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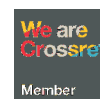
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# School principal leadership in transmigration areas to improve the quality of education

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the leadership practices of school principals in transmigration areas to improve education quality, identifying key supporting and inhibiting factors, along with potential solutions. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques consisting of in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis involving principals, teachers, supervisors, and school committees. Findings indicate that the principal applied an Integrated Adaptive Leadership (IAL) model, which combines charismatic, situational, democratic, transformational, servant, and instructional approaches. This leadership integration proved effective in strengthening teacher competence, participatory school management, and a positive school culture, thereby contributing to improvements in the input, process, and output dimensions of education quality. Supporting factors for leadership success include teacher loyalty, a conducive school climate, and active community engagement, while inhibiting factors consist of limited facilities and infrastructure, low technological competence, insufficient government support, and the socio-economic conditions of the community. Solutions identified encompass capacity strengthening for principals and teachers, greater utilization of information technology, enhancement of community participation, and active advocacy to local government. The novelty of this study lies in its direct exploration of principal leadership in transmigration areas, explicitly linked to educational quality indicators in the Education Report. Practically, the research provides important implications for principals, education authorities, and communities in formulating context-sensitive strategies to improve education quality. Theoretically, its contribution extends the study of educational leadership into marginalized and under-resourced settings.

## Keywords:

School principal leadership  
Quality of education  
Transmigration area schools

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## Introduction

Education is a fundamental pillar of national development, playing a strategic role in preparing high-quality human resources with global competitiveness. The quality of education is often regarded as a key indicator of regional progress, and its improvement requires the synergy of multiple elements, including the leadership role of school principals. Numerous studies highlight that principals hold a central position as managers and instructional leaders who are responsible for mobilizing resources, supporting teacher professionalism, and creating a school climate conducive to learning (He et al., 2024; Jimerson & Quebec Fuentes, 2020; Shava, 2021). Other studies state that

school principals' leadership has a positive influence on teacher motivation and student learning achievement (Sari et al., 2021). Furthermore, the leadership style of school principals affects the quality of education (Sujana et al., 2022; Yuhanita et al., 2022). National evaluation instruments, such as the Education Report, have now become one of the key indicators for assessing the quality of education, providing empirical data that can be utilized by schools and governments to design strategies for quality improvement (Blikstad-Balas et al., 2022; Hood et al., 2021).

Although school leadership and its relationship with education quality have been widely studied, there remains a limited understanding of leadership in specific contexts such as transmigration areas. Most studies tend to focus on leadership in urban or rural settings in general, without addressing the distinct characteristics of transmigration regions, which are marked by limited infrastructure, socio-cultural diversity, and complex socio-economic challenges (Khotimah Herlian & Asep Saepul Bahri, 2025; Mustafa et al., 2024). This condition raises the question of how school principals' leadership in such areas is able to overcome local barriers while simultaneously improving the quality of education as reflected in the indicators of the Education Report.

Contemporary research emphasizes the importance of adaptive and contextual leadership models, in which no single model is universally relevant for all situations (Chughtai et al., 2024; Kucharska & Rebelo, 2022). Transformational and instructional leadership styles, which have been proven to enhance teacher performance and students' academic achievement, are now often combined with democratic and collaborative approaches to address the diverse demands of educational environments (Kucharska & Rebelo, 2022). On the other hand, the utilization of the Education Report (Rapor Pendidikan) as a national evaluation instrument remains a subject of debate, particularly concerning its effectiveness in driving quality improvement in regions with structural limitations (Nurdin et al., 2022; Owan et al., 2023).

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on examining the leadership style of school principals in transmigration areas by directly linking it to education quality as measured through the Education Report. This study differs from previous research, which generally highlights remote or rural contexts, as transmigration areas possess unique demographic, social, and historical characteristics that demand distinct leadership strategies. Accordingly, this research is expected to present a contextual leadership model that is more relevant for improving education quality in regions with similar conditions.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of educational leadership literature by extending the application of leadership theories within the specific context of transmigration areas. Practically, its findings may serve as a reference for principals, education authorities, and policymakers in formulating strategies for education quality improvement based on the Education Report, while also providing the community with a better understanding of the importance of their participation in supporting the role of school principals. Based on this rationale, the research question proposed is: How do school principals' leadership styles in transmigration areas contribute to improving education quality as measured through the Education Report, and what supporting factors, inhibiting factors, and solutions can be implemented?

## Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of school principals' leadership practices in improving education quality in transmigration areas. This approach was selected to provide an in-depth understanding of school principals' leadership practices in enhancing education quality in transmigration areas, as this methodology excels at exploring complex phenomena and capturing the rich textures of human experience and perspectives (Banha et al., 2022; Mantula et al., 2024; Siddiqua, 2023). The study was conducted at State Junior High School 29 South Bengkulu, located in the Karang Cayo Transmigration Settlement Unit, Pino Raya District, South Bengkulu Regency. State Junior High School 29 South Bengkulu was selected as the research site because it is the only junior high school in the settlement unit and thus

serves all children of transmigrant families in the area. The school reflects the typical conditions of educational institutions in transmigration regions such as limited resources, geographical isolation, and reliance on a single school to meet community needs. These characteristics make the school a representative case for examining the challenges and realities of education in transmigration areas, while also providing a relevant context for exploring leadership practices in relation to educational quality.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct relevance to the research focus. The main participants included: (1) the principal, as the key figure in leadership practices; (2) teachers, who interact directly with the principal in teaching and learning activities; and (3) school supervisors, who hold a formal role in guiding and supervising the principal. These three groups were involved to ensure a comprehensive range of perspectives and to strengthen data validity through triangulation.

Data were collected using three primary techniques: in depth interviews, direct observation, and document study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the principal's leadership style, supporting and inhibiting factors, and strategies for improving education quality as reflected in the 2025 Education Report indicators particularly in the areas of learning quality, school climate, and students' literacy-numeracy achievements. Observations were carried out by examining the principal's leadership behaviors in daily school activities, enabling the researchers to obtain factual evidence of adaptive leadership practices in authentic contexts. Document study involved analyzing the Education Report, school work plans, supervisory reports, meeting minutes, and school policy archives to validate and enrich the findings from interviews and observations.

Data collection tools were developed in line with the study's objectives. The interview guide was structured around leadership indicators (styles, roles, supporting and inhibiting factors, and solutions). The observation guide was used to record observable leadership practices during school activities. The documentation instrument, in the form of a recording format, was employed to capture key information from official documents related to the principal's strategies in responding to Education Report findings.

Data analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman's interactive model through four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Creswell & Poth, 2016). All data from interviews, observations, and documentation were processed inductively to generate a comprehensive description. To ensure validity, triangulation was applied across sources, methods, and time. Specifically, data from interviews were used to determine the focus of classroom and school observations (e.g., claims made by teachers about the principal's instructional supervision were followed up by direct observation of classroom visits). Conversely, observational findings were used to clarify, challenge, or validate participants' statements during follow-up interviews. Finally, documentary evidence (such as supervisory reports or school policies) was systematically compared with both interview and observation data to assess consistency, resolve discrepancies, and enhance the credibility of the findings. The first author acted as the primary research instrument, directly engaging in fieldwork, interpreting the data, and ensuring the validity, originality, and integrity of the study throughout the research process.

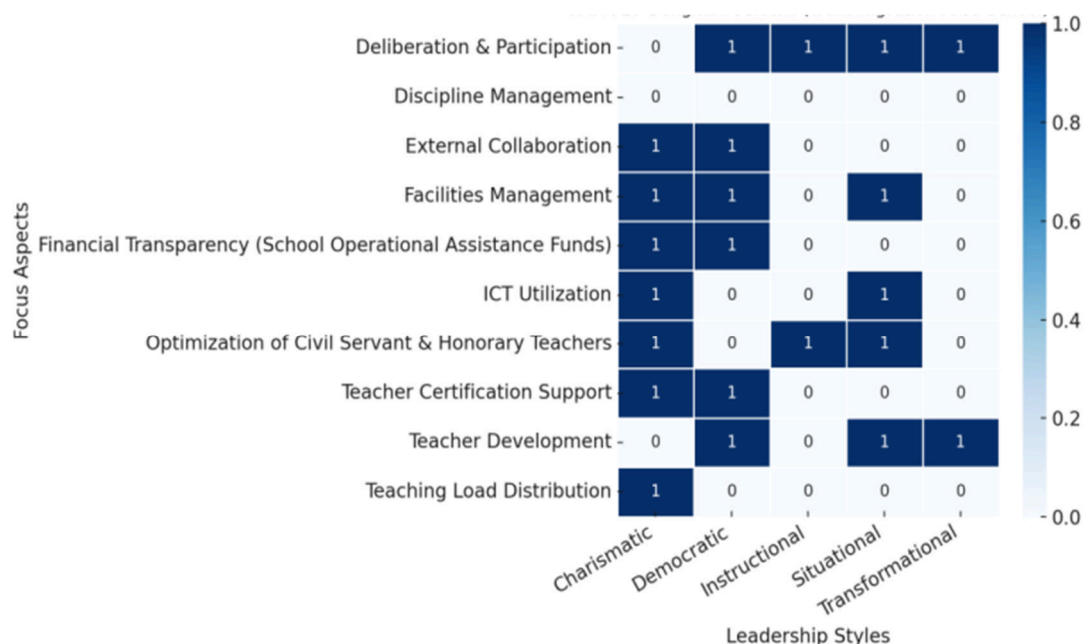
## Results and Discussion

### **Leadership style of school principals in transmigration areas for improving education quality**

The research findings on the leadership style of school principals in transmigration areas for improving education quality are presented based on the aspects of input, process, and output, as outlined in the education report indicators for primary and secondary schools issued by the Ministry of Primary Education of the Republic of Indonesia in 2025.

### Input aspect

The findings of input indicate that the principal's leadership at SMPN 29 Bengkulu Selatan reflects an adaptive model, integrating situational, charismatic, democratic, instructional, and transformational styles, with situational and charismatic leadership emerging as the most dominant. As illustrated in Figure 1 and corroborated by field evidence, the situational style is consistently applied in managing teacher certification, teaching load distribution, discipline, and ICT utilization, where the principal adapts leadership strategies to the specific conditions and capacities of teachers.



**Figure 1** Matrix of Dominant Leadership Styles by Input Aspect of Education Quality

Charismatic leadership is particularly evident in external collaboration, financial transparency, and motivating both civil servant and honorary teachers through personal attention, moral support, and incentives, which successfully foster teacher loyalty and commitment despite limited resources. Democratic leadership is strongly reflected in deliberation and participation, especially in decision-making forums involving teachers, committees, and parents. This participatory approach ensures accountability and strengthens the sense of ownership among the school community, particularly in the management of School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds and facility development. Instructional leadership is demonstrated through direct involvement in mentoring teachers, particularly in ICT-based administrative systems such as ARKAS, RGTK, and e-rapor, where the principal provides technical guidance and patient support. Transformational elements are also visible in teacher development, where the principal motivates staff by facilitating professional training, promoting peer-mentoring programs, and inspiring innovation for continuous improvement.

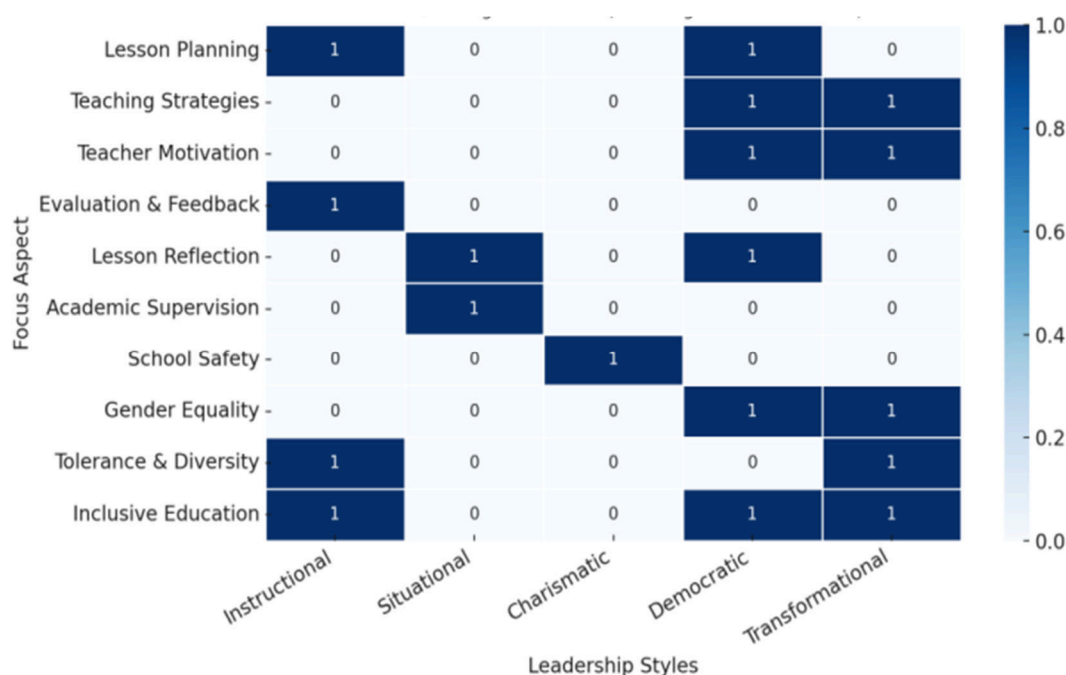
The matrix also underscores the interplay between leadership styles and structural challenges. For example, financial transparency in the management of School Operational Assistance Funds is strongly associated with charismatic and democratic leadership. This suggests that the principal leverages trust-building and participatory practices to enhance accountability in financial management, a critical issue in schools operating in remote transmigration settlements. At the same time, the emphasis on democratic leadership in distributing teaching loads reflects an attempt to balance workloads fairly among civil servant and honorary teachers. This concern that has significant implications for teacher motivation and retention in such contexts. The success of this leadership combination is evidenced by several concrete outcomes: teachers feel supported during certification processes despite poor internet connectivity, teaching loads are distributed fairly



without internal conflict, discipline improves through exemplary leadership, and financial reporting becomes more transparent to parents and committees. These results, supported by interviews, observations, and official documents, confirm that the principal's leadership in a transmigration area school is both adaptive and integrative, effectively addressing input-related challenges to ensure sustainability in educational quality.

### Process aspect

The findings on the process dimension of educational quality at SMPN 29 Bengkulu Selatan reveal a leadership pattern that is both combinative and adaptive, integrating instructional, situational, charismatic, democratic, and transformational styles. As illustrated in Figure 2 presents the matrix of dominant leadership styles across various aspects of the educational quality process at SMPN 29 Bengkulu Selatan..



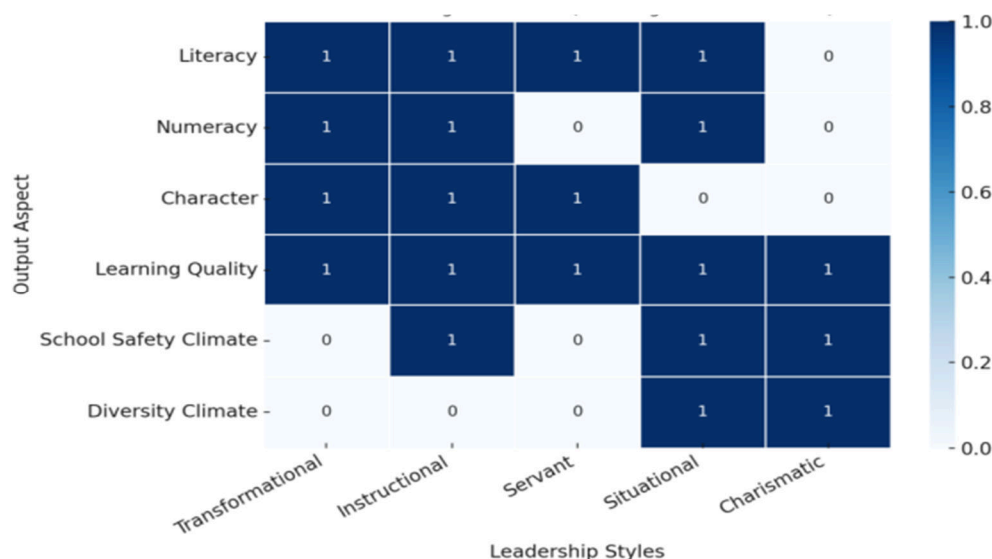
**Figure 2** Matrix of Dominant Leadership Styles by Process Aspect of Education Quality

The visualization illustrates that no single leadership style stands alone; instead, the principal integrates multiple approaches depending on the focus area. Instructional leadership appears strongly in lesson planning, evaluation and feedback, as well as tolerance and diversity, emphasizing the provision of clear technical guidance. Situational leadership emerges in lesson reflection and academic supervision, where the principal adjusts strategies according to teacher readiness and contextual classroom challenges. Charismatic leadership is visible in ensuring school safety, where the principal's moral authority and exemplary behavior establish discipline and trust. Democratic leadership dominates in decision-making for teaching strategies and gender equality, highlighting the participatory culture that involves teachers and students in shaping practices. Transformational leadership is most evident in teacher motivation, inclusivity, and promoting tolerance, where the principal inspires innovation, builds collective vision, and nurtures respect for diversity in a heterogeneous transmigration-area school.

This matrix confirms that the principal's leadership in the process dimension is combinative, situational, and adaptive, with instructional and situational styles providing the technical backbone of classroom practices, while charismatic, democratic, and transformational styles ensure motivation, collaboration, and inclusivity. Together, these approaches contribute to strengthening the quality of educational processes through systematic planning, reflective practice, collaborative supervision, and the cultivation of an inclusive and safe school environment.

### Output aspect

The findings on the output dimension demonstrate that the principal's leadership at SMPN 29 Bengkulu Selatan significantly contributes to both the quality and equity of education. As shown in Figure 3, multiple leadership styles such as transformational, instructional, situational, charismatic, and servant are applied in a complementary manner across different aspects.



**Figure 3** Matrix of Dominant Leadership Styles by Output Aspect of Education Quality

In terms of learning outcomes, transformational and instructional leadership are evident in promoting a literacy culture through reading programs and classroom routines, although the decline in literacy assessment scores indicates a gap between practice and measurable outcomes. Conversely, numeracy performance has improved due to systematic follow-up of assessments, remedial and enrichment programs, and the use of contextual learning media. Character scores also show positive growth, reinforced by consistent habituation of discipline, religiosity, and responsibility, supported by the principal's role modeling. Overall, the quality of learning continues to improve, with remedial interventions and contextual approaches contributing to better student performance.

Regarding educational equity, the leadership combination has created contrasting dynamics. The school safety climate benefits from charismatic leadership, demonstrated through the principal's visible presence and authority, instructional leadership through structured disciplinary rules, and situational leadership in handling cases with contextual sensitivity. Despite these efforts, the 2025 Education Report shows a decline in safety indicators, suggesting the need for more systematic interventions in managing students' social dynamics. On the other hand, diversity climate indicators improved, reflecting the effectiveness of charismatic and servant leadership in fostering tolerance and acceptance. Through role modeling, attentiveness to students' concerns, and inclusive activities, the principal has successfully nurtured a sense of belonging, minimized conflicts among students from diverse backgrounds, and provided equal opportunities in school programs.

Taken together, these results highlight that the principal does not adhere to a single leadership style but adopts an adaptive and integrative approach, combining charismatic, instructional, transformational, situational, and servant leadership as needed. This flexibility has enhanced both the quality and equity of education, although certain gaps, such as literacy outcomes and school safety, require further managerial strategies for sustained improvement.

**Supporting factors of school principals in transmigration areas for improving education quality**

The study identified several supporting factors that strengthen the effectiveness of the principal's leadership at SMPN 29 South Bengkulu. Internal factors emphasize the competence and solidarity within the school. The research findings regarding the internal factors supporting the principal's leadership are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Findings of Internal Supporting Factors for Principal Leadership

Internal Factors	Research Findings
Principal Competence	The principal is able to plan programs based on educational report data, mobilize teachers through participatory discussion forums, and uphold the principles of transparency and accountability
Support for Teachers and Education Personnel	Civil servant and honorary teachers showed high motivation and loyalty thanks to the moral support of the principal, creating collective solidarity in carrying out their duties.
School Culture & Climate	Positive traditions of discipline, literacy, diversity, and tolerance have been established. Decision-making is carried out through deliberation, creating a harmonious atmosphere
Facilities and infrastructure	Facility limitations are addressed by delegating tasks according to teacher competency, transparent management of BOS funds, and assistance in the use of administrative technology

External support from the school committee, parents, the local government and the Department of Education, the surrounding community, as well as the distinctive geographical conditions of transmigration areas, functions as a complementary factor to the internal aspects. The research findings regarding the external factors supporting the principal's leadership are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Findings of Supporting Factors for External Aspects of Principal Leadership

External Factors	Research Findings
Committee and Parents	Actively involved in planning, decision making, financial oversight, and supporting student literacy and character development activities
Regional Government and Education Office	Providing assistance with facilities (reading books, CDM, chairs, tables) through direct coordination with the principal by bringing concrete needs data
Local communities	Participate in the construction of simple facilities and support the school's social and religious activities
Geographical Conditions of Transmigration	Encouraging leadership innovation, cross-school collaboration, and strengthening the value of diversity as social capital in education

### **Inhibiting factors of school principals in transmigration areas for improving education quality**

In addition to supporting factors, the study identified several inhibiting elements that constrain the effectiveness of the principal's leadership in improving educational quality at SMPN 29 South Bengkulu. Internally, limitations in technological competence, uneven teacher participation, inconsistent school discipline, and insufficient facilities emerged as challenges that hinder optimal learning processes. Externally, delayed government support, low parental involvement, socio-economic difficulties, and geographical barriers were identified as critical constraints.

**Table 3.** Findings of Factors Inhibiting Principal Leadership in Improving the Quality of Education

Focus	Summary of Findings
Principal Competence	Principals are limited in their mastery of technology and assessment; literacy outcomes are not in line with the literacy program being implemented
Teacher and Staff Support	Teacher participation is uneven; some are active, some are passive and resist change, resulting in low internal solidarity



Focus	Summary of Findings
School Culture	Teacher and student discipline is inconsistent; minor conflicts due to cultural differences still occur; the principal's approach tends to be persuasive
Facilities and infrastructure	Limited facilities (classrooms, laboratories, libraries, internet); learning and administrative activities are often hampered
Government/Department Support	Aid is not always on target and is often late due to budget constraints
Community/Parental Participation	Low engagement due to busy work in the fields; minimal support for home learning
Socio-Economic Conditions	The majority of parents have low incomes; it is difficult to provide for their children's learning needs (books, quotas, etc.)
Geographical Barriers	Winding and slippery roads during the rain hamper access for teachers and students; the internet connection is unstable

As summarized in Table 3, these inhibiting factors reflect both structural and contextual barriers that reduce the potential impact of leadership efforts. More importantly, they reveal that adaptive leadership alone is insufficient without systemic reinforcement, highlighting the need for coordinated strategies involving schools, communities, and government agencies to sustain improvements in educational quality.

### Solution of Inhibiting factors

The solutions to leadership barriers in transmigration areas demonstrate that improving educational quality demands adaptive strategies that balance internal and external limitations with local creativity and participatory collaboration. Internally, the solutions undertaken include enhancing the principal's competence through self-directed learning and sharing best practices with peers, strengthening teacher participation through small-scale deliberations and a familial atmosphere, and gradually building a culture of discipline through the principal's exemplary leadership. Limitations in facilities are addressed through collective action and the use of simple learning media based on local potential. Externally, the principal seeks to optimize communication with the education office despite limited budgetary support and to encourage community participation by integrating school activities into village or religious agendas. Weak socio-economic conditions are addressed through teacher solidarity in supporting students, while geographical and internet access barriers are managed through collective strategies, such as flexible scheduling and identifying alternative locations for network connectivity. Overall, these findings underscore that the leadership of school principals in transmigration areas does not rely solely on formal policies but also on creativity, adaptability, and collaboration with teachers, the community, and other stakeholders to ensure the continuity of educational quality improvement programs within existing constraints.

### Discussion

The practical leadership of the principal at SMPN 29 South Bengkulu illustrates an Integrated Adaptive Leadership (IAL) model, blending transformational, instructional, situational, charismatic, democratic, and servant styles. This model emerges as a strategic response to infrastructural limitations, the socio-cultural heterogeneity of the transmigrant community, and inconsistent external support. The findings highlight that educational leadership effectiveness cannot be reduced to a universal model; instead, it depends on the leader's capacity to adapt approaches to the local context. In complex educational environments, effective leadership requires integrating diverse functions to balance flexibility with control (Moya & Molonia, 2020).

The leadership style of school principals in transmigration areas reflects a dynamic combination of charismatic, democratic, situational, transformational, and instructional approaches. Principals act not only as directors but also as motivators, facilitators, and role models who are capable of adjusting their leadership strategies to the needs of teachers and the actual conditions of the school (Corrigan & Merry, 2022; Halimah et al., 2024; Yakob et al., 2025). These findings demonstrate how

adaptive leadership can encourage teachers to enhance their competencies, strengthen a culture of collaboration, and maintain loyalty despite limited resources. Beyond merely managing administration, the principal is able to foster a participatory working atmosphere, cultivate a sense of belonging, and nurture teachers' intrinsic motivation through a leadership approach that is both humanistic and visionary (Chughtai et al., 2024; Sott & Bender, 2025).

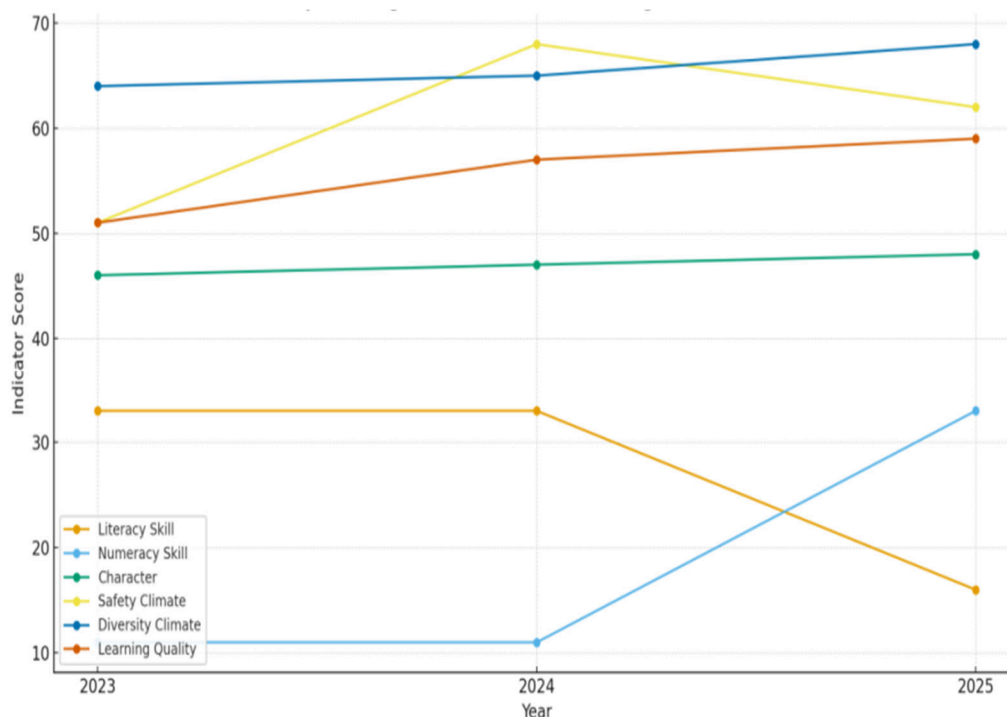
Recent academic literature underscores the necessity for a dynamic synthesis of leadership approaches in modern educational settings, particularly in resource constrained contexts like transmigrant schools. While transformational leadership is widely acknowledged for enhancing teacher motivation and organizational commitment (Alainati et al., 2023; Sarong, 2024), its application proves insufficient when practiced in isolation, especially in developing countries facing significant socio-political challenges (Alzoraiki et al., 2024). This highlights the importance of examining how leadership models apply to specific contexts (Menon, 2023), necessitating an integration with other leadership approaches to form an Integrated Adaptive Leadership model.

Principals in this context not only articulate a vision and model professional conduct (Faig, 2024), but also adapt strategies to teachers' readiness, a key aspect of situational leadership (Michel, 2024), and foster trust through personal closeness, aligning with charismatic leadership, which is influenced by cultural variety and socioeconomic conditions. Instructional leadership, as emphasized by Hallinger and Murphy, remains relevant but is practiced in a simplified and localized manner, particularly in rural contexts characterized by many challenges (Noor & Nawab, 2022; O'shea & Zuckerman, 2022). Rather than focusing on extensive supervision and curriculum management, principals prioritize teaching preparation, reflective supervision, and remedial support for students, ensuring learning effectiveness within the limits of available resources (Pashmforoosh et al., 2023). Similarly, servant leadership emerges in a pragmatic form, often termed survival servant leadership, where mentoring teachers, addressing urgent school needs, and conducting home visits represent strategies for sustaining education under constrained conditions (Shula et al., 2022). This approach fosters a vibrant environment where teachers experience enhanced morale, job satisfaction, and engagement within the educational community (Kainde & Mandagi, 2023), and contributes to a positive organizational climate, particularly in underperforming schools (Swart et al., 2021).

Situational and charismatic leadership further expand in scope, encompassing not only adjustments to teacher competence but also sensitivity to the cultural and economic heterogeneity of transmigrant communities (Maqbool et al., 2023). This is crucial for leadership in culturally diverse environments (Adams & Velarde, 2021). Democratic leadership, in turn, functions strategically to build participation, transparency, and collective social capital, effectively substituting for inconsistent external support and sustaining key school programs such as literacy and numeracy (Prastiawan et al., 2020; Traver-Martí et al., 2021). Community engagement through democratic processes is vital for leadership development and fostering collective involvement in school change projects (Ayaya, 2020).

Taken together, these findings affirm that international leadership theories provide useful conceptual foundations, but their effectiveness in peripheral or resource-limited schools depends on their integration. This synthesis forms the basis of Integrated Adaptive Leadership, a model that positions the combination of multiple leadership styles as a strategic response to local challenges. This integrated approach, which includes diverse leadership styles, plays an invaluable role in the victory and development of schools, contributing significantly to students' learning outcomes, overall educational experiences, and the achievement of academic excellence (Huber & Pruitt, 2024; Kielblock & Lilla, 2025; Maqbool et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2025). The implications of this study affirm that leadership in schools located in transmigration areas is not merely about routine administration but about creating a resilient and progressive educational ecosystem.

The application of Integrated Adaptive Leadership (IAL) at SMPN 29 South Bengkulu demonstrates a tangible impact on the quality of education, as reflected in the 2023–2025 educational report trends presented in Figure 4.



**Figure 4** Comparative Trends of Education Report of State Junior High School 29 South Bengkulu for 2023-2025

In the dimension of literacy and numeracy, the principal emphasized both cultural and instructional innovations. Literacy initiatives included a 15-minute reading program before class, reading corners, and recognition awards. While these efforts reflect strong instructional and transformational leadership focusing on curriculum, supervision, and motivating a shared vision (Alzoraiki et al., 2024; He et al., 2024; Kilag & Sasan, 2023).

The 2025 education report revealed a decline in literacy scores. This suggests a gap between cultural practices and measurable assessments, highlighting the complexity of evaluating literacy outcomes and the need for systematic monitoring. Conversely, numeracy performance improved significantly through structured remedial classes, enrichment, and the use of learning media, demonstrating the effectiveness of instructional and situational leadership in tailoring strategies to diverse student needs (Podgórska & Detko, 2023).

Character education also recorded consistent progress. The principal integrated religious practices, discipline, and social responsibility into daily routines and school policies. Transformational leadership shaped a strong vision of character development (Kilag & Sasan, 2023), supported by instructional leadership through technical supervision. Servant leadership was evident in role modeling, which inspired teachers and students toward integrity and community service. These practices collectively enhanced student character scores, demonstrating that moral example and structured programs can reinforce cultural and social values in schools.

Improvements in learning quality further indicate that adaptive leadership created a professional and innovative environment for teachers. Instructional leadership contributed to the adoption of effective teaching strategies, while transformational leadership inspired ongoing pedagogical innovation (Alzoraiki et al., 2024; He et al., 2024). This synergy strengthened the quality of teaching and learning, aligning with the institution's broader educational goals. Equity-related dimensions also highlighted the role of charismatic, servant, and situational leadership. The principal's authority and exemplary conduct established a foundation of safety and discipline, in line with studies linking charismatic leadership to compliance and trust (Widiantari et al., 2022). Instructional leadership ensured clear disciplinary policies, while situational leadership enabled

flexible responses to specific behavioral cases. However, the slight decline in safety indicators in 2025 underscores the need for more systematic managerial strategies. By contrast, diversity scores improved, driven by inclusive practices rooted in servant and transformational leadership. Servant leadership promoted inclusion by prioritizing individual needs and ensuring recognition (Sun et al., 2024), while transformational leadership fostered an inclusive culture embracing social heterogeneity (Sasan et al., 2023). Together, these practices built tolerance and strengthened cross-cultural understanding, essential in the socially diverse context of transmigration schools (Tanzi & Hermanto, 2024).

Overall, the integration of multiple leadership styles at SMPN 29 South Bengkulu has enhanced numeracy, character, and learning quality, while fostering inclusive diversity. Nevertheless, persistent gaps in literacy outcomes and school safety reveal limitations that require further structural support and continuous innovation. These findings affirm that adaptive and synergistic leadership, especially in resource-constrained and heterogeneous contexts, is critical for achieving holistic educational excellence.

On the other hand, numeracy, character, and overall learning quality show consistent improvement, while literacy indicators, despite the establishment of a literacy culture, experience a decline. This mixed trajectory indicates that adaptive leadership, although effective in cultivating positive traditions and collaborative practices, still faces structural and contextual barriers that influence outcomes. The supporting factors outlined in Table 1 (internal) and Table 2 (external) provide the foundation for these improvements. Internally, the principal's competence in evidence-based planning and participatory decision making mobilized teachers toward shared goals, while strong school culture anchored in discipline, tolerance, and solidarity compensated for material limitations. Externally, the active involvement of parents, committees, and community actors strengthened transparency and accountability, while government assistance and the unique social capital of transmigration settings stimulated cross-school collaboration and innovation. These supporting dynamics explain the upward trend in numeracy, character formation, and learning quality, as teachers were motivated, resources were optimized, and a culture of collaboration was nurtured.

Nevertheless, as summarized in Table 3, inhibiting factors provide a counterbalance that constrains leadership impact. Limited principal mastery of technology and uneven teacher participation contribute to the gap between literacy programs and actual assessment results. Similarly, insufficient infrastructure, delayed government support, and low parental engagement, exacerbated by socio-economic hardship and geographical barriers, hinder the consolidation of improvements. These challenges are reflected in the literacy decline and the stagnation of safety indicators in the education report, showing that adaptive leadership alone cannot fully offset systemic weaknesses. The distinctive geographical and social conditions of transmigration areas, despite their limitations, have become drivers of leadership innovation. The principal has been able to utilize community diversity as a source of pluralism values while also establishing inter-school cooperation to overcome resource constraints. Thus, school leadership in transmigration areas does not rely solely on individual capacity but also on the collective support within the school, community participation, and strategic external partnerships, all of which together contribute to improving the quality of education (Juharyanto et al., 2023).

School leadership in transmigration areas faces a range of complex internal and external challenges. Internally, the principal's limited competence in mastering digital technology and assessment-based learning strategies serves as a major barrier to fostering innovation. In addition, some teachers' resistance to change and their low participation in school programs weaken team cohesion. The school culture, which remains unconducive marked by minor student conflicts and inconsistent discipline further reduces the effectiveness of the learning process (Lin, 2022). Another obstacle lies in the limited facilities and infrastructure, such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and weak internet access, which hinder the diversification of teaching methods and the integration of digital learning.

External factors further exacerbate these challenges. Support from the government and the education office often arrives late and does not align with the actual needs, thereby disrupting school planning. Parental and community participation remains low, both in attending meetings and in supporting children's learning at home, which prevents optimal collaboration with the school. The socio-economic conditions of students' families, most of whom worked as farmers with limited income, also restrict their ability to meet educational needs. In addition, geographical barriers such as poor road access and limited digital infrastructure further narrow the school's operational space. These conditions not only disrupt the consistency of teacher and student attendance but also isolate the school from technological advancement. Overall, these obstacles demand that principals possess adaptive, managerial, and strong advocacy capacities to mitigate negative impacts and ensure the sustainability of educational quality improvement in transmigration areas.

Solutions to leadership barriers in transmigration schools emphasize strengthening the school's internal capacity and fostering strategic external collaboration. Internally, principal competency development should focus on mastering technology, assessment-based management, and adaptive leadership through practice-oriented training, peer learning, and mentoring. Enhancing teacher participation can be achieved through transformational leadership, the establishment of professional learning communities, and recognition of their contributions. A conducive school culture is fostered by internalizing values, reinforcing discipline, and implementing conflict resolution programs grounded in local wisdom. Meanwhile, the limitations of facilities and infrastructure are addressed through collective action, the use of local resources, alternative learning media, and data-based advocacy to the government.

External factors require collaborative solutions with the government, community, and parents. Proactive advocacy to local government and education offices, supported by data-based school needs proposals, is crucial for securing targeted support. Low community and parental participation can be addressed with flexible strategies, such as integrating school events with village activities, utilizing digital media, and implementing family literacy education programs. The economic constraints of parents are mitigated through community solidarity initiatives, local scholarship programs, corporate social responsibility (CSR) support, and assistance from social organizations in providing students' learning needs.

Geographical and digital barriers demand both short and long term innovations (Losacker et al., 2023). Principals can encourage the government to improve road access, utilize community hotspots or offline learning technologies as temporary solutions, and advocate for the construction of telecommunication towers or satellite internet access for long-term sustainability. A combination of face-to-face instruction and offline modules can also reduce dependence on internet connectivity. Overall, the proposed solutions are adaptive, collaborative, and sustainability-oriented, thereby transforming limitations into opportunities for improving the quality of education in transmigration areas.

This study has several limitations that should be considered for future research. First, the study was conducted in only one school, namely SMPN 29 Bengkulu Selatan, located in a transmigration area. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all schools in other transmigration contexts that may differ socially, geographically, or culturally. Second, the approach used was qualitative-descriptive, which emphasizes contextual and descriptive understanding rather than causal relationships that could be examined quantitatively. Third, the limited duration of the study means that the data only represent conditions during a specific period and may not fully capture the dynamics of school leadership in the long term. Fourth, restricted access to technological facilities and internet networks in the research site affected the smoothness of data documentation and verification processes. Fifth, the subjectivity of informants and the researcher's interpretation in interviews and observations may have introduced bias, even though data validation efforts through triangulation were undertaken. Considering these limitations, future studies are expected to broaden the research context by including more diverse locations, adopt mixed-method



approaches, extend the observation period, and employ technological support to strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings.

## Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine the leadership practices of school principals in transmigration areas and their role in enhancing education quality amid geographical and resource constraints. The findings have demonstrated the effectiveness of an Integrated Adaptive Leadership (IAL) model that combined situational, charismatic, democratic, instructional, transformational, and servant leadership styles. This integration enabled principals to address challenges across the input, process, and output dimensions while fostering school culture, teacher collaboration, and community engagement. Theoretically, the study has extended leadership theory by showing how the coexistence of multiple leadership styles generated resilience and responsiveness in contexts marked by socio-economic and geographical barriers. By situating adaptive leadership within transmigration schools, it contributed to refining the application of leadership theory in marginalized environments. Practically, the findings have emphasized the urgency of tailored professional development for principals in areas such as technology use, instructional supervision, and partnership building. At the policy level, timely government support, equitable resource allocation, and attention to socio-economic disparities are required to sustain educational improvement. Future research should be designed using mixed-methods to capture measurable outcomes and lived experiences, conducted longitudinally to examine long-term leadership effectiveness, and extended to other transmigration and marginalized contexts to strengthen a contextually grounded model of educational leadership.

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