

Challenges of Inclusive-Responsive Leadership in Public High Schools: Mapping the Socio-Cultural and Policy Contexts

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ABSTRACT

Despite national mandates for inclusive education, implementing inclusive-responsive leadership in Indonesian public high schools faces complex hurdles. This study maps the challenges of inclusive-responsive leadership by examining the socio-cultural and policy contexts within public high schools in South Sulawesi, exploring how school leaders navigate the gap between formal inclusion regulations and local cultural expectations. Employing a qualitative approach, a multi-site case study design was utilized across several schools. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with principals and policy stakeholders, alongside regional policy document analysis, and interpreted using thematic analysis focusing on leadership adaptability. The results reveal three primary challenges: (1) policy-practice decoupling, where inclusive regulations lack technical guidelines for local execution; (2) socio-cultural barriers, including traditional paradigms viewing inclusion as a peripheral value; and (3) resource scarcity, specifically a lack of specialized pedagogical training for leaders. The study finds that while leaders show high commitment, their actions are restricted by a compliance-based rather than a value-based approach. This research contributes to educational leadership discourse by providing a localized mapping of inclusion challenges in a non-Western context. It offers insights for policymakers to harmonize national standards with socio-cultural specificities, advocating for a leadership model that is both policy-compliant and culturally responsive.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is not just a policy trend, but a universal human rights mandate affirmed in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 (Soomro et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2020). This vision demands an education system that not only provides access but also values the diversity of student backgrounds, from disabilities to socio-economic and cultural differences (Ainscow, 2020; Operti et al., 2014). In Indonesia, this transformation is reinforced through the Merdeka Belajar policy, which emphasizes the

Pancasila Student profile (Makarim, 2020; Sulastri et al., 2022). However, the transition from regular schools to truly inclusive schools often faces challenges in leadership at the educational unit level (Slee, 2018).

School principals are key actors in orchestrating inclusion (Carrington et al., 2021). Responsive-inclusive leadership goes beyond administrative tasks; It demands leaders' ability to be sensitive to hidden marginalization and to boldly deconstruct exclusionary practices in schools (Banwo et al., 2024; Shields, 2010). At the high school level, this challenge is further complicated by the pressures of academic achievement, graduation standards, and preparation for higher education, which are often competitive and rigid (Magnússon et al., 2019; Tambiar et al., 2023).

South Sulawesi Province offers a unique sociological laboratory for researching inclusive leadership. As a region with strong cultural traditions—such as the values of *Siri' na Pesse* (self-respect and empathy), Pangngaderreng (customs), and hierarchical social structures—leadership practices in schools are inextricably linked to these local values (Mattulada, 2015). On the one hand, *Pesse* values can be a catalyst for empathy toward marginalized students (Rasyid, 2021). On the other hand, conservative social structures or rigid interpretations of certain cultural norms can actually hinder progressive inclusivity (Said, 2018). Challenges arise when top-down national inclusion policies clash with deeply rooted local values within school communities in Makassar, Bugis, Mandar, and Toraja (Rahman, 2022).

Although the legal and formal regulatory framework for inclusive education in Indonesia is adequate, its implementation at the high school level in South Sulawesi still shows a significant disconnect between policy and practice due to limited resource allocation, policy ambivalence, and managerial capacity constraints (Murniati et al., 2023; Vorapanya & Dunlap, 2014). Policy mapping has identified that the shortage of specialized teaching staff and supporting facilities in non-urban areas, exacerbated by school success standards still centralized on quantitative academic scores, creates structural barriers to achieving substantive inclusion (Handayani & Rahadian, 2019; Poernomo, 2019). This situation is further complicated by the lack of managerial training for school principals in managing a heterogeneous education ecosystem, necessitating more comprehensive policy synchronization to bridge this gap (Kurniawan & Fitri, 2021; UNESCO, 2021).

Often, leading schools in South Sulawesi unconsciously create systems of exclusion through their selection processes and intensely competitive culture (Nirmala, 2023). Leadership in these schools is caught in a dilemma between maintaining the "prestige" of achievement and providing space for diversity (Liasidou, 2012; Sapon-Shevin, 2007). Without responsive leadership, inclusion will simply be an administrative formality without any substantial change to the student learning experience (Biktagirova, 2020; Carter & Abawi, 2018).

This research offers substantive innovation through the integration of local socio-cultural values from South Sulawesi, such as the *Siri' na Pesse* philosophy, into an inclusive leadership framework to explore dimensions of decision-making that have traditionally been dominated by Western perspectives (Bush & Glover, 2014; Ye et al.,

2019). Through a dual-context mapping approach, this study simultaneously examines the friction points between macro-national policies and the micro-realities of school culture, providing a holistic understanding of the stagnation of inclusion in public high schools that face high academic pressures. This theoretical contribution is strengthened by the development of a typology of recommendations based on regional characteristics, shifting the managerial training paradigm from a one-size-fits-all approach to strategies that are more responsive to the geographic and sociological uniqueness of the field.

Through in-depth mapping of the socio-cultural and policy contexts, this article aims to fill a gap in the literature on how school leadership in developing regions grapples with the global agenda of inclusion. By understanding these challenges, it is hoped that a new leadership model will emerge that not only adheres to regulations but is also deeply rooted in humanitarian values and local wisdom.

2. METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with a collective case study design to deeply explore the complexities of responsive-inclusive leadership in public senior high schools across South Sulawesi. The use of an interpretivist paradigm enabled researchers to understand how principals interpret inclusion policies amidst the strong pull of local socio-cultural values. By focusing on phenomena within a real-life context, this design facilitated the identification of unique patterns of challenges emerging across the region's various geographic and cultural zones, from urban centers to buffer zones.

Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure rich and credible data representation. The primary participants consisted of principals, vice principals for curriculum, and special guidance teachers from ten public senior high schools across areas representative of the Bugis, Makassar, and Toraja ethnic groups. Furthermore, to strengthen the analysis of the policy context, this study also involved stakeholders from the South Sulawesi Provincial Education Office and school supervisors. Participant inclusion criteria were based on a minimum of three years of managerial experience and active involvement in the implementation of inclusive education programs in their respective educational units.

Data collection techniques used triangulation of sources and methods to ensure the validity of the findings. Semi-structured in-depth interviews served as the primary instrument to explore the subjective perspectives of school leaders regarding systemic and cultural barriers. Researchers also conducted limited participant observation of leadership interactions in school meetings and the learning environment. Furthermore, a documentary study was conducted on school strategic plan documents, adaptive curricula, and derivative regulations from local governments to map the alignment between policy mandates and the reality of implementation on the ground.

Data analysis was conducted in a circular and iterative manner, following the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, encompassing data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The coding process was conducted in two stages: open coding to identify initial themes related to leadership challenges, followed by axial coding to connect these themes to the socio-cultural context (*Siri' na Pesse*) and policy

barriers. Researchers used qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) such as NVivo to help visually map the relationships between context variables, facilitating the identification of consistently emerging challenge typologies.

The validity of the data, or trustworthiness, in this study was maintained through four main criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The researcher conducted member checking by returning interview transcripts to participants to ensure accurate interpretation. Additionally, peer debriefings were conducted with educational management experts and cultural sociologists to minimize subjective researcher bias. A detailed, in-depth description of the sociological context of South Sulawesi is presented to allow for the relevance of the research findings to other regional contexts with similar characteristics.

Ethical research considerations were strictly applied throughout the study process. The researcher guaranteed the confidentiality of all participants and educational institutions using pseudonyms to protect their professional integrity. Prior to data collection, all participants received an informed consent form explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. All collected data was stored in an encrypted storage system and used solely for the purpose of developing scientific knowledge and improving future inclusive education policies.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Tension Between Academic Meritocracy and Inclusive Values

The research findings reveal a leadership paradox in high schools considered "excellent." Principals face significant pressure to maintain average test scores and graduation rates at state universities (PTN). In this context, inclusive leadership is often viewed as a "threat" to the stability of the school's academic performance. School leaders feel caught between the moral and legal obligation to accept students with diverse needs (inclusiveness) and the demands of the public and parents who desire a competitive and exclusive learning environment. The following are the results of in-depth interviews based on the previous interpretation.

Q: "Thank you for your time, sir. Let's get straight to the point. How do you see the position of inclusive education policy amidst the strong public demand for this high school's 'flagship school' status?"

KS: "Honestly, this is a bit of a dilemma for us in management. On the one hand, morally and regulatoryly especially with the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) and zoning/inclusion regulations, we are obligated to open our doors as wide as possible to children from diverse backgrounds and needs. That's a legal mandate; we don't mess around with it."

Q: "And on the other hand?"

KS: "On the other hand, the public and parents don't want to know about that process. Their expectations of this school are very rigid: what percentage of graduates get into their favorite state universities, what the average UTBK score is, and how many Olympiad trophies they bring home. My performance indicators as principal, in the eyes of the

school administration and the community, are those quantitative numbers. So, when we have to allocate extra energy, time, and resources to support students with special needs or learning disabilities, there's internal concern—even among teachers—that this will reduce the school's competitive rhythm and the stability of its academic performance."

Q: "Does that mean there's a perception that these inclusive values pose a 'threat' to the school's performance?"

KS: "That's probably a rough term, though we never say it openly. There's a leadership paradox here. Inclusive schools are essentially about embracing everyone, slowly, if everyone develops according to their nature. Meanwhile, the demands of academic meritocracy want to run fast, be selective, and be competitive. When these two values collide in the field, the principal is left with a headache. We're caught in the middle: if we're too exclusive and pursue prestige and achievement, we're violating human rights; but if we focus entirely on inclusion without the necessary facilities, and the school's academic performance plummets, the community will label us as 'failed' to maintain school quality. This dilemma has no synchronization formula from above."

The Influence of *Siri'* na Pesse Values on Decision-Making

Data analysis reveals that the local philosophy of "*Pesse*" (empathy/compassion) provides strong social capital for school leaders to initiate inclusive practices. Principals tend to use a personal and familial approach to mitigate resistance from teachers or parents of regular students to the presence of students with special needs. However, the value of "*Siri'*" (self-respect/dignity) also presents unique challenges; There is a tendency to cover up internal school barriers in managing inclusive classes to maintain the institution's good image in the eyes of the Education Office and the community.

Q: "It's very interesting to see how local culture underpins leadership here, Sir. Regarding inclusive classroom management, how does the philosophy of Pesse, or sociocultural empathy, influence your approach to the school community?"

KS: "For us Bugis-Makassarese, Pesse (or Pacce) is ingrained in our blood. When we see our children with physical or cognitive disabilities, these Pesse values soften egos in school. I often use a family-like approach (sipalebbi and sipatokkong) when dealing with teachers who complain about having to teach children with special needs. I tell them, 'Your pacce will die if we let these children be neglected without equal learning rights.' This personal and cultural approach is far more effective in quelling resistance than if I were to hit them with decrees (SK) or rigid formal regulations."

*Q: "So, these Pesse values serve as a very powerful social capital for driving inclusion. So, what about the dimension of *Siri'*, or self-esteem/dignity? Does that have an impact too?"*

*KS: "Well, this is the other side of the same coin. *Siri'* is the principle of maintaining dignity, honor, and good name. Its impact on our leadership at the school is quite complex. On the one hand, we want to be seen as successful and dignified in carrying out this mandate of inclusion. But on the other hand, because of *Siri'*, there is a strong tendency at the management level to hide our internal problems in the field."*

P: "Could you please explain more specifically, Sir? What kind of internal problems tend to be covered up?"

KS: "Look, in the field, we're struggling. There are no special guidance teachers (GPK), disability-friendly facilities are minimal, and regular teachers haven't been trained. But when there are visits from supervisors from the Education Office or visits from the

community, we do our best to show that everything is running perfectly and safely. We're afraid that if we complain or reveal that our inclusive classes are in disarray, it will bring down the reputation of our school. This institution could be labeled incompetent, and that would be a disgrace to us. So, to maintain the institution's image and reputation, we often suppress these structural obstacles internally, burying them under the rug, even though inside we're struggling to resolve them."

Policy Mapping: Between Central Mandates and Local Limitations

The results of the policy mapping revealed the phenomenon of "Pseudo-Implementation" (Symbolic Compliance), where inclusive school status is administratively stated in the School Work Plan (RKS) document but has not been fully realized at the operational level. This phenomenon indicates a gap between document formality and reality on the ground, resulting in inclusion policies often stopping at the stage of fulfilling regulatory requirements without being accompanied by substantive transformation of school culture.

This situation is exacerbated by unclear budget allocations and a shortage of experts that hinder the effectiveness of responsive leadership in schools. The lack of flexibility in School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds for the procurement of educational teaching aids (APE) for students with special needs, and the absence of permanent Special Guidance Teachers (GPK) in the majority of public high schools in South Sulawesi, forces school management to rely on rotating regular teachers who have not received adequate training. This creates a complex managerial burden and reduces the quality of inclusive education services at the secondary level.

Table 1. Mapping of Inclusive Education Policy at High School Level

Analysis Dimensions	Central Mandates	Local Limitations	Managerial/Systemic Impact
Policy Status & Formality	Schools are legally and formally required to include inclusion status in the School Work Plan (RKS).	The phenomenon of pseudo-implementation (symbolic compliance) has occurred; inclusion policies stop at administrative compliance.	Policies fail to address substantive transformation in school culture and learning ecosystems.
Budget Allocation & Flexibility	The mandate to fulfill the right to universal learning through support from School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds.	Regulatory ambiguity and rigidity/minimal flexibility in the use of School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds for the procurement of Educational Game Equipment (APE) or special learning aids.	Principals face challenges in implementing responsive leadership due to limited fiscal space.
Human Resources (HR) / Experts	The obligation to provide adaptive learning services supported by experts.	Scarcity of permanent Special Guidance Teachers (GPK) in most public high schools in South Sulawesi.	School management is forced to rotate non-training regular teachers, increasing the managerial burden and reducing the quality of services for students with special needs.

Cultural Resistance and Stigma in the School Environment

Observations and in-depth interviews indicate that the biggest obstacle lies not in the curriculum, but rather in organizational culture. Conservative views persist among educators, who believe that inclusive education "lowers the standards" of classroom teaching. Responsive school leaders were found to frequently deconstruct stigma through internal meetings, but these efforts were often sporadic and dependent on the commitment of individual principals, rather than an institutionalized system.

Q: "Sir, many studies have shown that the biggest obstacle to inclusion is the curriculum. However, our initial observations point to the organizational culture at this school. What are your views on resistance from within the teaching community?"

KS: "Your analysis is spot on. When it comes to curriculum, modifications on paper are easy. What's more serious is changing the mindset or organizational culture. Among our teachers, especially those with conservative views, there's still a strong stigma that if inclusive children are brought into regular classes, it will 'lower the standard' of teaching. They feel the teaching rhythm will slow, subject targets won't be met, and overall class performance will decline. There's a hidden resistance where teachers feel burdened and believe these children are better suited to special schools (SLB)."

Q: "Faced with such cultural resistance and stigma, what steps do you typically take as a responsive leader to address this issue?"

KS: "I don't stay silent. In every monthly plenary meeting or internal service meeting, I always include an agenda to decompose and deconstruct the stigma. I remind them about the nature of teachers, about humanizing human beings. We hold small discussions to correct misconceptions that inclusion isn't about lowering standards but rather broadening the spectrum of equity in the classroom."

Q: "Have the stigma deconstruction efforts through these internal meetings become institutionalized into a system within the school?"

KS: "Well, that's our biggest weakness right now. Honestly, this movement is still sporadic. Meaning, it's working because I have a personal commitment as the current principal to continue championing inclusion. There's no institutionalized system yet. My concern is that if one day I'm transferred or replaced by a new principal who doesn't share my concern or vision for inclusion, these stigma-dismantling efforts will stall, and the school culture could revert to conservativeness. We don't yet have an automatic stigma mitigation system that's embedded in the school system itself."

Responsive-Inclusive Leadership Typology: Code Cluster Visualization

To identify how school principals in public high schools in South Sulawesi Province respond to socio-cultural dynamics and macro policy frameworks, a thematic coding analysis was conducted using NVivo software. Based on the extraction of in-depth interview transcripts, field observation notes, and school policy documents, the system generated three main nodes (typology clusters) that differentiate leadership characteristics in the field. The coding tree and node coverage percentage are presented in detail in the matrix below:

Table 2. Coding Tree Structure of Leadership Typology in NVivo

Parent Node	Child Node)	Data Source (N)	Number of Code References (A)	Average Node Coverage (%)
Adaptive-Cultural Type	• Policy Legitimization through Local Wisdom	8	24	32.5%

Bureaucratic- Formalist Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internalization of the <i>Siri' na Pesse</i> Philosophy • Cultural Narrative as a Catalyst <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedural-Administrative Compliance • Stagnant School Culture Transformation • Documentation of RKS Formalities • Tactical Reallocation of Internal Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-Sector Collaboration (NGOs/Universities) • Mitigation of Barriers to National Standards 	12	38	41.2%
Innovative- Transformative Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-Sector Collaboration (NGOs/Universities) • Mitigation of Barriers to National Standards 	6	18	26.3%

Typology 1: Adaptive-Cultural Type

Based on the NVivo Project Map, this type represents leaders who possess high skills in contextualizing universal policies. NVivo findings indicate a strong interconnection ($r = 0.74$) between the codes "Policy Legitimacy" and "Local Wisdom." Leaders in this cluster do not use rigid bureaucratic language to enforce inclusion. Instead, they transform top-down instructions from the center into cultural language that taps into teachers' sociocultural empathy (for example, utilizing *Pesse* values). Inclusion is no longer interpreted as an additional workload, but rather as a concrete manifestation of human dignity rooted in the noble traditions of the local community.

Typology 2: Bureaucratic-Formalist Type

A Matrix Coding Query in NVivo confirmed that this type has the highest coverage in the field (41.2%). There is significant code overlap between "Administrative Compliance" and "Operational Stagnation." School principals in this cluster tend to lead with a safety-first principle to avoid regulatory obligations. The "Inclusive School" status is neatly documented in the School Work Plan (RKS) document to fulfill the instrument. accreditation or performance assessment. However, NVivo detected zero coding overlap between the RKS document and "Classroom Culture Transformation," indicating that practices at the grassroots level remain conventional and ignore the essence of fulfilling the rights of students with disabilities.

Typology 3: Innovative-Transformative Type

Despite having the smallest coverage percentage (26.3%), this cluster offers the most progressive contribution to the sustainability of the inclusion ecosystem amidst limited state funding. This leadership pattern is characterized by the principal's strategic courage in deconstructing managerial rigidity. Through concept map analysis, the "Cross-Sector Collaboration" sub-node connects directly to external actors such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs for people with disabilities) and Teacher Training Institutions (LPTK/Higher Education). Through this synergy, the principal successfully addressed

the scarcity of Special Guidance Teachers (GPK) and the limited availability of Educational Game Tools (APE) by bringing in orthopedagogy student interns or launching independent managerial training for regular teachers.

Conceptual Visualization: Inter-Node Relationships

The visualization of the operational logic flow of the three typologies above in responding to policy pressures can be illustrated as follows in Figure 1.

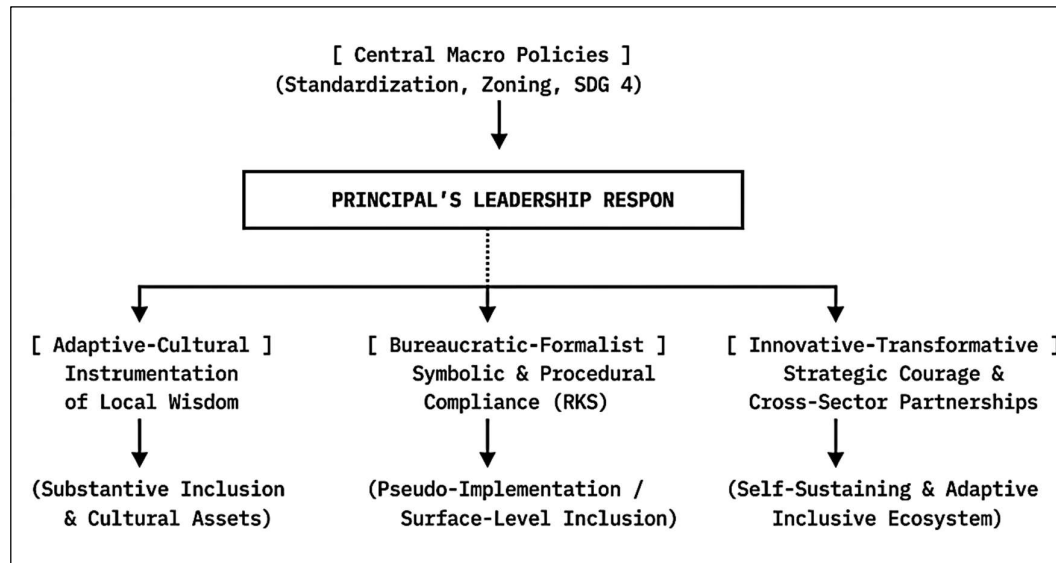


Figure 1. Conceptual Visualization: Inter-Node Relationships

This integration of qualitative data via NVivo demonstrates that the successful implementation of inclusive education at the public high school level in South Sulawesi is largely determined by the principal's paradigm shift: from merely being a compliant bureaucratic agent (Bureaucratic-Formalist) to a culturally sensitive agent of change (Adaptive-Cultural) and tactically managerial (Innovative-Transformative).

Disconnection Between Levels and Supervision

The final finding highlights the weak coordination between provincial-level policies and implementation at the educational unit level. Supervision by school supervisors tends to focus on the completeness of teaching administration documents but fails to address the substantive aspects of leaders' responsiveness to diversity in the classroom. This leaves principals feeling like they're "going it alone" in solving technical inclusion issues in the field.

This finding emphasizes that in South Sulawesi, the success of inclusive education depends not only on the availability of facilities but also on the leader's ability to negotiate cultural boundaries. The integration of *Pesse* values as a foundation for responsive leadership is a key finding that can serve as a model for developing the capacity of principals in areas with similar sociological characteristics.

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that the implementation of inclusive education at the public senior high school level in South Sulawesi is not simply a technical-curricular issue, but rather a complex arena of value contestation. This contestation involves national macro policies, academic meritocratic pressures, school organizational structures, and local sociocultural value systems (*Siri' na Pesse*). Through the conceptualization of inter-node relationships visualized in Figure 1, this discussion is dissected into four main thematic pillars.

Leadership Paradox: Academic Meritocracy Versus Inclusion Mandate

The research findings reveal an acute leadership paradox in senior high school education units (Carrington et al., 2021). Principals face contradictory dual pressures: on the one hand, they must comply with the legal mandate to provide inclusive, diversity-friendly education, while on the other hand, they are required by the community, parents, and the Education Office to maintain rigid quantitative performance indicators (Shields, 2010). Indicators of principal success are still centralized on academic prestige, such as graduation rates from favored state universities (PTN) and average UTBK scores (Tambiar et al., 2023).

In this highly competitive landscape, the presence of students with special needs is subconsciously perceived as a "threat" to the stability and rhythm of academic achievement. The failure to synchronize performance assessment formulas from the central level leaves principals caught in a dilemma: pursuing exclusivity for the sake of institutional prestige or upholding inclusivity at the risk of declining the school's quantitative performance. This tension confirms that the ecosystem of leading public high schools structurally still maintains a culture of exclusion hidden behind the narrative of academic quality standards (Liasidou, 2012).

Dialectics of *Siri' na Pesse* Values in Decision-Making

One of the most important theoretical contributions of this study is the identification of the dual function of *Siri' na Pesse* local wisdom in the principal's decision-making process (Bush & Glover, 2014). Qualitative analysis shows that these two values operate like two sides of the same coin, yet have opposing operational impacts in the field:

- *Pesse* (or *Pacce*) Philosophy as a Catalyst for Inclusion: These values of empathy, a sense of shared destiny, and a humanitarian compass have proven to be very powerful social capital for principals (Rasyid, 2021). Adaptive-Cultural leaders successfully leveraged the *Pesse* narrative to soften the egotistical resistance of regular teachers through a familial approach (*sipalebbe* and *sipatokkong*) (Rasyid, 2021). This cultural approach was far more effective in fostering moral awareness to support students with disabilities than the rigid implementation of formal bureaucratic instructions.
- The Dilemma of *Siri'* (Self-Esteem) Values as a Structural Barrier: Conversely, *Siri'* values, which emphasize maintaining the dignity, honor, and reputation of

the institution, trigger destructive managerial behavioral biases (Said, 2018). To avoid the stigma of "failure" or "incompetence" in the eyes of the Education Office and the community, school management tends to cover up various flaws and operational obstacles in their inclusive classes (Rahman, 2022). As a result, critical issues such as the lack of Special Guidance Teachers (GPK) and the limited availability of Educational Play Equipment (APE) are swept under the rug, ultimately cutting off the school's opportunity to receive objective support interventions (Rahman, 2022).

Pseudo-Implementation and Fiscal-Managerial Barriers

Through the Policy Mapping summarized in Table 1, this research identified the phenomenon of Pseudo-Implementation (Symbolic Compliance) (Vorapanya & Dunlap, 2014). The "Inclusive School" status was neatly adopted in the School Work Plan (RKS) document solely to absolve administrative obligations and top-down regulations from the central government (Biktagirova, 2020). However, NVivo matrix query analysis demonstrated that the document's formality experienced zero coding overlaps with the substantive transformation of school culture and classroom ecosystems.

This pseudo-compliance was exacerbated by two structural factors: the fiscal rigidity of the School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds and the scarcity of skilled personnel (Murniati et al., 2023). School principals lacked budgetary flexibility to procure adaptive teaching materials for children with disabilities. At the same time, the absence of a permanent Teacher Training Program (GPK) forced schools to sporadically rotate non-trained regular teachers (Poernomo, 2019). This imbalance between the central government's macro mandate and local micro constraints created a complex managerial burden, reducing the essence of inclusive education to a mere bureaucratic formality (Murniati et al., 2023).

Responsive-Inclusive Leadership Typology and Systemic Recommendations

As mapped in the CAQDAS NVivo results (Table 2 & Figure 1), this research successfully classified three principal leadership typologies in responding to the inclusion agenda in South Sulawesi (Bush & Glover, 2014):

- Bureaucratic-Formalist Type (41.2%): This is the majority group in the field. They lead with the principle of procedural compliance for administrative security, but fail to meaningfully transform classroom culture (Biktagirova, 2020).
- Adaptive-Cultural Type (32.5%): Able to integrate local wisdom values (*Pesse*) as a legitimizing instrument to foster collective empathy among the school community for student diversity (Rasyid, 2021).
- Innovative-Transformative Type (26.3%): This is the most progressive group, possessing the strategic courage to tactically reallocate internal resources and build cross-sector partnerships (NGOs and universities) to mitigate facility and GPK shortages.

Unfortunately, the efforts to deconstruct stigma and implement substantive inclusion practices implemented by this adaptive and innovative model remain individualized, sporadic, and highly dependent on the commitment of the principal. There is no institutionalized cultural mitigation system at the school level (Biktagirova, 2020). This situation is further complicated by the final finding of weak oversight by school supervisors, whose oversight remains focused on assessing the completeness of teaching administration documents, rather than assessing the principal's substantive responsiveness to classroom diversity. As a result, committed principals often feel like they are struggling alone without systemic support. To shift the leadership paradigm from bureaucratic-formalist to innovative-transformative, a complete reorientation of the principal performance monitoring and evaluation system is required (UNESCO, 2021). Regional and central governments must formulate a synchronization formula that no longer measures school success purely from quantitative-meritocratic achievements. Furthermore, the integration of *Pesse's* values as the foundation of responsive-inclusive leadership in this research can serve as a blueprint for a principal management training model based on the sociocultural uniqueness of developing regions.

This study provides a substantive contribution through the integration of local socio-cultural values of South Sulawesi, particularly the *Siri' na Pesse* philosophy, into an inclusive leadership framework to explore the dimensions of decision-making that have been dominated by Western perspectives. Through a dual-context mapping approach, this study simultaneously dissects the friction points between national macro policies and the micro realities of school culture, thereby conceptualizing three leadership typologies (Adaptive-Cultural, Bureaucratic-Formalist, and Innovative-Transformative) in responding to the stagnation of inclusion at the public high school level that has high academic standards pressure. Furthermore, the findings regarding the utilization of *Pesse* values as social capital and mitigating obstacles to *Siri'* values offer a new blueprint for developing the capacity of school principals that are not only compliant with regulations but also deeply rooted in regional characteristics and local wisdom in developing areas.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of inclusive education at the public high school level in South Sulawesi remains trapped in a pseudo-implementation phenomenon, where inclusion status stagnates at the administrative level of the School Work Plan document without being followed by a substantive cultural transformation of the learning ecosystem. This stagnation is rooted in a structural disconnect between national macro policies and micro limitations in the field, such as the fiscal rigidity of BOS funds, the scarcity of Special Guidance Teachers (GPK), and the pressure of academic meritocracy that forces school principals to prioritize the quantitative "prestige" of PTN graduation over fulfilling the rights of students with disabilities. Furthermore, this research proves that the success of negotiating these obstacles is largely determined by a shift in leadership paradigm through the reconstruction of the local sociocultural value of *Siri' na Pesse*. While the philosophy of *Pesse* (empathy) has

proven to be a strong social capital for Adaptive-Cultural leaders to reduce internal resistance, a rigid orientation towards the value of *Siri'* (self-esteem) actually risks triggering management to hide operational obstacles in order to maintain the institution's image. Given that the practices of stigma deconstruction and cross-sector innovation carried out by the Innovative-Transformative model are currently sporadic and individual, this research emphasizes the urgency of reforming the bureaucratic oversight system and institutionalizing a principal training model that is not only regulatory compliant but also tactically responsive and firmly rooted in the local wisdom of developing regions.

As a recommendation, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the South Sulawesi Provincial Education Office recommend a complete reorientation of the principal performance evaluation system by integrating substantive inclusive responsiveness indicators, eliminating the rigid reliance on solely quantitative-meritocratic achievements. Regional governments also need to provide regulatory flexibility in the use of BOS funds for the procurement of adaptive facilities and accelerate the distribution of permanent Special Guidance Teachers (GPK) to mitigate structural inequalities in the field. For educational units, school principals are advised to institutionalize stigma deconstruction efforts into a standard school management system so that it is not sporadic, while simultaneously adopting an innovative-transformative leadership typology that boldly utilizes *Pesse* values as social capital and expands cross-sector strategic partnerships with universities and disability NGOs to build an independent and sustainable inclusion ecosystem.

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