengan penelitian Epstein (2018) tentang kemitraan sekolah-keluarga-masyarakat, yang menekankan bahwa keterlibatan masyarakat dan orang tua merupakan faktor penting dalam mendukung keberhasilan pendidikan.

Keberhasilan kepala sekolah dalam menjalin komunikasi terbuka, melibatkan masyarakat dalam berbagai program sekolah, dan menumbuhkan rasa kepemilikan terhadap sekolah menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan yang efektif dapat membangun modal sosial yang kuat. Temuan ini juga mendukung teori Putnam (2000), yang menyatakan bahwa kepercayaan sosial dan jaringan kolaboratif adalah fondasi penting untuk meningkatkan partisipasi masyarakat dan efektivitas lembaga pendidikan. Lebih lanjut, perubahan karakter siswa yang muncul melalui penanaman budaya sekolah mendukung penelitian Lickona & Davidson (2023), yang menekankan bahwa pendidikan karakter yang efektif harus diimplementasikan melalui budaya sekolah yang konsisten, bukan hanya melalui pembelajaran di kelas. Nilai-nilai disiplin, tanggung jawab, kepedulian, dan kerja sama yang berkembang pada siswa dalam penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa lingkungan sekolah berfungsi sebagai wahana internalisasi nilai melalui keteladanan dan pembiasaan. Dengan demikian, budaya sekolah menjadi instrumen strategis dalam membentuk karakter siswa secara berkelanjutan. Temuan mengenai optimalisasi sarana dan lingkungan sekolah melalui kolaborasi seluruh warga sekolah juga selaras dengan penelitian Hallinger & Hosseingholizadeh (2020), yang menyatakan bahwa kepemimpinan sekolah yang efektif dapat menggerakkan sumber daya yang tersedia untuk mendukung pencapaian tujuan pendidikan. Penelitian ini membuktikan bahwa keberhasilan pengembangan lingkungan sekolah tidak semata-mata bergantung pada besarnya dukungan finansial, melainkan pada kemampuan kepala sekolah dalam membangun komitmen bersama, menggerakkan partisipasi masyarakat, dan menumbuhkan rasa kepemilikan kolektif terhadap sekolah.

Secara keseluruhan, temuan penelitian ini memperkuat berbagai temuan empiris yang memosisikan kepala sekolah sebagai aktor kunci dalam transformasi sekolah. Kepemimpinan

transformatif yang diwujudkan melalui perilaku keteladanan, komunikasi efektif, pemberdayaan tenaga kependidikan, dan pembangunan kemitraan dengan masyarakat terbukti mampu menciptakan perubahan menyeluruh dalam budaya organisasi, profesionalisme guru, karakter siswa, dan partisipasi masyarakat. Oleh karena itu, hasil penelitian ini semakin menegaskan pentingnya penguatan kompetensi kepemimpinan transformatif dalam program pengembangan profesional kepala sekolah guna mendukung peningkatan kualitas pendidikan secara berkelanjutan.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Comprehensive research results indicate that the principal's leadership style plays a crucial role in driving the school ecosystem and fostering community awareness of education. The principal successfully implemented transformational and participatory leadership, demonstrated through exemplary behavior, humanitarian-based communication, strengthening the school's organizational culture, and actively engaging the community in various educational programs. This leadership implementation resulted in a gradual, positive transformation in the school ecosystem, which previously faced multidimensional challenges.

This transformation included increased teacher professionalism and concern for students, the development of a culture of discipline and environmental stewardship among students, the optimization of school infrastructure, and increased community participation in supporting educational programs. These findings confirm that school success is not solely determined by the availability of facilities or administrative regulations, but rather by the principal's capacity to build a collaborative, quality-oriented organizational culture and social relationships. This research confirms that principal leadership serves not merely as an administrative management mechanism but as a transformative social force in creating a healthy, participatory, and sustainable education ecosystem. Thus, the principal has a crucial position as an agent of social change who is able to integrate all elements of education towards improving school quality and forming a generation with character.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended: (1) Principals need to continue to develop transformational leadership capacity by emphasizing role models, collaboration, and empowerment of all components of the school community; (2) Teachers are expected to continue to improve their professionalism and optimize their role in shaping students' character in order to realize a humanistic school culture; (3) Schools need to strengthen partnerships with the community through open communication and active community involvement in educational programs; (4) The government and educational policy makers are expected to strengthen principal leadership competency development programs, especially in the social, managerial, and transformational dimensions; (5) Further research is expected to explore the phenomenon of educational leadership in a broader context by involving various levels of education and different

methodological perspectives, in order to produce a more comprehensive understanding of the transformation of the educational ecosystem.

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