

# Fostering integrity among school principals' ethical leadership: a comprehensive systematic review

Mackencidy ak Bujang<sup>1</sup>, Bity Salwana Alias<sup>2</sup>, Azlin Norhaini Mansor<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Centre of Leadership and Educational Policy, Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup>Centre for Shaping Advanced and Professional Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia

## Article Info

### Article history:

Received Apr 28, 2024

Revised Sep 23, 2024

Accepted Sep 30, 2024

### Keywords:

Ethical leadership

Integrity

Principal

PRISMA framework

Systematic review

## ABSTRACT

This systematic review explores the importance of promoting integrity in the ethical leadership of school principals, particularly when ethical lapses by educational leaders can impact outcomes. Increasing societal pressures and a complex educational environment highlight the importance of ethical leadership in shaping the school environment and student success. However, the lack of a complete understanding of how to effectively create ethical leadership remains a major concern. An extensive search of scholarly articles was conducted from reputable databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC, focusing on studies published between 2020 and 2024. The flow of study based on PRISMA framework. The database found (n=19) final primary data was analyzed. The finding was divided into three themes which is academic integrity and ethics in education, leadership and integrity in educational management, and character and value education in schools. Comprehensive programs and administrative support are essential to fostering integrity in schools, while effective leadership plays an important role in shaping a conducive school environment. In conclusion, the need to foster integrity among school principals across disciplinary boundaries requires concerted efforts and innovative approaches to prepare ethical leaders to navigate the complexities of the contemporary educational landscape and inspire positive change.

*This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](#) license.*



## Corresponding Author:

Bity Salwana Alias

Centre of Leadership and Educational Policy, Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

43600 Bangi Selangor, Malaysia

Email: bity@ukm.edu.my

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The role of school principals is pivotal in shaping the educational environment and ensuring the successful implementation of academic and administrative policies. Beyond managerial competencies, principals are expected to embody and promote ethical leadership, serving as role models for teachers and students alike. Ethical leadership, characterized by integrity, transparency, and a commitment to ethical standards, is essential in fostering a positive school culture and enhancing overall school effectiveness [1]–[3]. This paper explores the critical aspects of fostering integrity among school principals and the broader implications for ethical leadership within educational institutions. In recent years, the educational landscape has undergone significant transformations due to technological advancements, shifting societal expectations, and evolving educational standards [4]–[6]. These changes have amplified the complexities and challenges faced by school leaders, making the need for ethical leadership more pronounced than ever. Principals, as the primary leaders in schools, are uniquely positioned to influence the moral climate of their institutions. They

play a crucial role in setting the ethical tone, establishing norms, and guiding the behaviors and attitudes of teachers and students [7]. Consequently, fostering integrity among school principals is not only a matter of personal character but also a strategic imperative for achieving educational goals and nurturing a culture of ethical behavior.

The concept of ethical leadership in education encompasses various dimensions, including integrity, fairness, accountability, and respect for stakeholders. Integrity, often considered the cornerstone of ethical leadership, involves adherence to moral and ethical principles [8], consistency in actions and decisions, and honesty in communication [9]. For school principals, demonstrating integrity means making decisions that are in the best interest of students and staff, even when faced with pressure or adversity [10]. It requires a steadfast commitment to ethical standards and the courage to uphold these standards in all aspects of school administration. Research indicates that ethical leadership positively impacts multiple facets of school functioning. Ethical leaders are associated with higher levels of trust among staff, improved teacher morale, and enhanced student performance [11]. When principals exhibit integrity, they foster an environment of trust and respect, which is critical for effective collaboration and the overall well-being of the school community. Moreover, ethical leadership contributes to the development of a positive school culture where ethical behavior is valued and reinforced [12], [13]. This, in turn, helps mitigate issues such as bullying, misconduct, and academic dishonesty, creating a safer and more inclusive learning environment.

Despite the clear benefits of ethical leadership, principals face challenges in balancing the complex expectations of various stakeholders, maintaining ethical standards, and navigating ethical dilemmas caused by accountability pressures and performance. This situation underscores the need for robust support systems, ongoing professional development, and a clear understanding of ethical principles. Principals disguise expectations from policymakers, parents, and the community [14], all while trying to uphold ethical standards and deal with accountability pressures [15], which often put them in tough situations that call for strong support and continuous professional growth. To address these challenges, this paper advocates for a comprehensive approach to fostering integrity among school principals. This includes the implementation of targeted training programs that focus on ethical decision-making, the establishment of supportive networks for principals to share best practices and seek guidance, and the promotion of a culture of ethical behavior throughout the educational system. By equipping principals with the necessary tools and support, educational institutions can ensure that their leaders are well-prepared to uphold integrity and lead their schools with ethical conviction.

Fostering integrity through ethical leadership among school principals is vital for maintaining the well-being of educational institutions. Ethical behavior by principals positively impacts the overall health of schools, creating an environment where both staff and students can thrive [16]. However, Hansen and Lárusdóttir [17] point out a gap between principals' ethical values and their practical application, highlighting the need for structured support and training to ensure that ethical principles are consistently reflected in leadership actions. Gohar and Carvalho [18] underscore the importance of ethical education, drawing from Kant's ideas on inner discipline to help principals model and instill ethical behavior in students. research by Majidipour *et al.* [19] discuss the challenges of leadership, stressing the need for principals to balance care ethics with professional ethics to effectively address issues. Mortari and Ubbiali [20] propose service learning as a way to embed ethical principles in education, enriching students' experiences and fostering responsibility and ethical awareness for their future careers. Ethical leadership in schools goes beyond administrative tasks, focusing on curriculum excellence and transformative practices. Preez [21] emphasizes the importance of honest goals and collective commitment in ethical curriculum leadership. Phetsombat and Na-Nan [22] highlight how ethical leadership fosters integrity and citizenship within schools. Addressing factors like professional ethics training is crucial, as Ayenalem *et al.* [23] note that its absence can lead to teacher misconduct. They also stress the importance of a positive working environment. Effective leadership by principals ensures accountability and ethical conduct among staff. Mendonça [24] highlights the role of inclusivity and equity in ethical leadership. Overall, this paper addresses various challenges and strategies in tackling ethical dilemmas within educational settings, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of such challenges, and the need for principled leadership in guiding institutions through times of crisis [25]–[27].

In conclusion, fostering integrity among school principals is essential for ethical leadership, significantly impacting the effectiveness and moral climate of educational institutions. As the demands on school leaders evolve, it is crucial to prioritize the development of ethical leadership skills and integrate ethical principles across various aspects of school administration, from decision-making to curriculum design. By addressing factors such as interpersonal dynamics, organizational behaviors, and professional ethics training, schools can cultivate leaders who not only excel administratively but also exemplify integrity, guiding their institutions toward ethical excellence, academic success, and a culture of accountability that benefits both students and educators.

## 2. METHOD

This systematic literature review (SLR) follows a deliberate and well-planned analysis of previously published research to explore the dynamics of ethical leadership among school principals, specifically focusing on fostering integrity within educational settings. A systematic review, according to Newman and Gough [28], is a family of research methodologies that use primary research findings to answer a research question. The SLR approach begins with developing suitable research questions. Developing research questions is the most significant component of creating SLR to determine the scope of the investigation [29]. The research questions (RQ) for this paper are:

- i) What are the most effective strategies for promoting and maintaining academic integrity among students and teachers in secondary and higher education institutions? (RQ1)
- ii) How do different leadership styles in educational management impact the integrity and performance of teachers and students? (RQ2)
- iii) What are the key challenges and best practices in implementing character and value education programs in schools? (RQ3)

This SLR was organized according to the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analysis (PRISMA) standards [30]. The review process followed PRISMA guidelines, with four phases: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, as seen in Figure 1.

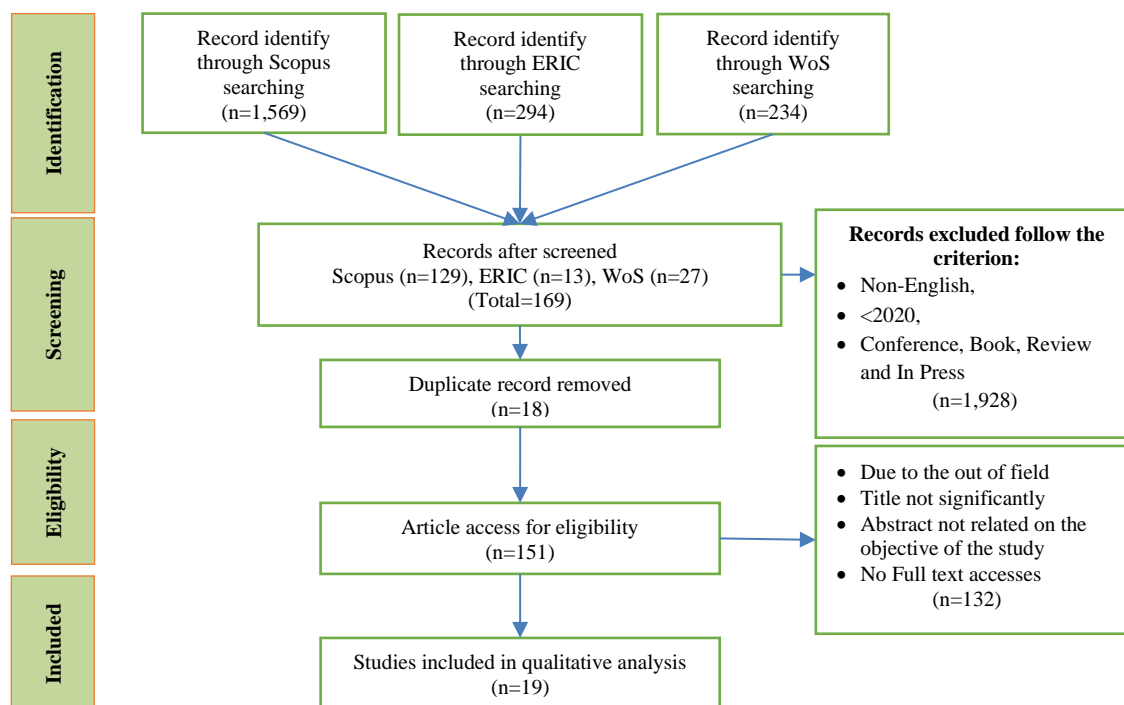


Figure 1. PRISMA diagram of the propose searching study [30]

### 2.1. Identification

The four primary stages of the systematic review procedure are utilized to select many relevant publications for this report. The process starts with the identification of keywords and the search for related terms based on the thesaurus, dictionaries, encyclopedia, and past research. Consequently, search strings on Scopus, ERIC, and Web of Science (WoS) database have been developed once all pertinent terms have been determined. During this initial phase of the systematic review, the current research successfully retrieved a total of 2,097 papers from both databases. Based on the research question, three main keywords were identified: “principal”, “ethical leadership” and “school”. To enrich the search using these keywords, the related terms and synonyms are identified using online thesaurus and asked the opinion of an education expert. This process produces several keywords such as “integrity”, “honesty”, “ethics”, “ethical”, “moral”, “administrator” and “school leader”. By expanding the range of keywords and search terms, the identification process increased the comprehensiveness of the literature search and ensured all relevant articles were identified. Table 1 shows the search string for all three databases.

Table 1. The search strings and keywords used for systematic review process

Database	Search string
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ( integrity OR honesty ) AND ( ethic OR ethical OR moral ) AND ( principal OR administrator OR "school leader" ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( PUBYEAR , 2020 ) OR LIMIT-TO ( PUBYEAR , 2021 ) OR LIMIT-TO ( PUBYEAR , 2022 ) OR LIMIT-TO ( PUBYEAR , 2023 ) OR LIMIT-TO ( PUBYEAR , 2024 ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "SOCT" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE , "English" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SRCTYPE , "j" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( PUBSTAGE , "final" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( OA , "all" ) ) Date of access: June 2024
ERIC	(integrity OR honesty) AND (ethic OR ethical OR moral) AND (principal OR administrator OR "school leader") pubyearmin:2020 pubyearmax:2024 Date of Access: June 2024
WoS	TS = (( integrity OR honesty ) AND ( ethic OR ethical OR moral ) AND ( principal OR administrator OR "school leader" )) and 2020 or 2021 or 2022 or 2023 or 2024 (Publication Years) and Article (Document Types) and English (Languages) and All open access (Open Access) Date of access: June 2024

## 2.2. Screening

During the screening step, the collection of potentially relevant research items is evaluated to determine their alignment with the predefined research questions. Content-related criteria commonly used in this phase include selecting research items related to fostering integrity among school principals' ethical leadership. At this step, all duplicate papers are removed from the search results. In the first stage of screening, 1,928 publications were excluded, and in the second stage, 169 papers were examined based on various exclusion and inclusion criteria specific to this study as seen in Table 2. The primary criterion was literature (research papers), as it is the main source of practical recommendations. This also encompassed reviews, meta-syntheses, meta-analyses, books, book series, chapters, and conference proceedings that were not included in the latest study. Additionally, the review was limited to publications in English and focused only on the years 2020-2024. A total of 18 publication was rejected due to duplication.

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria involved in the screening process

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Timeline	2020-2024	<2020
Literature type	Journal (Article)	Besides Journal (Article)
Publication stage	Final	In Press
Subject area	Social sciences	Besides social sciences

## 2.3. Eligibility

In the third phase, known as the eligibility assessment, a compilation of 151 articles was assembled. During this stage, the titles and core content of all articles were meticulously examined to confirm their alignment with the inclusion criteria and relevance to the study's research objectives. Consequently, 132 articles were excluded for being out of field, having titles that were not significantly relevant, having abstracts unrelated to the study's objectives, or lacking full-text access. As a result, a total of 19 articles remains for the upcoming review.

## 2.4. Data abstraction and analysis

An integrative analysis was conducted in this study, employing examination techniques to analyze and synthesize various research designs (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods). The expert research focused on developing appropriate topics and sub-topics. The initial step in theme development was the data collection phase, during which a group of 22 papers was carefully reviewed for statements or information addressing questions from this current research. The next step involved analyzing the material related to fostering integrity among school principals' ethical leadership to determine and form meaningful groups: i) academic integrity and ethics in education; ii) leadership and integrity in educational management; and iii) character and value education in schools. Each developed theme, along with any related themes, concepts, or ideas, was thoroughly examined. Within the framework of this study, the corresponding author collaborated with co-authors to establish themes based on the findings. A log was maintained during the data analysis process to document any analyses, opinions, puzzles, or other ideas relevant to data interpretation.

Findings were compared to resolve any discrepancies in the theme creation process, and any inconsistencies were addressed collaboratively. Finally, the developed themes were refined to ensure consistency. Two experts have been chosen to reviews and validate these 21 articles. This study used the critical appraisal skills program (CASP) checklist for systematic review [31]. Quality appraisal were carried

out by the qualified experts who have more than 10 years of work experience in educational institutions. Checklists are used as guidelines for critically evaluating the quality of studies and different types of evidence [32]. There are three indicators for the quality appraisal which is “excellent”, “good” and “moderate”. Each article was evaluated for its quality in terms of clear statement of the research aims, relevance of its methods and research design, recruitment of appropriate strategy, data collection, data analysis, clear statement findings, and the value of the research. To ensure the validity of the themes, examinations were performed by two experts, one specializing in leadership management and the other in school administration. The expert review phase ensured each sub-theme's clarity, importance, and adequacy by establishing domain validity. Adjustments were made based on feedback and comments from the experts, as deemed necessary by the authors.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. Academic integrity and ethics in education

Academic integrity and ethics in education are critical concerns for institutions worldwide. The increasing availability and use of anti-plagiarism software are pivotal in maintaining academic integrity, yet many colleges, especially in regions like Tamil Nadu, India, face significant barriers in adopting such technologies. According to Subaveerapandiyan and Sakthivel [33], 70.9% of colleges surveyed do not subscribe to plagiarism detection software due to perceived high costs and perceived lack of necessity. This situation underscores the need for regulatory bodies such as the University Grants Commission (UGC) to mandate and financially support the subscription to these tools. Additionally, Burbidge and Hamer [34] highlights a disparity in how academic integrity is addressed among students and teachers within the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program, suggesting the need for comprehensive, institution-wide integrity training programs that include both students and educators. In Islamic higher education institutions in Aceh, Indonesia, the erosion of academic ethics among lecturers has been linked to a lack of understanding and professional values. Yusuf *et al.* [35] found that despite a general understanding of integrity, this knowledge did not significantly influence lecturers' academic ethics practices. The study advocates for enhanced training and courses on integrity and professional values to reinforce ethical standards among lecturers. Similarly, creating a culture of academic integrity in secondary schools is complex, with Çelik and Razi [36] identifying facilitators like administrative support and student involvement, and barriers like teacher resistance and prioritization of academic success over integrity. Effective implementation of a culture of integrity requires strategic planning, comprehensive policy frameworks, and active involvement from all school community members.

Supervision practices significantly impact adherence to ethical principles in educational settings. Demir and Kale [37] examined supervision practices in Ankara, Turkey, finding that while most supervisors adhered to principles like impartiality and objectivity, issues remained with avoiding conflicts of interest and maintaining courtesy and respect. Addressing these gaps through effective communication training and adherence to established ethical regulations is essential. The prevalence of online learning also poses challenges for academic integrity, with Nelson [38] revealing that online business school instructors often handle violations independently, potentially undermining institutional efforts. Clear reporting mechanisms and support systems are needed to manage academic dishonesty comprehensively. Additionally, Yıldırım *et al.* [39] found that unethical behaviors among teachers negatively affect relationships with students, parents, and colleagues, highlighting the importance of targeted training and fostering a culture of respect and integrity in educational environments.

In sum, maintaining academic integrity and ethics in education is crucial but challenging. Educators are vital in fostering academic honesty, but disparities between students and teachers show the need for comprehensive training programs. Establishing a culture of academic integrity in secondary schools requires overcoming barriers like teacher resistance and prioritization of academic success over integrity. Effective supervision practices, clear reporting mechanisms for online learning, and addressing unethical behaviors among teachers are vital for fostering an ethical educational environment.

#### 3.2. Leadership and integrity in educational management

Leadership and integrity in educational management are crucial for creating a positive and effective learning environment. The Tahfidzul Quran education system (T-QES) in Indonesia exemplifies how integrity can be nurtured through educational programs. Rasyid *et al.* [40] found that T-QES significantly contributes to developing leaders with strong moral principles in two Islamic boarding schools in Bandung. This system, which emphasizes religious teachings and ethical conduct, can serve as a model for other educational systems. Ethical leadership extends beyond religious contexts; Papaloi *et al.* [41] highlighted that school principals in six European countries are expected to emphasize core values such as honesty and moral

responsibility, which are crucial for fostering students' holistic development and democratic values. This underscores the importance of ethical leadership in maintaining a morally-driven educational environment. Transformational leadership also significantly impacts teaching effectiveness and integrity. Ahmad and Rochimah [26] found that transformational leadership at As-Syafi'iyah Islamic University in Indonesia positively influences both integrity and teaching effectiveness, suggesting that leaders who inspire and motivate staff while upholding ethical standards can enhance educational outcomes. Conversely, in Nepal, Khadka and Bhattarai [42] identified external influences such as nepotism and political interests as major factors undermining the integrity of school leaders, highlighting the need to address these pressures to maintain ethical management. Effective strategies are necessary to ensure school leaders can perform their roles ethically and effectively, free from external influences that compromise their integrity.

Servant leadership, which prioritizes serving others, is also relevant to educational management. Uçar and Uğur [43] found that secondary school teachers in Van, Turkey, generally observed altruistic behavior, empathy, and honesty in their principals, though inconsistencies were reported. This indicates a need for more consistent servant leadership approaches. Effective interpersonal communication by school principals is crucial for teacher motivation and school management, as Suntani *et al.* [44] highlighted the importance of principals' ethical communication in fostering emotional closeness and mutual understanding among teachers, ultimately contributing to a cohesive and productive educational environment. Additionally, Arif *et al.* [45] found that leader integrity positively affects leader-member exchanges (LMX) and enhances employees' sense of inclusion in a public-school system in the southeastern United States. This study emphasizes the role of integrity in leadership for fostering inclusive and supportive workplace environments, which are essential for the effectiveness and harmony within educational institutions.

In sum, leadership and integrity are critical in educational management for fostering effective learning environments. Studies highlight various aspects, where principals are expected to uphold core values. Transformational leadership positively influences teaching effectiveness and integrity. External pressures like nepotism undermine school leaders' integrity. Servant leadership and effective interpersonal communication by principals enhance teacher motivation and school cohesion. Furthermore, leader integrity positively affects LMX and employees' sense of inclusion, crucial for supportive educational environments.

### 3.3. Character and value education in schools

Character and value education in schools play a pivotal role in shaping individuals with integrity, empathy, and responsibility. Hermanto *et al.* [46] demonstrated the successful integration of core values like religiosity, nationalism, independence, cooperation, and integrity into the educational framework of Indonesian schools, emphasizing activities promoting these values and their positive impact on students' conduct and intellectual growth. Furthermore, Kwarteng [47] highlighted the significance of integrity in educational administration, uncovering prevalent corruption within the Ghana education service and advocating for automated systems and whistleblower mechanisms to uphold integrity and foster a conducive environment for character education. Teachers' work ethic is another crucial factor in character and value education. Park and Hill [48] identified integrity, interpersonal skills, respect for students, and professional development as key components of teachers' work ethics, underscoring their importance in creating a professional and ethical teaching environment. Moreover, Rohman *et al.* [49] shed light on the challenges posed by fraud in educational institutions, emphasizing the need for anti-fraud measures and ethical training to support character education. Additionally, Sezer *et al.* [50] stressed the importance of comprehensive in-service training programs that instill personal, professional, universal, and cultural values in teachers, thereby preparing them to effectively impart character education to students.

In sum, character and value education in schools involve a multifaceted approach that includes integrating core values into the curriculum, ensuring integrity in educational administration, fostering teachers' work ethics, preventing fraud, and providing comprehensive in-service training for teachers. These elements collectively contribute to the development of students' character and values, preparing them to become responsible and ethical individuals.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The findings on academic integrity and ethics in education underscore the ongoing challenges faced by institutions worldwide. Subaveerapandiyana and Sakthivel [33] highlighted the financial and perceptual barriers to adopting anti-plagiarism software in Indian colleges, an issue reflecting broader concerns in the literature. The inconsistency in addressing academic integrity, as Burbidge and Hamer [34] noted in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program, reveals the need for institution-wide integrity training programs. This aligns with Hansen and Lárusdóttir [17] observation that there is often a gap between ethical values and their practical implementation in educational settings. The necessity for comprehensive training to bridge this gap is further emphasized by Yusuf *et al.* [35] who found that while lecturers in Aceh, Indonesia,

generally understand integrity, this knowledge does not significantly influence their academic ethics practices. These findings resonate with Özgenel and Aksu [16], which emphasizes the importance of ethical leadership in fostering an environment conducive to integrity. Moreover, the challenges of cultivating a culture of academic integrity in secondary schools, as identified by Çelik and Razi [36], reflect the broader global difficulties faced in educational settings. The need for strategic planning, comprehensive policy frameworks, and active community involvement is evident, reinforcing Mortari and Ubbiali [20] advocacy for service learning as a practical approach to embedding ethical principles within educational practices. This comparison highlights that promoting academic integrity requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond mere awareness and includes robust training and policy support.

Leadership and integrity in educational management are critical for creating a positive and effective learning environment. The T-QES in Indonesia, studied by Rasyid *et al.* [40], exemplifies how educational programs can nurture leaders with strong moral principles. This is in line with Papaloi *et al.* [41] findings that school principals in Europe are expected to emphasize core values such as honesty and moral responsibility, essential for fostering students' holistic development. These insights echo Majidipour *et al.* [19] who stress the importance of balancing care ethics with professional ethics in leadership, highlighting the role of internalized moral values in overcoming leadership challenges. Ahmad and Rochimah [26] demonstrate that transformational leadership positively influences both integrity and teaching effectiveness, suggesting that leaders who inspire and motivate staff while upholding ethical standards can enhance educational outcomes. This is consistent with the findings of Phetsombat and Na-Nan [22], who emphasize ethical leadership's impact on organizational dynamics, fostering a culture of integrity and citizenship within schools. However, the negative influence of external factors like nepotism and political interests on the integrity of school leaders, as identified by Khadka and Bhattarai [42], resonates with Hansen and Lárusdóttir [17] concerns about the disparity between ethical values and their implementation in practice. These studies collectively underscore the importance of protective measures and support systems that enable school leaders to maintain their integrity in the face of external pressures. The role of servant leadership in educational management is highlighted by Uçar and Uğur [43], who found that secondary school teachers in Turkey generally observed altruistic behavior, empathy, and honesty in their principals, though inconsistencies were reported. This finding aligns with Suntani *et al.* [44] emphasis on the importance of ethical communication by school principals in fostering a cohesive and productive educational environment. Additionally, Arif *et al.* [45] found that leader integrity positively affects LMX and enhances employees' sense of inclusion, reinforcing the broader theme of ethical leadership in promoting inclusivity and support within educational institutions. These findings suggest that a combination of ethical principles, transformational leadership, and effective interpersonal practices is essential for fostering integrity in educational management.

Character and value education in schools are pivotal in shaping individuals with integrity, empathy, and responsibility. Hermanto *et al.* [46] demonstrated the successful integration of core values like religiosity, nationalism, independence, cooperation, and integrity into the educational framework of Indonesian schools. This aligns with Gohar and Carvalho [18] emphasis on the importance of ethical education in shaping individuals' inner discipline, mirroring the role of school leaders in modeling and instilling ethical behavior. The integration of principles into school leadership supports the holistic development of students by emphasizing the importance of ethical behavior in navigating personal and professional challenges. Furthermore, Kwarteng [47] highlighted the significance of integrity in educational administration, uncovering prevalent corruption within the Ghana education service and advocating for automated systems and whistleblower mechanisms to uphold integrity. This finding is consistent with the broader literature, which stresses the need for systemic changes to support ethical practices in education. Park and Hill [48] identified integrity, interpersonal skills, respect for students, and professional development as key components of teachers' work ethics, underscoring their importance in creating a professional and ethical teaching environment. This perspective is supported by Rohman *et al.* [49] who emphasize the need for anti-fraud measures and ethical training to support character education. Additionally, Sezer *et al.* [50] stressed the importance of comprehensive in-service training programs that instill personal, professional, universal, and cultural values in teachers, thereby preparing them to effectively impart character education to students.

The results directly relate to the research questions by emphasizing that promoting and maintaining academic integrity requires a combination of comprehensive training programs, ethical leadership, and robust policy frameworks that address both the knowledge and practice gaps among students and teachers. Regarding leadership styles, transformational and ethical leadership are positively impact the integrity and performance of teachers and students by fostering an environment of trust, motivation, and moral responsibility, though challenges such as external pressures remain. The key challenges in implementing character and value education programs involve overcoming systemic corruption, ensuring consistency in ethical practices, and integrating core values into the educational framework through effective training and leadership, highlighting best practices like servant leadership and ethical communication in schools.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Developing ethical school principals and responsible citizens requires a holistic approach that integrates core values into the curriculum, ensures integrity in administration, fosters strong work ethics among teachers, prevents fraud, and provides comprehensive training. Effective leadership, characterized by ethical communication, transformational practices, and servant leadership, is crucial in nurturing a culture of integrity and shaping empathetic, responsible individuals. However, challenges like the high cost of anti-plagiarism tools, resistance to change, and external pressures such as political interests and corruption must be addressed. Ultimately, a steadfast commitment to ethical practices in education is essential for building trustworthy, harmonious institutions capable of navigating the complexities of modern education and inspiring positive change.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The financial support from the Ministry of Education [KPM.BT.700-30/22/41 (5)] is gratefully acknowledged. Furthermore, this study could represent a continuation of research conducted the previous year. Therefore, the researcher extends sincere appreciation to the institutions and affiliated parties whose support facilitated the successful execution of this study.




## REFERENCES

- [1] J. G. Cullen, "Moral recovery and ethical leadership," *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 175, no. 3, pp. 485–497, Jan. 2022, doi: 10.1007/s10551-020-04658-3.
- [2] M. E. Brown and L. K. Treviño, "Ethical leadership: a review and future directions," *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 6, pp. 595–616, Dec. 2006, doi: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2006.10.004.
- [3] D. N. Den Hartog, "Ethical leadership," *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 409–434, Apr. 2015, doi: 10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032414-111237.
- [4] M. A. Adeoye, O. P. Akinubi, and A. K. Yahaya, "Unlocking the potential of education in Nigeria's industry 4.0 era: overcoming challenges of digital transformation," *Indonesian Journal of Educational Research and Review*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 608–617, Oct. 2023, doi: 10.23887/ijerr.v6i3.66842.
- [5] A. Ezzaim, A. Dahbi, A. Haidine, and A. Aqal, "AI-based adaptive learning: a systematic mapping of the literature," *JUCS - Journal of Universal Computer Science*, vol. 29, no. 10, pp. 1161–1198, Oct. 2023, doi: 10.3897/jucs.90528.
- [6] N. Sinha, "The transformation of the teachers' role: new challenges for the future," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, pp. 1–10, 2021, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.3974663.
- [7] D. Grant, "Leading with integrity: how principals influence teacher effectiveness without derailing morale," *Research Outreach*, no. 135, pp. 26–29, Apr. 2023, doi: 10.32907/RO-135-4370549554.
- [8] I. Halyna, Y. Olena, and M. Olha, "Implementation of the basic principles of academic integrity into the educational process of specialists in the specialty 017 physical culture and sports at Boris Grinchenko Kyiv University," *Sport Science and Human Health*, vol. 1, no. 9, 2023, doi: 10.28925/2664-2069.2023.17.
- [9] M. G. M. Reyes and B. M. Redoña, "Personal attributes and behavioral response of academic heads of private higher education institutions: basis for human resource intervention development model," *Asia Pacific Management Review*, vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 180–185, Dec. 2021, doi: 10.1016/j.apmr.2021.02.002.
- [10] S. Sutomo, M. Ahmad, M. Matin, and H. Rochimah, "Strengthening professionalism of school principals through integrity, communication skills, and teamwork," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 4650–4661, Dec. 2023, doi: 10.35445/alishlah.v15i4.4428.
- [11] S. S. Vikaraman, A. N. Mansor, M. Y. M. Nor, B. S. Alias, and V. Gurusamy, "Ethical leadership practices and trust among public school leaders in Malaysia," *Asian Journal of University Education*, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 174–191, Aug. 2021, doi: 10.24191/ajue.v17i3.14509.
- [12] F. Kinchington, "Empowering the school leaders of tomorrow: what lessons can we learn from the decision-making of today's school leaders?" *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, vol. 26, no. 5, pp. 837–853, Sep. 2023, doi: 10.1080/13603124.2020.1829713.
- [13] B. O. B. Ballangrud and M. Aas, "Ethical thinking and decision-making in the leadership of professional learning communities," *Educational Research*, vol. 64, no. 2, pp. 176–190, Apr. 2022, doi: 10.1080/00131881.2022.2044879.
- [14] E. Pamir, A. Waheedi, and K. A. Habib, "Stakeholders in assessment and evaluation: an analysis of evaluation in Afghanistan and its effects," *Randwick International of Education and Linguistics Science Journal*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 245–253, Jun. 2023, doi: 10.47175/rielsj.v4i2.688.
- [15] Y. Taj, "Ethical dilemmas in leadership: navigating difficult situations with integrity," *International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research*, vol. 5, no. 4, p. 4222, Jul. 2023, doi: 10.36948/ijfmr.2023.v05i04.4222.
- [16] M. Özgenel and T. Aksu, "The power of school principals' ethical leadership behavior to predict organizational health," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 816–825, Dec. 2020, doi: 10.11591/ijere.v9i4.20658.
- [17] F. B. Hansen and S. H. Lárusdóttir, "Principals' priorities and values - twenty-five years of compulsory school principalship in Iceland," *Nordic Studies in Education*, vol. 40, no. 4, pp. 305–322, Oct. 2020, doi: 10.23865/nse.v40.2603.
- [18] A. Gohar and A. B. de Carvalho, "A critical review of Kant thoughts on ethical education: a reflection on current era," *Praxis Educativa*, vol. 18, pp. 1–9, 2023, doi: 10.5212/PraxEduc.v.18.21400.023.
- [19] P. Majidipour, K. B. Hamtan, R. Marzooghi, and M. Salehi, "Women's educational supervisors' experiences of leadership challenges due to care ethics in Kermanshah hospitals," *Journal of Advanced Pharmacy Education and Research*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 121–126, 2021, doi: 10.51847/OZZ743HQTN.
- [20] L. Mortari and M. Ubbiali, "Service learning: a philosophy and practice to reframe higher education," *Athens Journal of Education*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 115–138, Jan. 2021, doi: 10.30958/aje.8-2-1.






- [21] P. du Preez, "Curriculum leadership and Alain Badiou's ethics: a South African experience," *Education as Change*, vol. 24, pp. 1–12, Nov. 2020, doi: 10.25159/1947-9417/5633.
- [22] P. Phetsombat and K. Na-Nan, "A causal model of ethical leadership affecting the organizational citizenship behavior of teachers in the office of the basic education commission," *Sustainability*, vol. 15, no. 8, p. 6656, Apr. 2023, doi: 10.3390/su15086656.
- [23] K. A. Ayenalem, M. A. Gone, M. E. Yohannes, and K. A. Lakew, "Causes of teachers' professional misconduct in Ethiopian secondary schools: implications for policy and practice," *Cogent Education*, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 2188754, Dec. 2023, doi: 10.1080/2331186X.2023.2188754.
- [24] P. Mendonça, "A scarlet a-line skirt, independent and critical visual practice, and the Brit(ish) line: representing women's leadership in education through values-based cartooning," *Frontiers in Education*, vol. 6, p. 550058, Apr. 2021, doi: 10.3389/feduc.2021.550058.
- [25] O. Erdoğan and F. Sezgin, "Ethical dilemmas that school administrators and teachers experience: reasons and coping strategies," *Pegem Eğitim ve Öğretim Dergisi*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 593–634, May 2020, doi: 10.14527/pegog.2020.020.
- [26] M. Ahmad and H. Rochimah, "Improving teaching effectiveness through transformational leadership and integrity," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 1316–1324, Dec. 2021, doi: 10.11591/ijere.v10i4.21801.
- [27] D. Edwards, M. Schmidt, and R. Mestry, "Core values of ethical leaders in South African schools," *South African Journal of Education*, vol. 43, no. si2, pp. S1–S11, Dec. 2023, doi: 10.15700/saje.v43ns2a2469.
- [28] M. Newman and D. Gough, "Systematic reviews in educational research: methodology, perspectives and application," in *Systematic Reviews in Educational Research*, O. Zawacki-Richter, M. Kerres, S. Bedenlier, M. Bond, and K. Buntins, Eds. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2020, pp. 3–22, doi: 10.1007/978-3-658-27602-7\_1.
- [29] I. F. del Amo, J. A. Erkoyuncu, R. Roy, R. Palmarini, and D. Onoufriou, "A systematic review of augmented reality content-related techniques for knowledge transfer in maintenance applications," *Computers in Industry*, vol. 103, pp. 47–71, Dec. 2018, doi: 10.1016/j.compind.2018.08.007.
- [30] D. Moher, A. Liberati, J. Tetzlaff, and D. G. Altman, "Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: the PRISMA statement," *International Journal of Surgery*, vol. 8, no. 5, pp. 336–341, 2010, doi: 10.1016/j.ijsu.2010.02.007.
- [31] Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP), "CASP checklist: CASP qualitative studies checklist," CASP, 2023. Accessed: Sep. 1, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://casp-uk.net/casp-tools-checklists/qualitative-studies-checklist>.
- [32] S. Nadelson and L. S. Nadelson, "Evidence-based practice article reviews using CASP tools: a method for teaching EBP," *Worldviews on Evidence-Based Nursing*, vol. 11, no. 5, pp. 344–346, Oct. 2014, doi: 10.1111/wvn.12059.
- [33] A. Subaveerapandiyan and N. Sakthivel, "A study of obstacles in plagiarism software subscribing by colleges in Tamil Nadu," *DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology*, vol. 42, no. 5, pp. 318–324, Oct. 2022, doi: 10.14429/djlit.42.5.18273.
- [34] T. Burbidge and R. Hamer, "Academic honesty in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme: student, teacher, and school perspectives," *Journal of International Students*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 265–285, May 2020, doi: 10.32674/jis.v10i2.667.
- [35] S. M. Yusuf, M. Z. M. Yusoff, M. D. Kasa, Y. Don, and W. H. W. M. Zain, "Contributing factors in academic ethics practices among lecturers of Islamic higher education," *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 8, no. 5, pp. 2123–2128, May 2020, doi: 10.13189/ujer.2020.080551.
- [36] Ö. Çelik and S. Razi, "Facilitators and barriers to creating a culture of academic integrity at secondary schools: an exploratory case study," *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, vol. 19, no. 1, p. 4, Mar. 2023, doi: 10.1007/s40979-023-00125-4.
- [37] S. Demir and M. Kale, "Examining the compliance of supervision practices with professional and ethical principles," (in Turkish), *Milli Eğitim Dergisi*, vol. 52, no. 238, pp. 1219–1258, May 2023, doi: 10.37669/milliegitim.1130950.
- [38] D. Nelson, "How online business school instructors address academic integrity violations," *The Journal of Educators Online*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 1–14, 2021, doi: 10.9743/JEO.2021.18.3.1.
- [39] İ. Yıldırım, C. Albez, and D. Akan, "Unethical behaviors of teachers in their relationships with the school stakeholders," *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 152–166, Jan. 2020, doi: 10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.8n.1p.152.
- [40] S. Rasyid, D. Nurdin, A. Suryana, A. Samsudin, and A. H. Aminudin, "Can the tahfidzul-qur'an education system (T-QES) create leadership with integrity? NVivo 12 analysis," *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, vol. 17, no. 6, pp. 1925–1942, 2022, doi: 10.18844/cjes.v17i6.7485.
- [41] E. Papaloi, A. Balasi, and G. Iordanidis, "Ethical leadership in the field of education in Europe: a comparative analysis," *European Journal of Education*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 1–16, Apr. 2023, doi: 10.2478/ejed-2023-0001.
- [42] B. B. Khadka and P. C. Bhattarai, "Integrity triad as doubled edged sword for head-teachers' integrity: a case from Nepal," *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, vol. 17, no. 1, p. 27, Dec. 2021, doi: 10.1007/s40979-021-00092-8.
- [43] R. Uçar and S. Uğur, "Teachers' views on school principals' servant leadership behaviors: a mixed method study," *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 565–612, 2020.
- [44] U. T. Suntani, R. N. Sasongko, M. Kristiawan, A. Walid, and R. G. T. Kusumah, "The role of principal interpersonal communication on teacher's work motivation," *Education Quarterly Reviews*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 147–151, Jun. 2021, doi: 10.31014/aior.1993.04.02.206.
- [45] L. Arif, S. R. Chaudhury, and L. LaCross, "Understanding leader integrity on employees' perceived inclusion through mediating role of leader-member exchange," *International Journal of Organizational Leadership*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 216–234, Jun. 2023, doi: 10.33844/ijol.2023.60360.
- [46] Hermanto, M. Japar, Riyadi, M. S. Sumantri, and H. R. P. Pembangunan, "Analysis of character education values: school-based character in Indonesia," *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 336–349, Dec. 2023, doi: 10.52152/kuey.v30i1.665.
- [47] J. T. Kwarteng, "Breaches of integrity in teacher administration in Ghana," *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, vol. 18, no. 1, p. 13, Dec. 2022, doi: 10.1007/s40979-022-00106-z.
- [48] H. Park and R. B. Hill, "Development of the Korean teachers' occupational work ethic scale: its factor structure, validity and reliability," *Asia Pacific Education Review*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 101–118, Mar. 2021, doi: 10.1007/s12564-020-09644-y.
- [49] A. Rohman, H. Mukhibad, and A. Nurkhin, "Religiosity and misuse of school aid funds: the development of the fraud theory," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 186–196, Mar. 2023, doi: 10.11591/ijere.v12i1.23965.
- [50] S. Sezer, N. Karabacak, M. Kucuk, and I. Korkmaz, "School administrators' opinions related to the values that should be gained to classroom teachers through in-service training," *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 20, no. 86, pp. 175–196, Apr. 2020, doi: 10.14689/ejer.2020.86.9.




**BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS**

**Mackencidy ak Bujang**    is a Ph.D. candidate at Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). He has a Bachelor's degree in Education (B. Edu.) in Business Administration from Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Sintok, Kedah and Master's degree in Educational Leadership and Management from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Samarahan Campus. He served in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Sibu Jaya as a form six academic teacher from 2010 to 2022, before continuing his study under the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) scholarship starting in October 2022. His research focuses on educational leadership and management. He can be contacted at email: mackencidyknt303@gmail.com; p120745@siswa.ukm.edu.my.



**Bity Salwana Alias**    is a Lecturer and Chairman for the Research Center of Leadership and Educational Policy at the Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. She holds a Ph.D. and Master's Degree in Educational Administration from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from International Islamic University, a Diploma in International Trade from Sultan Zainal Abidin Religious College, and a Diploma in Education from Kuala Lumpur Technical College, Malaysia. Started to work as a teacher in 1995, then as assistant director at the Ministry of Education Malaysia in 2009 and finally started to serve at UKM in 2018 as a lecturer until now. Her area of study is educational leadership, management and policy, with the main goal to ensure quality, equity, unity and integrity in education for all. She can be contacted at email: bity@ukm.edu.my.



**Azlin Norhaini Mansor**    received her Ph.D. in Educational Administration from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Master of Education and Bachelor of Science (Biology) from New York State University at Albany, New York, USA. She was a teacher (1987-1997), an Assistant Director at Educational Planning and Research Division, Ministry of Education Malaysia, (1997-2010) and a senior lecturer at Matriculation Division, Ministry of Education (2010-2012) before appointed as a senior lecturer in UKM in 2012 till now. She is currently an Associate Professor and a member of Centre for Shaping Advanced and Professional Education (UKMShape). Her publications and research interest includes educational leadership, educational management, policy evaluation, and various fields involving teaching and learning. She can be contacted at email: azlinmansor@ukm.edu.my; azlinmansor@gmail.com.