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Implementasi Model Servant Leadership dalam Penguatan Budaya Sekolah Humanis

Implementation of the Servant Leadership Model in Strengthening a Humanistic School Culture

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Abstrak

Kata Kunci: servant leadership; budaya sekolah humanis; kepemimpinan sekolah; empati; iklim sekolah inklusif

Di banyak institusi pendidikan, budaya sekolah masih didominasi oleh pendekatan otoriter, instruksional, dan top-down. Model ini seringkali menciptakan hubungan yang kaku antara kepala sekolah, guru, dan siswa, serta menghambat tumbuhnya kepercayaan dan kolaborasi. Jika kondisi ini tidak segera diatasi, maka akan berdampak pada lemahnya keterlibatan warga sekolah, menurunnya motivasi guru dan siswa, serta melemahnya nilai-nilai kemanusiaan dalam proses pendidikan. Apalagi dalam era Merdeka Belajar, otonomi dan humanisasi pembelajaran menjadi semakin penting. Tanpa kepemimpinan yang mampu menumbuhkan iklim saling melayani dan saling menghormati, sekolah akan gagal mencetak individu yang berkarakter kuat dan mampu menghadapi tantangan abad 21. Oleh karena itu, mendesak untuk mengeksplorasi model servant leadership sebagai solusi untuk membangun budaya sekolah yang humanis, partisipatif, dan berkelanjutan.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dan mendeskripsikan implementasi model servant leadership dalam penguatan budaya sekolah humanis. Secara khusus, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk: (1) mengidentifikasi prinsip-prinsip servant leadership yang diterapkan oleh kepala sekolah; (2) mengeksplorasi bagaimana nilai-nilai tersebut diinternalisasikan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari warga sekolah; dan (3) mengevaluasi dampak penerapan

Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kepustakaan (library research) yang bertujuan untuk mengkaji secara mendalam konsep internalisasi nilai-nilai humanis dalam konteks pendidikan, khususnya dalam aktivitas harian di lingkungan sekolah. Sebagai penelitian kualitatif, studi ini berfokus pada pemahaman makna, gagasan, dan hubungan antarkonsep yang terkandung dalam berbagai sumber literatur ilmiah, tanpa menggunakan data numerik atau pendekatan statistik

Relasi interpersonal yang egaliter dan empatik di sekolah merupakan fondasi penting dalam menciptakan iklim belajar yang inklusif dan humanis. Studi terkini menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan paternalistik dan komunikasi empatik kepala sekolah mampu meningkatkan kepercayaan dan keterikatan emosional dengan guru. Guru dengan kapasitas empati tinggi cenderung membangun interaksi yang positif dengan siswa, meningkatkan norma sosial, dan memperkuat kohesi kelas (Goroshit & Hen, 2016).

Abstract

Keywords: servant leadership; humanistic

In many educational institutions, school culture remains dominated by authoritarian, instructional, and top-down approaches. Such models often

school culture; school leadership; empathy; inclusive school climate

create rigid relationships among school principals, teachers, and students and inhibit the development of trust and collaboration. If this condition is not addressed, it may weaken school-community engagement, reduce teacher and student motivation, and erode humanistic values in educational processes. In the era of Merdeka Belajar, autonomy and the humanization of learning are increasingly important. Without leadership capable of cultivating a climate of service and mutual respect, schools may struggle to develop individuals with strong character who are prepared to face twenty-first-century challenges. Therefore, it is important to examine servant leadership as an approach to building a humanistic, participatory, and sustainable school culture.

This study aims to analyze and describe the implementation of the servant leadership model in strengthening a humanistic school culture. Specifically, the study seeks to: (1) identify the principles of servant leadership applied by school principals; (2) explore how these values are internalized in the daily life of school communities; and (3) evaluate the impact of their implementation.

The study employs a qualitative approach using library research to examine in depth the internalization of humanistic values in educational contexts, particularly in everyday school activities. As a qualitative study, it focuses on understanding meanings, ideas, and relationships among concepts contained in scholarly literature without relying on numerical data or statistical approaches.

Egalitarian and empathetic interpersonal relationships in schools constitute an important foundation for an inclusive and humanistic learning climate. Recent studies indicate that empathetic school leadership and communication can strengthen trust and emotional bonds with teachers. Teachers with strong empathetic capacities tend to establish more positive interactions with students, support social norms, and strengthen classroom cohesion.

INTRODUCTION

School culture constitutes an important foundation for shaping the character, climate, and developmental direction of educational institutions. In the context of a humanistic school, approaches that foreground human values, empathy, and harmonious interpersonal relationships are essential. Creating such a conducive environment requires servant leadership, a leadership approach that places the interests of others above personal interests.¹ The implementation of servant leadership enables school leaders to serve as role models in cultivating an inclusive and participatory culture oriented toward the development of students' and teachers' potential. A humanistic school culture developed through this approach is expected to enhance the psychological well-being of school community members, learning motivation, and a spirit of collaboration. In practice, however, not all school leaders have adopted this model comprehensively, and humanistic values therefore often remain at the level of rhetoric. This study is consequently important for examining how servant leadership

can strengthen a genuinely humanistic and sustainable school culture.

Urgency of the Problem

In many educational institutions, school culture remains dominated by authoritarian, instructional, and top-down approaches. Such models often create rigid relationships among principals, teachers, and students and inhibit the development of trust and collaboration.² If this condition is not addressed, it may weaken the engagement of school community members, reduce teacher and student motivation, and erode humanistic values in the educational process. In the era of Merdeka Belajar, moreover, autonomy and the humanization of learning have become increasingly important. Without leadership capable of fostering a climate of mutual service and respect, schools may struggle to develop individuals with strong character who are prepared to face twenty-first-century challenges. It is therefore necessary to explore servant leadership as an approach to building a humanistic, participatory, and sustainable school culture.

Review of Previous Studies

¹ Robert K Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

² Sen Sendjaya and James C Sarros, "Servant leadership: Its origin, development, and application in organizations," *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 9, no. 2 (2002): 57-64.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/107179190200900205>

Several studies have examined the relationship between servant leadership and school climate. Eva et al. report that servant leadership has a positive influence on teacher engagement and job satisfaction.³ Liden et al. developed a measurement model of servant leadership for educational and social-organizational contexts.⁴ In Indonesia, Suyatno et al. found that servant leadership contributes to strengthening student character through the exemplary conduct of school leaders.⁵ Collectively, these studies indicate that servant leadership can foster healthier working and learning environments. However, most studies have focused primarily on performance or motivation rather than on the formation of a humanistic school culture as an integrated system of values. This leaves room for further inquiry into how the implementation of servant-leadership values actually shapes a humanistic school culture as experienced by the entire school community.

Limitations of Previous Studies

Although previous studies have demonstrated the positive potential of servant leadership, several limitations warrant attention. First, most studies emphasize the influence of servant leadership on individual motivation among teachers or students rather than on comprehensive changes in school culture. Second, the methods employed tend to rely on quantitative surveys, which offer limited insight into the dynamics of implementation in practice.⁶ Third, local cultural contexts, including Indonesia, have not been a primary focus, thereby limiting the generalizability of findings. In the study by Suyatno et al., for example, the approach emphasizes narratives of principals' exemplary conduct without a systemic analysis of the complex dimensions of school culture.⁷ Accordingly, more in-depth qualitative research using case-study or ethnographic approaches is still required to understand contextually how servant leadership shapes patterns of interaction, values, and norms within school communities. These limitations constitute an academic gap that this study seeks to address.

Research Objectives

This study aims to analyze and describe the implementation of the servant leadership model in strengthening a humanistic school culture. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) identify the principles of servant leadership applied by school principals; (2) explore how these values are internalized in the daily life of school communities; and (3) evaluate the impact of this leadership model on the formation of a humanistic school culture. The study also seeks to map the challenges and strategies faced by school principals in adopting servant leadership amid complex managerial and bureaucratic dynamics. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of educational leadership models and to provide practical guidance for school principals in creating school climates grounded in humanistic values. In this way, schools can function not only as sites of academic learning but also as environments for the development of character and social values.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The adoption of servant leadership in educational institutions is increasingly recognized as a transformative approach to cultivating a humanistic school culture - one rooted in empathy, respect, and collective growth. Grounded in the principles of service, humility, and ethical conduct, servant leadership can strengthen interpersonal dynamics and institutional effectiveness.

1. Transforming School Culture through Servant Leadership

Research indicates that servant leadership significantly shapes school culture, which in turn mediates overall school effectiveness. Alanoglu and Karabatak emphasize that servant leaders do not necessarily improve school performance directly; rather, they nurture a positive school climate that provides fertile conditions for growth and effectiveness.⁸

Swart et al. further support this finding through their study of South African private schools, where servant-leadership practices were found to improve organizational climate and thereby create an environment more conducive to student learning and teacher collaboration.⁹

3 Nathan Eva et al., "Servant leadership: A systematic review and call for future research," *The Leadership Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2019): 111-132. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2018.07.004>

4 Robert C Liden et al., "Servant leadership and serving culture: Influence on individual and unit performance," *Academy of Management Journal* 57, no. 5 (2014): 1434-1452. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2013.0034>

5 Suyatno et al., "Values education through servant leadership: How school principals transform character education," *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 22, no. 6 (2019): 682-694. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2018.1507613>

6 Nathan Eva et al., "Servant leadership: A systematic review and call for future research," *The Leadership*

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7 Suyatno et al., "Values education through servant leadership: How school principals transform character education," *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 22, no. 6 (2019): 682-694. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2018.1507613>

8 M Alanoglu and S Karabatak, "School culture as a mediator in the link between leadership and school effectiveness," *Irish Educational Studies* (2025).

9 C Swart, L Pottas, and D Maree, "Servant School Leadership and Organisational Climate in South African Private Schools," *Education Research International* (2021).

2. Enhancing Teacher Well-Being and Commitment

Teachers' emotional well-being is a central element of a humanistic school. Servant leadership has been found to reduce emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, two major contributors to teacher burnout.¹⁰ By modeling care and practicing active listening, servant leaders provide the psychological safety teachers need to flourish.

In addition, servant leadership enhances teacher performance by fostering professional commitment and competence.^{11,12} These improvements are essential for sustaining high-quality teaching and cultivating a culture in which teachers feel valued and empowered.

3. Building a Learning Organization

Schools led by servant leaders often develop into learning organizations in which continuous professional development and reflective practice are embedded in everyday routines. Tsarkos found that elements such as empowerment, emotional healing, and the creation of community value - all characteristic of servant leadership - are strongly associated with the development of schools as learning organizations.¹³

4. Alignment with Humanistic Educational Philosophy

At its core, servant leadership is closely aligned with the values of humanistic education. It promotes student-centered approaches, empathy, and ethical conduct.¹⁴ These orientations help cultivate classrooms in which students are respected, heard, and supported.¹⁵ Its emphasis on long-term development and moral integrity also equips schools to respond to contemporary educational challenges with resilience and purpose.¹⁶

5. Strategic Implementation and Capacity Building

Effective implementation requires deliberate strategies. Tsarkos argues that overcoming

institutional resistance involves building a collaborative school culture and providing targeted leadership training.¹⁷ In addition, Dahiya highlights the value of psychoeducational programs that cultivate virtues such as forgiveness and benevolence, thereby reinforcing the humanistic foundations of schools.¹⁸

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research to examine in depth the internalization of humanistic values in educational contexts, particularly in everyday school activities. As a qualitative study, it focuses on understanding meanings, ideas, and relationships among concepts contained in a range of scholarly sources without relying on numerical data or statistical approaches. The method was selected to explore the conceptual and practical foundations of humanistic values within an educational landscape that is continuously evolving and dynamic.

The primary data sources consist of secondary scholarly literature obtained from reputable indexed journals and major academic publishing platforms, including Scopus-indexed sources, Springer, Elsevier, and Taylor & Francis, as well as academic books and relevant international conference proceedings. All documents analyzed were curated on the basis of thematic relevance, academic validity, and recency. Particular attention was given to studies addressing interpersonal relationships in schools, inclusive learning climates, and the integration of humanistic values into everyday educational practice. Most of the literature was published between 2015 and 2024 to ensure contextual relevance and the currency of the approaches examined.

During data collection, the authors employed a snowball-reading technique in which key publications were read first and then used to identify other relevant sources. This procedure enabled a more comprehensive mapping of theory

10 H Wu et al., "Servant Leadership and Teachers' Emotional Exhaustion—The Mediation Role of Hindrance Stress and Depersonalization," *Behavioral Sciences* (2024).

11 Suyanto et al., "The Role of Servant Leadership, School Culture and Supervision System on Teacher Performance Mediated by Teacher Competence and Moderated by Good School Governance," *Journal of Ecohumanism* (2024).

12 H Budiyo et al., "Human Capital and Sustainable Teacher Performance: Examining the Impact of Servant Leadership, Competence, and Professional Commitment in Catholic Education," *Journal of Applied Data Sciences* (2025).

13 A Tsarkos, "The effect of servant leadership on Greek public secondary schools acting as learning organizations," *International Journal of Leadership in Education* (2023).

14 A Tsarkos, "Exploring the efficacy of servant leadership in enhancing teacher engagement in educational environments," in *Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management for Complex Work Environments* (2024).

Resource Management for Complex Work Environments (2024).

15 P Mathew, "Teachers as servant leaders: Enriching teacher-student relationships through the application of Robert K. Greenleaf's servant-leadership philosophy," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Servant Leadership* (2023).

16 D van Dierendonck and K Patterson, "Servant Leadership: An Introduction," in *Servant Leadership: Developments in Theory and Research*, Second Edition (2025).

17 A Tsarkos, "Exploring the efficacy of servant leadership in enhancing teacher engagement in educational environments," in *Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management for Complex Work Environments* (2024).

18 R Dahiya, "Life satisfaction model of intention to contribute in sustainability: Through the lenses of servant leadership theory," *International Journal of Innovation and Sustainable Development* (2022).

and practice while reducing the limitations of a single-perspective approach. Keywords used in the literature search and classification included "humanistic education," "inclusive school climate," "interpersonal empathy in school leadership," "values internalization in education," and "SEL in school culture." The sources were managed and classified using reference-management software such as Zotero and Mendeley to support citation accuracy and consistency with APA referencing conventions.

The data were analyzed using content analysis and thematic analysis. Content analysis was used to identify representations of humanistic values in scholarly narratives, whereas thematic analysis was used to organize key concepts into major themes, including: (1) empathy-based interpersonal relationships, (2) inclusive and collaborative school climates, and (3) strategies for internalizing values in daily school activities. The entire analytical process was conducted reflectively and iteratively, taking into account relationships among theories and empirical contexts across different countries, including their relevance to the Indonesian educational context.

A critical approach was used to assess the quality of the arguments, methodologies, and validity of the findings reported in the reviewed studies. Each source was analyzed not only in terms of its substantive content but also in relation to the epistemological position and theoretical approach adopted by its authors. This procedure was important for maintaining scholarly integrity and reducing interpretive bias in the literature review.

Through this approach, the study is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of educational models that are humanistic, inclusive, and oriented toward the holistic strengthening of students' character.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Strengthening Egalitarian and Empathetic Interpersonal Relationships among Principals, Teachers, and Students

Egalitarian and empathetic interpersonal relationships in schools constitute an important

foundation for creating an inclusive and humanistic learning climate. Qian and Walker show that paternalistic leadership and principals' empathetic communication can strengthen trust and emotional bonds with teachers.¹⁹ Teachers with strong empathetic capacities tend to establish positive interactions with students, strengthen social norms, and reinforce classroom cohesion.²⁰

Explicit equity-based interventions such as E-EMR have been shown to improve teacher-student relationships, particularly for students from minority groups.²¹ In addition, peer collaboration among teachers and the integration of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) strengthen inclusive practices and the emotional well-being of the school community.²²

Implementing these strategies requires school principals to act as cultural agents who lead with empathy, cultural responsiveness, and structural fairness. Through professional development that emphasizes empathy, equity, and collaboration, relationships among members of the school community can develop on the basis of trust and mutual understanding, which are prerequisites for twenty-first-century school transformation.

2. Developing an Inclusive and Collaborative School Climate

An inclusive and collaborative school climate creates psychological, social, and physical conditions that support all members of the school community. Such an environment is characterized by mutually respectful relationships, a sense of safety, and values of equality and active participation.²³ Collaboration among general-education teachers, special-education personnel, professionals, parents, and the broader school community plays an important role in supporting successful learning.^{24,25} Such a climate has been shown to enhance students' learning motivation and teachers' perceptions of efficacy in inclusive education.²⁶

Students' perceptions of inclusiveness and teacher support are also positively associated with

19 Haiyan Qian and Allan D Walker, "Building emotional principal-teacher relationships in Chinese schools: Reflecting on paternalistic leadership," *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* 30, no. 4 (2021): 327-338. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-021-00563-z>

20 Goroshit and Hen, 2016.

21 Gaias et al., 2020.

22 Yoder and Skoog-Hoffman, 2021.

23 D Tasiouli and O Lyra, "The impact of inclusive school climate on children and teachers' well-being: A reflection on psycho-emotional empowerment," in *Building Mental Resilience in Children: Positive Psychology, Emotional Intelligence, and Play* (2024), 171-210. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-8312-4.ch007>

24 M Somerton et al., "Defining spaces: resource centres, collaboration, and inclusion in Kazakhstan," *Journal of Educational Change* 22, no. 3 (2021): 315-334. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-020-09384-1>

25 C J Solone et al., "Creating collaborative schools in the united states: A review of best practices," *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education* 12, no. 3 (2020): 283-292. <https://doi.org/10.26822/iejee.2020358222>

26 S Hosford and S O'Sullivan, "A climate for self-efficacy: The relationship between school climate and teacher efficacy for inclusion," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 20, no. 6 (2016): 604-621. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1102339>

emotional well-being and academic achievement.²⁷

Developing such a climate requires strategies that include parental involvement, the use of instruments such as the Inclusive School Climate Scale,²⁸ and the strengthening of two-way communication.²⁹ Challenges nevertheless remain, including reactive perceptions among school management teams and regulatory pressures affecting parental participation.³⁰ A systematic collaborative approach grounded in the values of inclusion is therefore crucial for creating schools that are welcoming, equitable, and participatory.

3. Internalizing Humanistic Values in Daily School Activities

The internalization of humanistic values in daily school activities aims to develop students' character holistically across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. Core values integrated into this process include empathy, honesty, justice, responsibility, personal freedom, and social concern.^{31,32} This approach supports the creation of a safe, inclusive, and caring learning environment.³³

The implementation of these values is particularly effective when embedded in active learning approaches such as "learning by doing," values education through the Education in Human Values approach, and the habituation of values through everyday interactions at school.^{34,35} The personal transformation of teachers into agents of values also plays an important role.³⁶

However, major challenges in internalizing humanistic values include performative pressures such as academic targets and the limited availability of authentic instruments for assessing school culture.^{37,38} Comprehensive and collaborative strategies involving teachers, students, and parents are therefore necessary to make humanistic values an integral part of everyday school life.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of twenty-first-century schools requires a holistic approach that places human values at the core of educational practice. Three major dimensions are interrelated and mutually reinforcing in shaping an inclusive, emotionally healthy, and structurally equitable learning environment. First, egalitarian and empathetic interpersonal relationships among principals, teachers, and students provide the principal foundation for a supportive and trusting school climate. Humanistic leadership and empathy-based communication encourage collaboration and strengthen social cohesion within the school community.

Second, the development of an inclusive and collaborative school climate creates psychologically and socially safe spaces for all members of the school community. Synergy among teachers, parents, and professionals facilitates adaptive learning, strengthens student motivation, and contributes to emotional well-being and academic achievement.

Third, the internalization of humanistic values in everyday school activities constitutes a strategic

27 S Schwab, U Sharma, and T Loreman, "Are we included? Secondary students' perception of inclusion climate in their schools," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 75 (2018): 31-39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.05.016>

28 M M Emam and Y F. Hendawy Al-Mahdy, "Building School Capacity for Inclusive Education in the Sultanate of Oman: A Construct Validation of the Inclusive School Climate Scale," *Leadership and Policy in Schools* 21, no. 2 (2022): 329-344. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2020.1770803>

29 J Alinsunurin, "School learning climate in the lens of parental involvement and school leadership: lessons for inclusiveness among public schools," *Smart Learning Environments* 7, no. 1 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-020-00139-2>

30 M Shani and D Ram, "Perceptions of School Administration Team Members concerning inclusion in Israel: Are they in congruence with the ecological sustainable perspective?," *British Journal of Special Education* 42, no. 3 (2015): 301-318. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8578.12103>

31 D Darom, "Humanistic values education: Personal, interpersonal, social and political dimensions," in *Education, Culture and Values: Volume VI: Politics, Education and Citizenship* (2005), 24-40. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203984086-9>

32 A D Manea, "Features of educational activities in the contemporary society," *Astra Salvensis* 6, no. 12 (2018): 255-260.

33 M B Nemet, R T Zec, and A Krstić, "PEDAGOGY OF EFFECTIVE LOVE IN THE CULTURE OF AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION," *Diacovensia* 30, no. 4 (2022): 615-634. <https://doi.org/10.31823/d.30.4.7>

34 N.K.S.K. Wardhani, G.A.A.R. Mahendradhani, and K E Putra, "Cultivating elementary school students' characters through Neo-Humanistic Education," *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* 43, no. 2 (2022): 323-328. <https://doi.org/10.34044/j.kjss.2022.43.2.08>

35 R Packham, M Taplin, and K Francis, *How values education can improve student and teacher wellbeing: A simple guide to the 'education in human values' approach* (Western Sydney University, Australia: Taylor and Francis, 2024). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003478607>

36 R Farmer and S Farmer, "The Noble Role of Teachers in Values-Based Education," in *Springer International Handbooks of Education* (2023), 579-591. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-24420-9_31

37 M Frostenson and H Englund, "Teachers, performative techniques and professional values: how performativity becomes humanistic through interplay mechanisms," *Cambridge Journal of Education* 50, no. 6 (2020): 695-710. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2020.1761943>

38 L Lyon et al., "Humanism in dental education: A comparison of theory, intention, and stakeholder perceptions at a North American dental school," *Journal of Dental Education* 81, no. 8 (2017): 929-936. <https://doi.org/10.21815/JDE.017.044>

effort to shape student character. Through active approaches, teachers' exemplary conduct, and collaboration among all school stakeholders, values such as empathy, justice, and responsibility can become deeply embedded. Comprehensive

and consistent efforts are therefore required for schools to become genuine spaces for the development of the whole person rather than merely academic institutions.

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