

Discipline-Based Servant Leadership Model for Effective School Principal Leadership: Conceptual Framework Development and Empirical Validation

Safwandi*, Aan Komariah^{ORCID}, Asep Suryana^{ORCID}, Eka Prihatin^{ORCID}

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Dr. Setiabudhi St. No. 229, Bandung, West Java, 40154, Indonesia

*Corresponding author, email: safwandi@upi.edu

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Abstract

Despite extensive research on servant leadership and positive discipline, no existing framework integrates both into a coherent model for elementary educational leadership, particularly in collectivist cultural contexts. This study develops and empirically validates a discipline-based servant leadership framework for elementary school principals. Using a qualitative approach with systematic narrative review of literature from Scopus and Web of Science (2021–2024), followed by an instrumental single case study at an Indonesian elementary school involving 15 informants (principals, teachers, staff, and students), analysis was conducted through framework analysis using ATLAS.ti for network visualization. The framework consists of five integrated dimensions: transformative service, constructive discipline, structured empowerment, moral accountability, and continuous development. The central theoretical contribution is the conceptualization of “structured compassion” as an integrative principle resolving the dichotomy between service orientation and organizational accountability through the integration of Self-Determination Theory, Compassionate Leadership Theory, and Paradoxical Leadership Theory. Empirical validation identified 72 unique codes confirming framework implementability, while network analysis revealed strong cross-dimensional interconnections. The framework advances the literature by reconciling Indonesian cultural values of *gotong royong* and *kerukunan* with contemporary educational accountability requirements, offering a transferable model for collectivist educational contexts globally.

1. Introduction

School principal leadership is a determining factor in achieving quality and sustainable educational goals. A synthesis of two decades of research involving analysis of 219 studies shows that principals have significant effects on various school outcomes, ranging from school climate and student achievement to teacher practices and educator retention (Grissom et al., 2021). Recent research further specifies what effective principal practice entails, identifying instructional engagement with teachers, sustained staff development, cultivation of collaborative culture, and sound management of personnel and resources as its defining hallmarks (Darling-Hammond et al., 2023). These findings underscore that effective principals must operate simultaneously in relational and structural registers, attending to the human dimensions of their role while maintaining the organizational conditions necessary for institutional performance. This condition becomes increasingly challenging given society’s expectations that schools are not limited to academic achievement but also character development and student readiness to face dynamic future challenges. In the context of global educational transformation that demands high accountability while remaining humanistic, principals face complex dilemmas in balancing service orientation with the need for organizational structure and strict discipline.

The urgency of resolving this tension is confirmed by empirical evidence at multiple levels. Longitudinal research involving 281 teachers found that principal leadership significantly affects teacher performance, with different leadership styles producing varying impacts on teacher effectiveness (Parveen et al., 2022). The urgency of resolving this tension is confirmed by empirical evidence at multiple levels. Longitudinal research involving 281 teachers found that principal leadership significantly affects teacher performance, with different leadership styles producing varying impacts on teacher effectiveness (Ozdemir et al., 2022). Taken together, these converging lines of evidence point toward the same conclusion: current leadership models, taken individually, are insufficient to address the full complexity of what effective elementary school principals must do. What is required is a more integrative approach, one that does not force practitioners to choose between serving people and maintaining structure but instead theorizes how these imperatives can reinforce one another to enhance overall leadership effectiveness.

Two bodies of scholarship are particularly relevant to constructing such a framework: research on servant leadership and research on positive discipline. Within the servant leadership tradition, Greenleaf (1977) established the foundational principle that truly effective leaders are those who place the needs and development of others at the center of their practice, prioritizing service before authority. van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) elaborated this into a multidimensional framework centered on empowerment, accountability, forgiveness, courage, authenticity, and humility, while Spears (2010) identified ten complementary characteristics including active listening, empathy, and commitment to community building. When applied to educational settings, servant leadership has been shown to produce consistently positive organizational outcomes: a systematic review of thirty studies documented that principals who lead in this mode foster school environments marked by elevated teacher morale, stronger job satisfaction, and deeper professional engagement toward the learning process (Kainde & Mandagi, 2023), with community building further shown to moderate the relationship between servant leadership and socially responsible school behavior (Kyambade et al., 2024). Alongside this, the scholarship on positive discipline offers complementary insights about how structure and accountability can be designed to serve developmental rather than punitive ends. Contemporary analysis of over eighty studies spanning more than a decade confirms that school discipline is shifting away from exclusionary approaches toward positive behavioral support and restorative practices (Welsh, 2024), a shift theorized by Nelsen (2006), who defines positive discipline as a simultaneously kind and firm approach grounded in mutual respect that prioritizes long-term social and life skill development.

Dreikurs and Cassel (1972) provided the foundational rationale for this approach, arguing that discipline reaches its potential when it is educationally oriented rather than punitive, guiding learners to understand the natural consequences of their choices and develop intrinsic behavioral motivation. Contemporary research has confirmed the practical value of these principles: discipline frameworks grounded in positive behavioral support significantly improve school climate, reduce exclusionary practices, and enhance students' social-emotional competence and academic performance (McIntosh et al., 2021; Gershoff & Font, 2021). The question that neither tradition has yet fully answered is how a school leader can operationalize both simultaneously. Research on servant leadership in schools documents that principals must continuously navigate tensions between attending to individual needs and meeting collective organizational goals, fostering both personal growth and collective effectiveness (Greenfield, 2022), while studies of paradoxical leadership demonstrate that leaders who manage such competing demands successfully generate measurable improvements in the well-being and satisfaction of those they lead (Zhao et al., 2023). These findings open the door to a more integrative conception of school leadership but stop short of providing the systematic framework that practitioners and researchers require.

Despite the richness of both literatures, a fundamental theoretical gap remains: no existing framework comprehensively integrates servant leadership and positive discipline into a coherent model for elementary educational leadership. Existing literature tends to treat service orientation and structural discipline as separate or even competing approaches, when evidence shows that integrating both can produce synergistic effects that enhance overall leadership effectiveness. This gap matters for practical as well as theoretical reasons. School principals encounter multifaceted challenges shaped by institutional policies, community expectations, and socioeconomic contexts, requiring adaptive approaches genuinely responsive to local conditions (Khalifa et al., 2022), a complexity further deepened by evidence that teachers and principals perceive their school climate in markedly different ways that relate directly to the leadership styles being applied (Veletić & Olsen, 2023). In collectivist educational contexts such as Indonesia, where cultural values of *gotong royong* and *kerukunan* emphasize communal harmony and collective solidarity, these challenges take on particular intensity: principals must reconcile care-oriented relational leadership with the performance accountability demanded by national standards, yet no existing framework has been built to address this specific intersection. A leadership framework adequate to this context must therefore be theoretically integrated and culturally responsive by design, capable of transforming the apparent contradiction between service and discipline into a productive and manageable dynamic.

This study aims to develop and empirically validate a discipline-based servant leadership framework for elementary school principals, centered on the novel integrative construct of "structured compassion", defined as the deliberate combination of caring relational support with clear expectations and consistent accountability. This construct is proposed as a means of resolving the persistent dichotomy between service orientation and organizational discipline in elementary school leadership, demonstrating that caring and accountability can function as mutually reinforcing rather than competing forces in daily practice. The theoretical foundations draw on Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), Compassionate Leadership Theory (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005), and Paradoxical Leadership Theory (Smith & Lewis, 2011), positioning structured compassion as a both/and response to the either/or tensions that characterize contemporary elementary school leadership.

Guided by the identified gap, this study addresses three research questions: first, how can a conceptual framework for discipline-based servant leadership be developed for effective elementary school leadership? Second, how do the five dimensions of the framework manifest empirically in daily elementary school leadership practice? Third, how is the paradox between service orientation and organizational disciplinary structure

resolved through “structured compassion”, a novel integrative construct proposed in this study, in elementary school leadership contexts?

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative research design with a case study approach that combines systematic narrative review for conceptual framework development with empirical case studies for practical validation. The case study approach was chosen for its ability to provide an in-depth understanding of complex social phenomena in natural settings (Yin, 2018). Following Stake (1995) this study uses an instrumental single case study approach where public elementary school X serves as an instrumental case for understanding the broader phenomenon of discipline-based servant leadership in elementary school contexts.

The selection of single case design is based on criteria explained by Yin (2018) for appropriate single case studies. Public elementary school X represents a revelatory case (Yin, 2018), where implementation of discipline-based servant leadership can be observed and analyzed in elementary school settings that were previously underexplored in existing literature. The selection of this qualitative approach is based on recommendations from Özdemir et al. (2022), who emphasize the need for “updated frameworks with clearer future directions” in educational leadership research. Creswell and Poth (2018) confirm that qualitative research is appropriate when research questions focus on meaning-making and theory development in complex social contexts.

Palinkas et al. (2015) explain that purposive sampling in qualitative research aims to identify and select information-rich cases related to phenomena of interest, which enables a detailed understanding rather than statistical generalization. Case study research was conducted at public elementary school X with 15 informants selected purposively to represent multiple stakeholder perspectives. Informant selection was based on criteria of a minimum of one year of experience at the school, willingness to participate in in-depth interviews, and representation of the elementary school organizational hierarchy. This multi-stakeholder approach aligns with findings from Veletić and Olsen (2023), who show the importance of understanding teacher and principal perceptions of school climate that differ significantly and relate to applied leadership styles.

Data collection used method triangulation, including semi-structured interviews with 15 informants representing principals, senior teachers, junior teachers, staff, and students, participant observation for 3 months, and school policy document analysis (see Table 1). Interview protocols were developed based on 10 key questions exploring five dimensions of the discipline-based servant leadership framework. This triangulation approach refers to methodological recommendations from recent studies that emphasize the importance of multiple data sources to enhance the validity of qualitative research findings.

Table 1. Research Informant Profiles

Code	Category	Description	Experience	Additional Role
KS-01	Principal	School Principal		
GS-01	Senior Teacher	Indonesian Language Teacher		
GS-02	Senior Teacher	Science Teacher		
GS-03	Senior Teacher	Mathematics Teacher		
GS-04	Senior Teacher	Civics Teacher		
GS-05	Senior Teacher	Counselor		
GJ-01	Junior Teacher	Mathematics Teacher		
GJ-02	Junior Teacher	Social Studies Teacher		
GJ-03	Junior Teacher	English Teacher		
GJ-04	Junior Teacher	Arts and Culture Teacher		
ST-01	Administrative Staff	Administrative Officer		
ST-02	Administrative Staff	Library Staff		
SIS-01	Student	Grade VI Student		
SIS-02	Student	Grade VI Student		
SIS-03	Student	Grade V Student		

Data analysis used a framework analysis approach with ATLAS.ti software for systematic coding and pattern identification. Framework analysis, first developed by Ritchie and Spencer (1994), is a matrix-based analytic method designed for qualitative policy research with emphasis on thematic analysis and cross-case comparison. Gale et al. (2013) confirm that framework analysis is particularly suited to research with specific a priori questions and predetermined representative samples both of which characterize this study.

Friese (2019), in a comprehensive guide for ATLAS.ti explains that Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) enhances rigor in qualitative research through systematic data organization, transparent coding processes, and comprehensive network analysis capabilities. ATLAS.ti was chosen for its

hermeneutic analysis capabilities suitable for interpretive research approaches, with features supporting systematic thematic coding and network visualization.

Analysis processes followed the five-stage framework analysis approach explained by Ritchie & Spencer (1994): (1) familiarization with data through immersive reading, (2) identification of thematic frameworks based on research questions and emerging themes, (3) indexing where data is coded systematically using thematic frameworks, (4) charting where data is abstracted and arranged in matrix format, and (5) mapping and interpretation to identify patterns, associations, and explanations.

Within the framework analysis, initial coding was conducted using line-by-line analysis to identify emerging themes aligned with the five dimensions of the theoretical framework. This process drew on principles of systematic concept identification (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), adapted to the framework analysis matrix rather than grounded theory development.

Following the mapping and interpretation stage of framework analysis, cross-dimensional pattern analysis identified “structured compassion” as the central integrative theme connecting all five framework dimensions, analogous to what Glaser (1978) terms a “core category” in theory-building research. This emergent centrality was confirmed through ATLAS.ti network visualization rather than through grounded theory procedures.

Following Lincoln and Guba (2019) four trustworthiness criteria (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability), member checking was conducted by returning coded transcripts and preliminary findings to selected participants for verification and feedback. Peer debriefing was implemented through regular discussions with research team members to challenge assumptions and ensure analytical rigor.

ATLAS.ti was used to organize data, develop network analysis, and identify co-occurrence patterns between codes. Network analysis capability enabled visualization of relationships between codes and the development of conceptual models that support theory building. This analysis approach aligns with best practices emphasized by Paulus and Lester (2016) in their systematic review of CAQDAS usage, which underscores the value of transparent, software-supported coding processes in ensuring methodological rigor.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

Empirical analysis of data from 15 informants at an Indonesian elementary school identified 72 unique codes organized across ten thematic clusters, documenting concrete manifestations of the discipline-based servant leadership framework in daily school practice. The findings are presented across the five core dimensions of the framework, supported by representative interview excerpts from each stakeholder group.

3.1.1. Structured Compassion as the Integrative Core

Structured compassion emerged as the central integrative theme across all informant groups, manifesting in the deliberate combination of caring relationships with clear, consistently enforced expectations. The principal articulated this orientation as foundational to daily school management:

“I always try to make sure students feel safe and cared for, but they also know that the rules are real and will be followed. Caring and firmness are not opposites in my mind—they both show respect for the child.” — KS-01, School Principal, 12 years experience [Caring_with_clear_rules]

Senior teachers confirmed this integration in classroom practice, describing how relational warmth and behavioral clarity reinforce one another rather than compete. Students similarly perceived disciplinary fairness and psychological safety as inseparable, indicating multi-stakeholder consistency in the experience of structured compassion.

3.1.2. Transformative Service

This dimension manifests as a proactive, preventive orientation toward identifying and removing barriers to student and staff development before problems escalate. Evidence across all informant groups showed a forward-looking leadership stance rather than reactive management:

“I don’t wait for problems to come to me. Every morning, I walk through the classrooms just to feel the atmosphere. If a student seems withdrawn or a teacher seems stressed, I want to catch that early and do something before it becomes a bigger issue.” — KS-01, School Principal, 12 years experience [Watching_student_needs_carefully]

Teachers described how this preventive philosophy shapes lesson planning and instructional preparation, while administrative staff observed it extending into continuous institutional improvement across all operational areas of the school.

3.1.3. Constructive Discipline

Constructive discipline represents a fundamental reframing of behavioral incidents from punitive corrections into developmental opportunities. This orientation was consistent across all stakeholder groups, with the principal describing it as the philosophical core of the school's disciplinary approach:

“When a child makes a mistake, my first question is not ‘what is the punishment?’ but ‘what does this child need to learn from this moment?’ Mistakes are some of the most important learning opportunities we have, and I do not want my teachers or students to be afraid of them.” — KS-01, School Principal, 12 years experience [Mistakes_are_learning_chances]

Teachers described systematically seeking to understand the root causes of behavioral incidents before responding, while students reported that restorative approaches to conflict resolution strengthened peer relationships and deepened their sense of accountability within the school community.

3.1.4. Structured Empowerment

Structured empowerment integrates meaningful agency with clear guidance frameworks, creating conditions where autonomy expands incrementally in line with demonstrated readiness. A junior teacher described how this scaffolded progression shaped her professional development:

“When I first came here, the principal did not just leave me on my own but also did not control everything I did. There was a clear framework, clear support, and then gradually, I was given more freedom to try things in my class. That progression felt very intentional.” — GJ-04, Junior Arts and Culture Teacher, 1.5 years experience [Growing_responsibility_step_by_step]

At the student level, the vice principal for student affairs described how involving students in decisions about learning activities produced qualitatively different engagement, with students arriving at class with a sense of ownership rather than passive compliance.

3.1.5. Moral Accountability

Moral accountability manifests as a visible and consistent alignment between stated values and enacted decisions, which informants across all groups identified as the primary source of institutional trust. A junior teacher described this quality as the defining feature of leadership credibility at the school:

“What I have learned from working here is that integrity means your actions and your words are the same thing. The principal says students come first, and every decision I observe reflects that. It is not just a slogan—you can see it in the choices that are made.” — GJ-01, Junior Mathematics Teacher, 2 years experience [Actions_match_words_always]

The guidance counselor highlighted how this ethical orientation extends to sensitive interpersonal situations, where student dignity is consistently protected. A Grade V student described how promise-keeping by staff builds her trust in the institution, demonstrating that moral accountability is experienced at the student level as well as among professional staff.

3.1.6. Continuous Development

The continuous development dimension reflects a whole-school culture of learning embedded in daily practice rather than episodic programming. The principal described this orientation as constitutive of the school's institutional identity:

“I believe a school that stops learning has stopped serving its students. Development here is not a program we run once a year—it is how we work every day. I learn from my teachers. Teachers learn from each other. Students learn from watching all of us grow.” — KS-01, School Principal, 12 years experience [Everyone_learns_and_grows]

Senior teachers described a culture in which both successful and unsuccessful practices are shared openly across the staff. Administrative staff noted that development extends beyond teaching personnel to include all school community members, reflecting an inclusive and organizationally comprehensive approach to growth.

Table 2. Empirical Manifestations of the Five Dimensions of the Discipline-Based Servant Leadership Framework

Framework Dimension	ATLAS.ti Code	Source	Empirical Manifestation
Structured Compassion	<i>Caring_with_clear_rules</i>	KS-01	Integration of care with a rule structure
	<i>Firm_but_loving_approach</i>	GS-01	Firm yet loving approach
	<i>Safe_learning_environment</i>	GJ-01	Safe learning environment
Transformative Service	<i>Fair_consistent_discipline</i>	SIS-01	Fair and consistent discipline
	<i>Watching_student_needs_carefully</i>	KS-01	Proactive monitoring of student needs
	<i>Helping_before_problems_happen</i>	GS-02	Preventive help before problems arise
	<i>Support_all_learning_styles</i>	GJ-02	Support for all learning styles
Constructive Discipline	<i>Making_school_better_always</i>	ST-01	Commitment to continuous improvement
	<i>Mistakes_are_learning_chances</i>	KS-01	Mistakes as learning opportunities
	<i>Teaching_better_choices_kindly</i>	GS-03	Teaching better choices with kindness
Structured Empowerment	<i>Helping_feel_better_after_mistakes</i>	GJ-03	Helping recovery after mistakes
	<i>Making_things_right_together</i>	SIS-02	Making things right together
	<i>Simple_choices_in_learning</i>	KS-01	Simple choices in learning
	<i>Students_help_decide_activities</i>	GS-04	Students help decide activities
Moral Accountability	<i>Growing_responsibility_step_by_step</i>	GJ-04	Growing responsibility step by step
	<i>Classroom_helper_opportunities</i>	ST-02	Classroom helper opportunities
	<i>Teachers_show_good_examples</i>	KS-01	Teachers model values through behavior
	<i>Kind_handling_sensitive_problems</i>	GS-05	Kind handling of sensitive problems
Continuous Development	<i>Actions_match_words_always</i>	GJ-01	Actions consistently match words
	<i>Trust_through_keeping_promises</i>	SIS-03	Trust is built through keeping promises
	<i>Everyone_learns_and_grows</i>	KS-01	Everyone learns and grows together
	<i>Teachers_learning_new_things</i>	GS-01	Teachers actively learning new things
	<i>Clear_steps_for_improvement</i>	GJ-02	Clear steps for improvement
	<i>All_school_staff_included</i>	ST-02	All school staff included in development

3.1.7. Network Analysis and Framework Validation

ATLAS.ti network visualization confirms that the five dimensions form an integrated system of mutually reinforcing practices, with structured compassion functioning as the central hub connecting all clusters (Figure 1). Central nodes, including Structured Compassion, Transformative Service, and Moral Accountability, serve as connective bridges across dimensions, while peripheral codes document specific behavioral manifestations in daily practice. Network density analysis indicates strong co-occurrence patterns with clear cluster formations for each dimension, confirming both theoretical coherence and practical implementability.

The cross-dimensional nature of this integration is corroborated by interview data: informants from all four stakeholder groups, principal, teachers, administrative staff, and students, independently described the same dynamic, that being cared for and being held to clear expectations are experienced not as competing forces but as complementary expressions of the same institutional respect.

Table 3. Key Findings of the Discipline-Based Servant Leadership Framework Empirical Validation

Finding Category	ATLAS.ti Code	Source	Empirical Manifestation
Paradox Resolution	<i>Kind_and_firm_together</i>	KS-01	Kindness and firmness as complementary forces
	<i>Caring_makes_learning_stronger</i>	GS-02	Care strengthens learning outcomes
	<i>More_help_means_higher_goals</i>	KS-01	Greater support enables higher aspirations
	<i>Respect_through_caring_challenge</i>	SIS-01	Respect built through caring challenge
Implementation Challenges	<i>Parents_expect_traditional_teaching</i>	KS-01	Parent expectations of traditional approaches
	<i>Students_learning_more_participation</i>	GS-03	Students adapting to participatory learning
	<i>Understanding_balance_takes_time</i>	GJ-04	Developing balance requires time
Effectiveness Evidence	<i>Caring_takes_more_time</i>	ST-01	Caring-oriented leadership is time-intensive
	<i>Counting_improvements_in_learning</i>	KS-01	Measurable improvements in learning
Cultural Transformation	<i>Happy_engaged_students</i>	GS-04	Increased student happiness and engagement
	<i>Students_want_stay_participate</i>	GJ-01	Students are motivated to stay and participate
	<i>Better_behavior_academic_progress</i>	SIS-02	Improved behavior and academic progress
	<i>Following_rules_to_wanting_learn</i>	KS-01	Shift from rule-following to intrinsic motivation
	<i>More_friendship_better_talking</i>	GS-05	Stronger relationships and communication
	<i>Feeling_belong_learning_community</i>	GJ-02	Sense of belonging to a learning community
	<i>Wanting_learn_from_inside</i>	KS-01	Internally motivated learning orientation

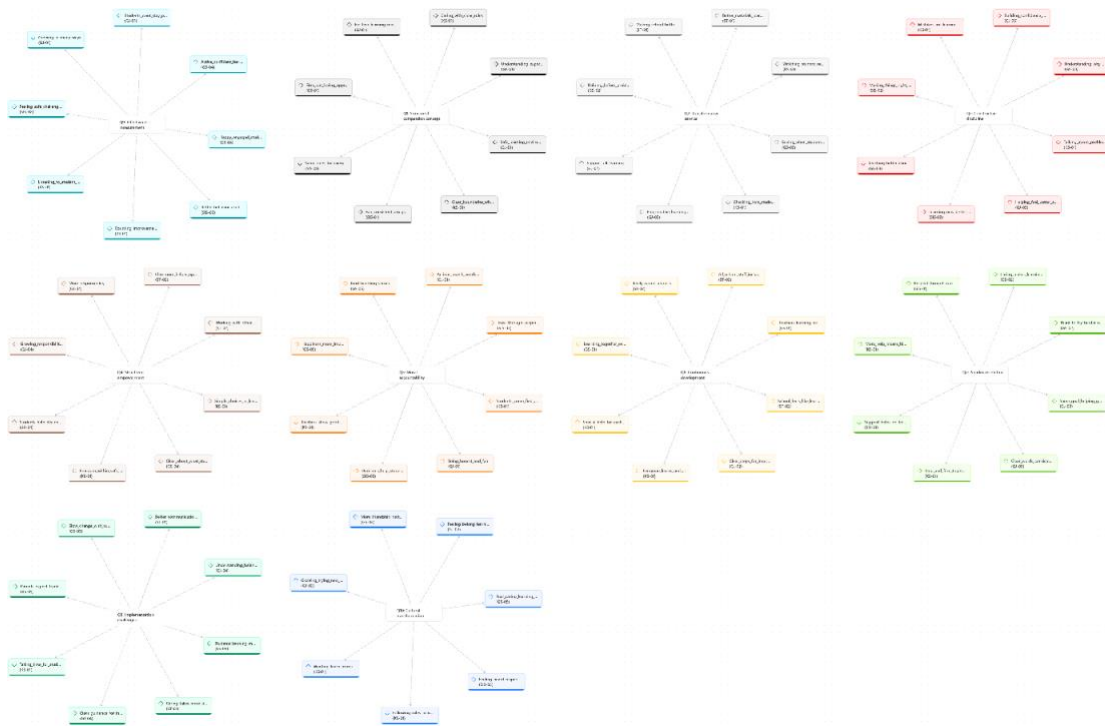


Figure 1. Network Analysis of Discipline-Based Servant Leadership Framework

3.1.8. Paradox Resolution, Challenges, and Effectiveness

Network analysis identifies four interrelated finding categories: paradox resolution, implementation challenges, effectiveness evidence, and cultural transformation. Within paradox resolution, codes such as *Kind_and_firm_together*, *Caring_makes_learning_stronger*, and *More_help_means_higher_goals* document a consistent both/and pattern in daily practice: greater relational investment produced higher rather than lower performance expectations, confirming that caring and accountability function as mutually reinforcing rather than competing forces.

Implementation challenges are also documented empirically. Codes including *Parents_expect_traditional_teaching*, *Understanding_balance_takes_time*, and *Caring_takes_more_time* reflect the real adaptive demands of the framework, providing honest guidance for schools considering adoption. Effectiveness evidence across stakeholder groups converged on consistent indicators: *Happy_engaged_students*, *Better_behavior_academic_progress*, and *Students_want_stay_participate* all point toward a positive learning environment sustained by structured compassion practices.

3.1.9. Cultural Transformation

The cultural transformation cluster documents the most significant outcome of framework implementation: a shift from external compliance toward intrinsic engagement. Codes including *Following_rules_to_wanting_learn* and *Wanting_learn_from_inside* capture a qualitative change in how students relate to school expectations, while *Feeling_belong_learning_community* and *Real_caring_learning_family* reflect the relational conditions that made this shift possible.

This transformation is particularly significant in the Indonesian cultural context, where values of *gotong royong* and *kerukunan* emphasize communal solidarity and social harmony. The framework successfully navigates the tension between these collectivist values and individual accountability requirements, as evidenced by the co-occurrence of *Same_rules_for_everyone* alongside *Understanding_why_behavior_happens*. The code *Making_things_right_together* further reflects the alignment of restorative discipline with traditional Indonesian conflict resolution principles, demonstrating authentic cultural integration. The empirical codes *Kind_handling_sensitive_problems* and *Clear_boundaries_with_warmth* show how paternalistic care was reframed from hierarchical control into developmentally supportive relationships, a transformation described in this study as “productive harmony”: maintaining social cohesion and cultural authenticity while simultaneously pursuing educational excellence.

3.2. Discussion

This study's primary theoretical contribution lies in the conceptualization of "structured compassion", an integrative principle that resolves the apparent paradox between service orientation and organizational accountability in elementary school leadership. Unlike prior frameworks that treat these orientations as competing (Greenleaf, 1977; Nelsen, 2006), the five-dimensional model demonstrates how caring and discipline can function as mutually reinforcing rather than contradictory forces.

Theoretical contributions of this framework also lie in integrating Social Exchange Theory and Self-Determination Theory in specific elementary education contexts. Ji & Yoon (2021) confirm that "calling moderates relationships between servant leadership, self-efficacy, and innovative behavior," supporting the findings of this research that structured compassion creates environments in which personal values can align with organizational expectations through five mutually reinforcing dimensions. Critically, this alignment was achieved not through abstract principles but through observable daily practices, documented via 72 ATLAS.ti codes, which constitute a methodological advance over conceptual-only servant leadership models.

The Continuous Development dimension directly addresses Darling-Hammond et al.'s (2023) emphasis on staff development and collaborative culture as cornerstones of effective principal practice, extending their findings by showing how servant leadership values can operationalize these practices in elementary contexts.

Paradox resolution through structured compassion has special relevance in Indonesian educational transformation contexts facing dual demands between achieving national standards and preserving local cultural values. Khalifa et al. (2021) emphasize that "culturally responsive school leadership requires principals to adapt their practices to align with the cultural values, norms, and expectations of the communities they serve, ensuring educational approaches resonate with local contexts." The empirical data confirms this: codes such as *Kind_and_firm_together* and *More_help_means_higher_goals* demonstrate that paradox resolution was not merely theoretical but enacted in daily leadership interactions, operationalizing Smith & Lewis (2011) "both/and" model in a specific elementary school context.

The empirical validation in this study extends Smith & Lewis (2011) paradoxical leadership model by providing concrete, context-specific evidence of how "both/and" thinking is enacted, not only at the level of leader cognition, but in observable institutional practices within an Indonesian elementary school. This moves paradox theory from abstract prescription to grounded practice.

Lewis (2000) identifies four organizational paradox types: learning, organizing, performing, and belonging. A novel finding of this study is that all four paradox types were navigated simultaneously by a single principal in a single elementary school context, something Smith & Lewis (2011) meta-analytic framework describes theoretically but has rarely been documented ethnographically in non-Western educational settings. The co-occurrence of codes across paradox types in ATLAS.ti network analysis provides empirical evidence for this multi-paradox resolution capacity.

Martin's (2007) concept of integrative thinking is empirically grounded in this study: the code *More_help_means_higher_goals* illustrates how principals synthesize competing demands into a unified leadership orientation, rather than trading one off against the other. This is a concrete instantiation of integrative thinking previously described only in corporate leadership contexts. A distinctive contribution of this study is the demonstration that structured compassion successfully navigates Indonesia's specific cultural paradox: high power distance norms that emphasize deference to authority must coexist with democratic education values requiring student voice and participation (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2020). Existing servant leadership models do not address this tension explicitly.

The empirical codes *Kind_handling_sensitive_problems* and *Clear_boundaries_with_warmth* show how paternalistic care (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997) was reframed from hierarchical control into developmentally supportive relationships a transformation not documented in prior Indonesian educational leadership studies. This study coins the term "productive harmony" to describe how structured compassion resolves the tension between *kerukunan* (social harmony) and performance accountability in Indonesian schools, as evidenced by codes like *Following_rules_to_wanting_learn* (internal motivation harmony) and *Caring_makes_learning_stronger* (performance through relationship). This universalism-particularism balance (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997) was further enacted through codes like *Same_rules_for_everyone* alongside *Understanding_why_behavior_happens*, demonstrating that equitable and contextually flexible practices are not mutually exclusive in elementary school leadership.

Collectively, these findings make three contributions to the literature. First, structured compassion extends servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1977; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011) by adding a disciplinary accountability dimension previously absent from the model. Second, paradox theory (Smith & Lewis, 2011; Lewis, 2000) is empirically operationalized in a non-Western elementary school setting for the first time in this

study's database. Third, the concept of "productive harmony" offers a culturally responsive construct applicable to other collectivist educational contexts beyond Indonesia, extending cross-cultural leadership theory (House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997) into elementary school practice.

4. Conclusion

This study successfully develops a discipline-based servant leadership framework for elementary school leadership, consisting of five integrated dimensions: transformative service, constructive discipline, structured empowerment, moral accountability, and continuous development. The central theoretical contribution is the conceptualization of "structured compassion" as an integrative principle that resolves the dichotomy between service orientation and organizational discipline through the integration of Self-Determination Theory, Compassionate Leadership Theory, and Paradoxical Leadership Theory in elementary school-specific contexts, producing a further construct termed "developmental authority" that maintains caring relationships while ensuring clear expectations and consistent accountability in age-appropriate manners. Empirically, ATLAS.ti analysis identified 72 unique codes documenting concrete manifestations of each framework dimension in daily leadership practice at public elementary school X, with network analysis confirming strong interconnections between dimensions and validating practical implementability. Culturally, the framework demonstrates how universal leadership principles can be authentically adapted to Indonesian values of *gotong royong*, *kerukunan*, and *bapakisme* without sacrificing professional effectiveness, offering a transferable model for similar collectivist educational contexts globally.

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Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/ or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declaration on AI Use

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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