



Humanitarian Values-Based Leadership: How Can Schools Add Value to Students and Teachers?

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Abstract

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Education is pivotal in fostering academic excellence and humanistic values such as empathy and collaboration, yet rural faith-based schools often lack leadership strategies prioritizing these principles. This study investigates how humanistic value-based leadership, operationalized through the VESDA framework (valuing, empathizing, serving, developing, engaging), enhances student well-being and teacher performance in underserved educational contexts. Employing a systematic literature review (SLR) of peer-reviewed articles from 2015–2025 sourced from Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar, thematic analysis was conducted to identify key patterns. Results indicate that VESDA-based leadership fosters inclusive school environments by enhancing trust, motivation, and collaboration, enabling students and teachers to thrive academically and socio-emotionally. These findings suggest that VESDA offers a transformative approach for rural schools, bridging academic and holistic development. Practical strategies are provided for school leaders to create supportive educational ecosystems in resource-constrained settings.

Kata Kunci:

Kepemimpinan
Humanistik;
Pendidikan
Berbasis Nilai;
Kepemimpinan
Sekolah;
Kesejahteraan
Siswa;
Pengembangan
Guru

Pendidikan berperan penting dalam mengembangkan keunggulan akademik dan nilai-nilai kemanusiaan seperti empati dan kolaborasi, namun sekolah berbasis agama di pedesaan sering kali kekurangan strategi kepemimpinan yang mengutamakan prinsip-prinsip ini. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana kepemimpinan berbasis nilai humanistik melalui kerangka VESDA (menghargai, berempati, melayani, mengembangkan, melibatkan) meningkatkan kesejahteraan siswa dan kinerja guru di lingkungan pendidikan yang kurang terlayani. Menggunakan tinjauan literatur sistematis (SLR) terhadap artikel terindeks dari 2015–2025 dari Scopus, ERIC, dan Google Scholar, analisis tematik dilakukan untuk mengidentifikasi pola utama. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan berbasis VESDA menciptakan lingkungan sekolah yang inklusif dengan meningkatkan kepercayaan, motivasi, dan kolaborasi, memungkinkan siswa dan guru berkembang secara akademik dan sosial-emosional. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa VESDA menawarkan pendekatan transformatif bagi sekolah pedesaan, menjembatani pembangunan akademik dan holistik. Strategi praktis disediakan bagi pemimpin sekolah untuk membangun ekosistem pendidikan yang mendukung di lingkungan dengan sumber daya terbatas.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals who are not only academically excellent but also embody human values such as empathy, respect, and collaboration. More than merely a process of knowledge transfer, education serves as a medium for developing human potential holistically, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions (Amels et al., 2020; Fernández et al., 2023). By emphasizing human values such as empathy, respect for diversity, and collaboration, education cultivates individuals who excel academically while also being responsible, socially aware, and capable of making positive contributions. This approach fosters a more inclusive and harmonious society, where individuals are trained to become citizens with social consciousness and the capacity to build better communities (Singh, 2020).

Humanistic value-based leadership places respect, empathy, and justice at its core in creating an inclusive school environment that supports holistic growth (Amels et al., 2020; Bock & Oelsnitz, 2025; Kovoer-Misra & Gopalakrishnan, 2016). Leaders who adopt this approach understand the perspectives of students, teachers, and staff, ensure equal access to opportunities, and foster authentic relationships and collaboration. The result is an inspiring school culture that enhances academic achievement, develops socially conscious student character, and strengthens the community to contribute to a better society (Ridho et al., 2023). In the school context, humanistic value-based leadership is a relevant approach to creating a learning environment that supports the well-being of both students and teachers. This approach emphasizes values such as valuing, empathizing, serving, developing, and engaging—collectively referred to as VESDA—which are believed to increase motivation, collaboration, and achievement within the school community. However, challenges remain, such as the lack of leadership strategies focusing on human values, especially in faith-based schools in rural areas such as Bondowoso.

Value-based leadership significantly enhances organizational performance, ethical culture, and sustainability across various contexts. Frost (2014) highlights its role in fostering connections among organizational members and stakeholders, while Snyder et al. (2024) emphasize strategies such as defining core values, promoting reflection, and storytelling to drive development. Bano et al. (2020) underscore the transformative power of ethical and moral values in reshaping organizations, and Sear (2025) notes that effective leaders create added value by prioritizing others' interests. Similarly, Titus et al. (2022) advocate for balancing social, environmental, and organizational interests to achieve sustainable outcomes. However, these studies predominantly focus on corporate or higher education settings, with limited exploration of humanistic value-based leadership in primary and secondary schools, particularly in rural faith-based contexts. Moreover, there is a notable gap in systematically analyzing how the VESDA framework (valuing, empathizing, serving, developing, engaging) can be applied to school leadership to enhance student and teacher outcomes.

This study addresses the critical challenge of insufficient humanistic leadership strategies in rural faith-based schools, where an overemphasis on academic achievement often overshadows socio-emotional well-being, hindering holistic development (Singh, 2020; Muhimmah et al., 2022). By operationalizing

humanistic value-based leadership through the VESDA framework, this research examines how valuing individuals, empathizing with their needs, serving the community, developing potential, and engaging stakeholders can foster inclusive and supportive learning environments. Recent studies highlight the transformative potential of humanistic leadership in building trust and motivation within educational settings (Alazmi, 2025; Kyambade & Namatovu, 2024). Through a systematic literature review, this study seeks to identify effective VESDA-based strategies that enhance student well-being (engagement and academic achievement) and teacher performance (motivation and collaboration), offering evidence-based recommendations for school leaders in resource-constrained, rural faith-based settings. This study aims to: (1) identify effective VESDA-based leadership strategies that enhance student well-being (engagement and academic achievement) and teacher performance (motivation and collaboration), and (2) formulate evidence-based recommendations for school leaders to foster inclusive and supportive learning environments in rural faith-based settings.

II. METHOD

This study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach based on the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure a systematic, transparent, and replicable process. The SLR is employed to identify, evaluate, and synthesize relevant literature on humanistic value-based leadership and its contribution to creating added value for students and teachers within the school environment.

The research applies a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method that is organized in a structured and methodical manner to identify and synthesize key findings related to the essential competencies of digital leaders in the educational context. The SLR design follows six general stages: (1) identifying the research questions, (2) determining inclusion and exclusion criteria, (3) developing a literature search strategy, (4) screening articles, (5) extracting data, and (6) analyzing and synthesizing the results.



Figure 1: Systematic Literature Review (SLR) Flowchart**1. Research Questions**

The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) begins with a crucial step of identifying research questions to establish a clear and well-directed focus. In this context, the study focuses on humanistic value-based leadership in school settings. To guide the SLR process, two research questions are formulated as follows:

1. How is humanistic value-based leadership implemented in school environments?
2. What is the impact of humanistic value-based leadership on students and teachers?

These questions aim to explore strategies for implementing leadership that prioritizes human values and to evaluate its influence on student development and teacher performance, thus providing a strong foundation for a systematic and in-depth literature analysis.

2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the relevance and quality of the literature analyzed in the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on humanistic value-based leadership in school environments, the criteria are designed to filter sources that are relevant, high quality, and aligned with the research focus. These criteria support a systematic and in-depth analysis within the SLR. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are established as follows:

	 Inclusion	 Exclusion
Type of Literature	Scholarly articles	Non-scholarly literature
Publication Source	Scopus, ERIC, Google Scholar	N/A
Publication Date	Jan 2015 - Aug 2025	Before January 2015
Leadership Focus	Humanistic value-based leadership	Leadership outside school context
Impact Measurement	Impact on students/teachers	No impact on students/teachers
Language	English or Indonesian	Other languages
Text Availability	Full-text available	Full-text unavailable

Figure 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**3. Search Strategy**

The literature search was conducted in **August 2025** using three main databases—**Scopus**, **ERIC**, and **Google Scholar**—selected for their extensive coverage of research in education and leadership. The search employed a

combination of keywords with Boolean operators, as follows: ("humanistic leadership" OR "value-based leadership" OR "ethical leadership" OR "kepemimpinan berbasis nilai kemanusiaan" OR "kepemimpinan etis") AND ("school" OR "education") AND ("student outcomes" OR "teacher wellbeing" OR "student motivation" OR "teacher satisfaction" OR "nilai tambah siswa" OR "kesejahteraan guru").

The search was limited to article titles, abstracts, and keywords, with filters applied to include only peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025, written in English or Indonesian, and with full-text availability. To enhance completeness, hand-searching was conducted on the reference lists of relevant articles to identify additional studies that may not have been retrieved through database searches. Through this approach, the SLR aims to produce a systematic, comprehensive, and in-depth analysis of the implementation and impact of humanistic value-based leadership in school settings, contributing to the advancement of more human-centered and effective educational practices.

4. Article Screening

This study employed a systematic approach to identify and select relevant studies for inclusion in the review. The process began with the identification of 145 records sourced from databases (n = 120) and registers (n = 25). Prior to screening, 35 records were removed, comprising 15 duplicates identified through automated tools and 10 records excluded for other reasons, resulting in 85 records screened. Of these, 35 reports were sought for retrieval, while 5 reports were not retrieved. The retrieved reports (n = 35) were assessed for eligibility, with 30 reports evaluated and 5 excluded due to publication before 2015 (n = 5), duplicate articles from different databases (n = 8), and un reputable journals (n = 7). Ultimately, 10 new studies and their corresponding 10 reports were included in the review.

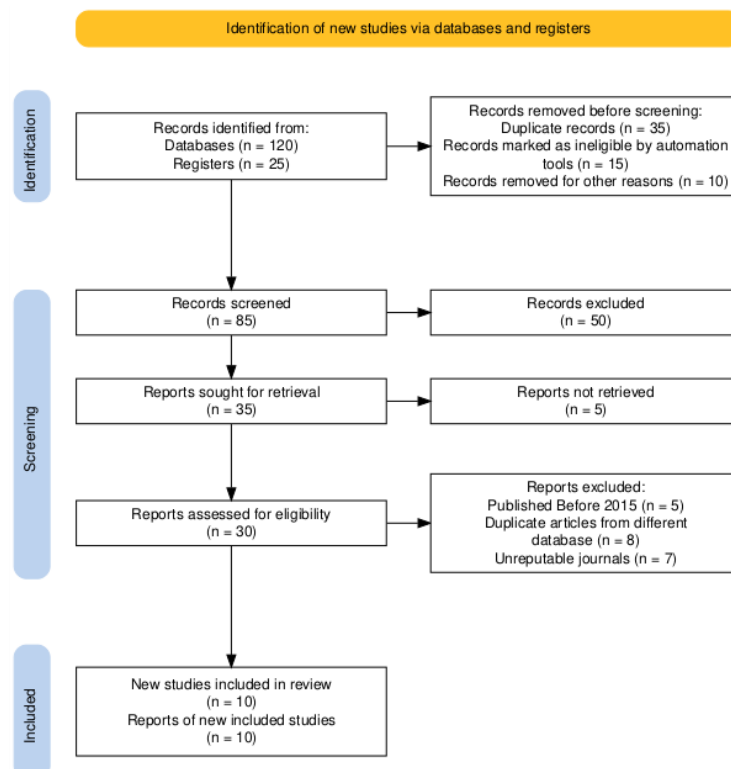


Figure 3: Flow of Article Selection with PRISMA**5. Data Extraction and Coding**

Following a rigorous selection and screening process, ten articles that met the inclusion criteria were identified as the primary sources for review. The next stage involved systematic data extraction and coding to capture key information from each article. The extracted information included the authors' names, article titles, journal names and indexing status, year of publication, and the research methods employed. The collected data were then categorized and coded to facilitate thematic analysis and synthesis of findings. This process aimed to reveal and map the essential competencies required of a digital leader within the educational context.

Table 1: Recapitulation of Research Article

No	Author	Journal Name	Journal Index	Publication Year
1	Anadol & Behery	Cross Cultural & Strategic Management	Q1	2020
2	Kim & Park	Leadership & Organization Development Journal	Q1	2020
3	Tvedt et al.	International Journal of Managing Projects in Business	Q1	2023
4	Muhimmah et al.	European Journal of Educational Research	Q3	2019
5	Alazmi	International Journal of Leadership in Education	Q2	2025
6	Dey et al	Journal of Cleaner Production	Q1	2022
7	Crossan et al.	Sport in Society	Q1	2023

8	Iqbal & Parray	Social Responsibility Journal	Q1	2025
9	Hesami	Strategy and Leadership	Q4	2025
10	Groves & Feyerherm	Leadership & Organization Development Journal	Q1	2022

6. Data Analysis

Data analysis in this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted using a thematic approach following the guidelines of Braun and Clarke (2006) to identify key themes, such as the characteristics of humanistic value-based leadership, its impact on students and teachers, and contextual factors influencing its implementation. The analysis process consisted of four stages: (1) initial coding based on findings from the ten selected articles, (2) grouping the codes into main themes and relevant subthemes, (3) reviewing the themes to ensure consistency and alignment with the research questions—namely, how humanistic value-based leadership is implemented in school settings and its impact on students and teachers, and (4) conducting a narrative synthesis to present the findings coherently.

The analysis was carried out qualitatively by mapping the interconnections among themes identified from the coded articles. The synthesis process aimed to build a comprehensive understanding of the essential competencies required for humanistic value-based leadership in educational contexts. To support this process, NVivo 12 Pro software was used for article coding and for visualizing relationships among themes through mind mapping. This approach facilitated an in-depth thematic analysis and conceptual synthesis, serving as the basis for developing a conceptual framework and practical implications for advancing humanistic value-based leadership in educational management.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Result

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to examine how the VESDA framework (Value People, Empathize, Serve, Develop, Engage) can enhance the performance of school leaders in providing added value to both students and teachers. The review synthesized findings from 12 selected peer-reviewed articles indexed in Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. These articles were chosen based on their relevance to value-based leadership practices in educational settings, with a particular focus on leadership strategies that foster well-being, motivation, and collaborative culture in schools.

The results revealed that the implementation of VESDA principles significantly contributes to creating inclusive, supportive, and growth-oriented learning environments. Specifically, Value People ensures that every teacher and student is recognized for their potential and contribution, fostering a sense of belonging and respect. Empathize allows school leaders to respond effectively to the emotional and academic needs of their stakeholders, thereby reducing

conflict and promoting psychological safety. Serve emphasizes the leader's role in providing resources, facilities, and support to enhance the overall learning process. Develop involves the continuous professional and personal development of both teachers and students, while Engage promotes active collaboration between the school and its broader community, including parents and local institutions.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of these relationships, a conceptual mapping of the VESDA framework was developed using NVivo 12 Pro through thematic coding and mind mapping techniques. This mapping illustrates the interconnected nature of the five principles, showing how each reinforces the others to achieve sustainable improvement in school performance. For example, valuing people strengthens engagement, and developing competencies enhances the leader's ability to serve effectively. The resulting conceptual framework (Figure 4) provides a systematic visualization of the VESDA model's role in supporting school leadership practices, thus offering a practical guide for leaders aiming to foster a human-centered educational environment.

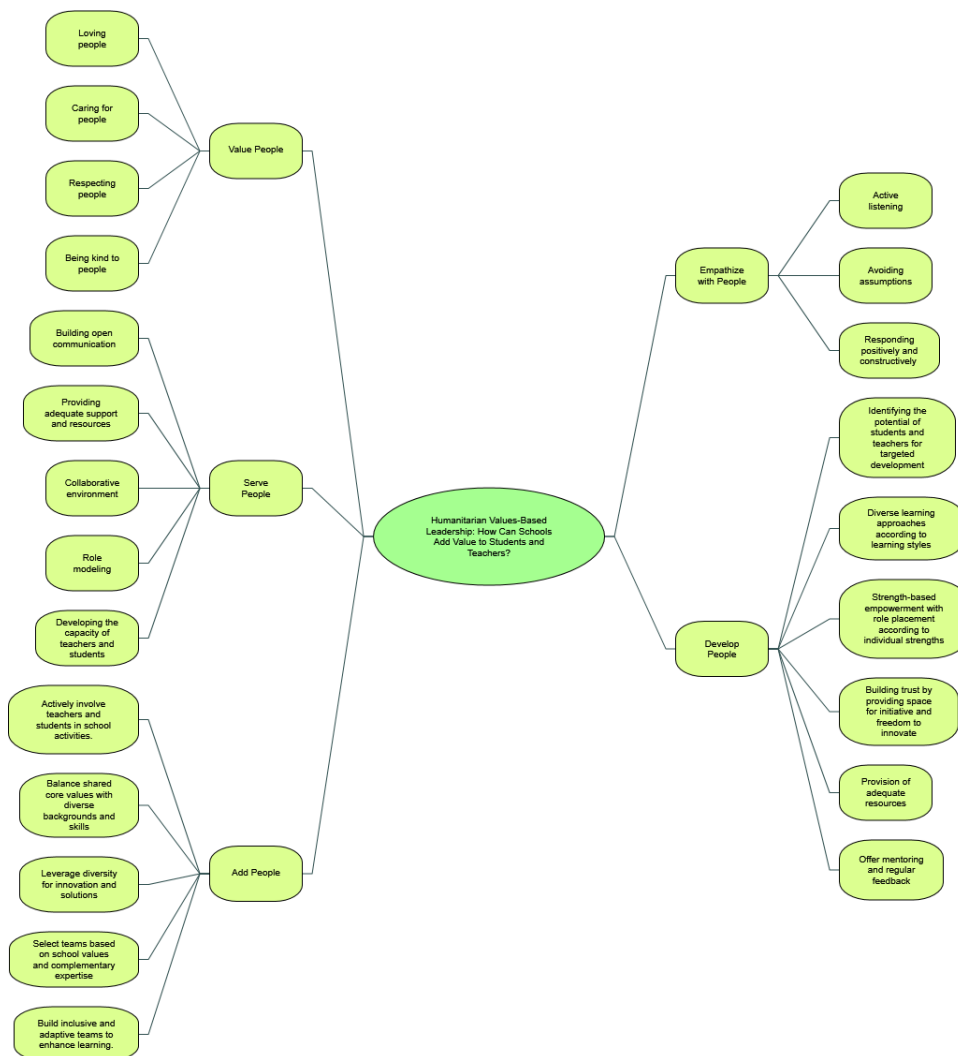


Figure 4 : Conceptual Framework of Human Values-Based Leadership: How Can Schools Add Value to Students and Teachers?

a. Value People

Valuing students and teachers is a fundamental pillar of humanistic, values-based leadership in schools. This principle emphasizes that educational success is not solely measured by academic achievement but also by the well-being and engagement of individuals within the school community (Kovoor-Misra & Gopalakrishnan, 2016). Leaders who focus exclusively on exam results without considering the emotional state, motivation, and personal needs of teachers and students risk encountering issues such as low enthusiasm for learning, high levels of burnout, or even internal conflicts (Khofi & Syafriani, 2024). Conversely, visionary schools place human values above mere quantitative results, integrating academic achievement with fairness, empathy, and empowerment-oriented practices (Baimyrzaeva & Meyer, 2020; Janson & McQueen, 2007).

Valuing students and teachers is not a mere formality or symbolic gesture, but rather the core of effective and sustainable school leadership. Leaders who embody this principle create a healthy, collaborative learning environment that motivates all school members to contribute optimally. The implementation of the *Value People* principle can be carried out through four interrelated approaches: loving, caring for, respecting, and being kind to people.

First, loving people. Effective leadership stems from genuine care from the heart. A school leader who loves students and teachers is present not only as a policy maker but also as a companion in their learning and personal development processes. For example, when a student is facing personal challenges, the leader may facilitate counseling support or provide moral encouragement. Similarly, for teachers, the leader may express appreciation for their hard work and dedication while offering opportunities for growth without excessive pressure (Alkhwaldi, 2024; Lee & Chon, 2020; Mutha & Srivastava, 2021). Second, caring for people. Authentic care has a long-term impact on the quality of interactions and productivity within the school. Leaders can demonstrate care by providing relevant resources—such as educational technology to enhance student learning, or professional training programs to improve teachers' competencies. Even simple policies, such as reducing teachers' administrative workload, can serve as tangible evidence that leadership prioritizes the human needs behind their professional roles (Muhimmah et al., 2022).

Third, respecting people. Respect builds a foundation of trust and loyalty. School leaders who respect students and teachers involve them in decision-making processes, actively listen to their aspirations, and acknowledge their contributions. This attitude fosters a culture of mutual respect that becomes contagious, creating a harmonious and inclusive school ecosystem (Hendijani & Ahmadi, 2023). Fourth, being kind to people. Kindness in leadership often manifests in small yet impactful actions, such as recognizing students' achievements in extracurricular activities or granting teachers flexibility in managing their teaching schedules to accommodate personal needs. Such acts of kindness not only enrich the school atmosphere but also encourage both personal and professional growth for every individual within it (Mutonyi et al., 2020).

b. Empathize with People

Empathy, as the core of humanistic, values-based leadership, is a vital capability that enables school leaders to understand and share in the experiences of both students and teachers. By adopting an empathetic

approach, schools can cultivate an environment that supports the holistic development of learners while strengthening relationships within the educational community (Gil et al., 2018; Potter et al., 2020). Etymologically, the term *empathy* derives from the prefix “em,” meaning “in,” and *pathos*, meaning “feeling.” This origin underscores that empathy is the ability to step into another person’s feelings, understand what they are experiencing, and view situations from their perspective. In the context of school leadership, empathy is not merely about feeling what others feel—it is about translating that understanding into appropriate and beneficial action (Mutonyi et al., 2020).

An empathetic principal seeks to understand the perspectives of students and colleagues without rushing to judgment or reacting emotionally. They listen attentively, avoid misleading assumptions, and respond sensitively to individual needs. This sensitivity encompasses an awareness of each community member’s cultural background, social conditions, and personal challenges (Baharuldin et al., 2020; Janson & McQueen, 2007; Wilson & Hastings, 2021).

Empathy is one of the most critical pillars for fostering a harmonious and inclusive school environment. In the midst of diversity among students and teachers—whether in terms of culture, abilities, or emotional needs—leaders who embody empathy are able to bridge differences, build mutual understanding, and maintain the motivation and well-being of all members of the school community. An empathetic principal makes students feel acknowledged and cared for, which in turn fosters engagement, builds self-confidence, and nurtures a love for learning. However, empathy is not merely an emotional state; it is an attitude that must be expressed through concrete actions (Brandebo, 2020; Kearns et al., 2015).

There are three key steps that can guide teachers and principals in applying empathy effectively within the educational setting. First, active listening. Listening attentively is a way of showing that every voice matters. A teacher or principal who takes time to hear students’ concerns about academic pressure, for example, may identify solutions to ease their burden—whether through adjusting assignments or offering counseling support. Second, avoiding assumptions. Understanding someone without rushing to judgment is essential to building trust (Anadol & Behery, 2020; Veletić & Olsen, 2021). A leader who takes the time to learn about a student’s cultural background, for instance, can adapt teaching methods to be more relevant and effective. Similarly, understanding a teacher’s personal challenges allows for tailored support that meets their needs. Third, responding positively and constructively in situations involving conflict or unfair treatment. For example, when dealing with a student displaying difficult behavior, an empathetic principal seeks to uncover the root cause and provide supportive interventions aimed at behavioral improvement rather than immediately resorting to punishment (Muhimmah et al., 2022).

By embedding empathy into every interaction, a school becomes not just a place for learning, but a safe and nurturing environment that affirms the humanity of every individual within it. Empathy is the bridge that connects hearts, builds trust, and fosters a spirit of togetherness in achieving more meaningful educational goals.

c. Serve People

Humanistic, values-based leadership places service at the core of building a school environment that supports the growth and development of both students and teachers. Unlike authoritarian approaches that rely on

directives, *servant leadership* prioritizes collaboration, empathy, and a commitment to collective well-being, thereby creating added value for the entire educational community (Kyambade & Namatovu, 2024).

This approach is manifested through meeting the needs of the school community—from providing resources such as learning technology and professional training to removing barriers that hinder well-being. Servant leadership also reverses the traditional hierarchy by placing students and teachers as the highest priority. Principals and teachers act as facilitators and supporters rather than rulers, guided by the simple philosophy that the well-being of school members outweighs the mere exercise of positional authority (Crossan et al., 2023).

School leaders focus on meeting teachers' needs through support, training, and a positive work environment, while teachers, in turn, guide students in developing their potential. Success is measured by the growth of both students and teachers, rather than by strict compliance with orders. In practice, this may take the form of appreciating teachers, creating a supportive workplace atmosphere, and giving students room to develop independence. Taking inspiration from Benjamin Franklin's question, "*What good shall I do this day?*", a school leader might similarly ask, "*What can I do today to support my students and teachers?*"

Servant leadership does not mean doing all the work or sacrificing excessively; rather, it means serving sincerely to foster mutual growth by placing the needs of students and teachers as the top priority. In the educational context, the focus is on creating conditions that enable each individual to develop optimally—both academically and personally—through complementary practical steps. School leaders can foster open, empathy-based communication by listening to the needs, aspirations, and challenges faced by students and teachers, for example, through regular dialogues to understand learning difficulties and seek solutions together (Khofi et al., 2024).

They also need to provide adequate support and resources—from professional training and teaching tools for teachers to learning facilities that enhance student success. A collaborative environment should be created through cooperation among teachers and students via group projects, extracurricular activities, or discussion forums that nurture a sense of belonging (Heikka et al., 2019). Leading by example is essential; humble and caring leaders actively participate in various school activities, demonstrating tangible commitment rather than mere words. Equally important, leaders should focus on developing the capacity of both teachers and students through skills training, academic mentoring, and counseling services to help them achieve their full potential. With this approach, servant leadership fosters a collaborative school ecosystem where students feel valued and motivated, teachers are encouraged to innovate, and the entire school community benefits sustainably in terms of achievement, character, and well-being (Fahy et al., 2024).

d. Develop People

Developing the potential of both students and teachers is at the heart of humanistic, values-based leadership. Through training and coaching, principals can help them reach their fullest capabilities. Focusing on individual growth fosters a school environment that supports personal and professional development, boosts motivation, and provides long-term benefits for the entire

educational community (Iqbal & Parray, 2025). Developing students and teachers is not only about enhancing skills but also about building confidence and character aligned with humanistic values. While some school leaders may worry that highly developed teachers or students might eventually leave the institution, investing in individual growth ultimately expands the school's positive influence and strengthens its culture of learning (Khofi, 2025).

Several effective development strategies can be applied by principals within educational settings. These require a planned and holistic approach, with interrelated steps that optimize the potential of all school members. First, principals should identify potential in both students and teachers, recognizing individuals with strong abilities and talents so that development efforts can be appropriately targeted (Tvedt et al., 2023). Following this, it is important to implement diverse learning approaches that accommodate different learning styles—listening through lectures and discussions, seeing through demonstrations and observations, speaking through presentations and reflections, and doing through hands-on practice and projects. This strategy is further strengthened when combined with strengths-based empowerment, which places students and teachers in roles that match their unique strengths. For example, a creative student might be entrusted with leading an art project, while a technologically skilled teacher could take the lead in digital training initiatives (Khofi & 2025).

Trust is also a crucial element in development. Principals can provide students with opportunities to take initiative in extracurricular activities, and grant teachers the freedom to develop innovative teaching methods. To ensure these strategies are successful, schools must provide adequate resources, such as access to professional training, teaching equipment, and counseling services (Majeed et al., 2018; Oplatka & Crawford, 2021). Finally, effective development strategies should be supported by mentoring mechanisms and regular feedback. Teachers can participate in mentoring sessions and receive constructive evaluations, while students can benefit from guidance provided by counselors or academic advisors. Through the implementation of such comprehensive strategies, the potential of all school members can be developed optimally, sustainably, and with a lasting positive impact on the progress of the institution (Alazmi, 2025).

Development within the school setting yields significant benefits for all parties involved. For students, it plays a key role in increasing confidence, skills, and readiness to face various challenges—both academically and in everyday life. Students who feel trusted and supported are more likely to maximize their potential. For teachers, development enhances professional competence, motivation, and job satisfaction. Teachers who continue to grow tend to be more creative and innovative in their teaching, thereby shaping an inspiring learning environment and contributing to a positive school culture. For the school as a whole, development becomes the foundation for creating a dynamic learning community, improving institutional reputation, and strengthening collaboration among all members of the school community, both teachers and students.

e. Add People

Involving teachers and students in every activity is an essential element of school leadership, as it fosters a sense of ownership, strengthens trust, and enhances collaboration. Such involvement not only enriches the quality of decision-making through diverse perspectives but also develops the competence, creativity, and responsibility of each individual. By providing space

for active participation, principals can cultivate a culture of healthy cooperation, motivate all members of the school community, and encourage sustainable innovation for the school's progress and adaptability. To ensure this involvement is effective, a balance between similarity and diversity within the school team is needed (Khofi, 2024).

Similarity serves as the foundation for collaboration—shared values such as a commitment to student-centered education or an interest in character development make cooperation easier and help build mutual trust. For example, teachers who share a vision of empathy-based learning can more easily collaborate in designing a humanistic curriculum. Research by psychologist Brett Pelham shows that similarity creates a natural attraction that strengthens team dynamics (Dey et al., 2022).

Conversely, diversity is a valuable source of innovation. Differences in background, experience, and skills can broaden perspectives and expand the solutions generated by the school team. Bringing together teachers from various generations—such as Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z—offers a mix of structured traditional approaches and technology-driven innovations. Likewise, gender diversity in school leadership, whether in the role of principal or coordinator, has been shown to improve decision-making quality and team performance. By combining similarity as a foundation and diversity as a source of innovation, principals can build inclusive, adaptive, and highly competitive teams.

Building a diverse team in a school setting requires the right strategies to ensure that the institution's goals are well achieved. Team member selection should be based on the school's core values—such as empathy and collaboration—while also involving individuals with varied expertise, for example, teachers skilled in technology, the arts, or counseling. Such diversity can spark creative ideas, as differences in experience and background—both from teachers and students—can lead to new teaching methods or more inclusive programs (Hsieh et al., 2023; Woo et al., 2022). In addition, team composition should be arranged so that each member has complementary skills—for example, having teachers focused on academic instruction alongside those skilled in supporting students' emotional development. In this way, a diverse team can become a driver of innovation while simultaneously improving the overall quality of learning in the school (Hauge & Norenes, 2014).

2. Discussion

The findings of this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on humanistic leadership, specifically through the VESDA framework (Value People, Empathize, Serve, Develop, Engage), align with and extend existing research on value-based leadership in educational settings. Previous studies, such as Frost (2014), emphasized that value-based leadership fosters connections between organizational members and stakeholders, which resonates with the VESDA principles of valuing and empathizing. Similarly, Snyder et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of defining core values and fostering reflection, which supports the VESDA components of developing and engaging. Bano et al. (2020) underscored the transformative power of ethical and moral values, aligning with the VESDA emphasis on serving and empathizing to create inclusive school environments. Sear (2025) further reinforced the idea that prioritizing others' interests adds value, which parallels the VESDA focus on serving and developing individuals for collective growth.

However, this study diverges from prior research by focusing specifically on the application of humanistic leadership in primary and secondary schools, particularly in rural, faith-based contexts like Bondowoso. Unlike Frost (2014) and Bano et al. (2020), who primarily explored corporate or higher education contexts, this SLR addresses a gap by examining the VESDA framework's applicability in school settings. For instance, the emphasis on empathy and active listening as practical strategies for school leaders aligns with Alazmi (2025), who noted improved student engagement in schools with empathetic leadership. Similarly, the focus on developing teachers and students through tailored training and mentoring, as found in Groves & Feyerherm (2022), complements the VESDA principle of development but is uniquely contextualized here for rural school environments. This study also extends Titus et al. (2022) by applying the balance of social and ethical interests to school leadership, demonstrating how VESDA fosters both academic achievement and social-emotional well-being.

The positive impacts of humanistic leadership, as identified through the VESDA framework, can be explained by its focus on fostering trust, motivation, and collaboration within the school community. The principle of valuing people, for instance, creates a culture of respect and recognition, which, as supported by Crossan et al. (2023), enhances teacher motivation and student engagement by making individuals feel appreciated. Empathetic leadership, as outlined in the findings, enables school leaders to address diverse needs, reducing conflict and fostering inclusivity. This aligns with psychological theories of motivation, such as Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which posits that autonomy, competence, and relatedness drive intrinsic motivation. By empathizing and serving, leaders meet these psychological needs, leading to improved teacher performance and student well-being.

The serving and developing components of VESDA contribute to long-term growth by providing resources and opportunities for professional and personal development. For example, teacher training and student counseling, as highlighted in Dey et al. (2022), enhance skills and confidence, which in turn improve academic outcomes and workplace satisfaction. Engaging diverse stakeholders, as supported by Iqbal & Parray (2025), fosters innovation and collective responsibility, as diverse perspectives lead to more creative solutions and stronger community bonds. The effectiveness of VESDA in rural faith-based schools may be further amplified by the close-knit nature of these communities, where trust and shared values are critical for collaboration, as noted in Muhimmah et al. (2019).

This study makes several significant contributions to the field of educational leadership. First, it provides a systematic analysis of humanistic leadership through the VESDA framework, offering a structured approach to implementing value-based leadership in schools. By synthesizing findings from 10 peer-reviewed studies, this SLR establishes evidence-based strategies that school leaders can adopt to enhance student well-being and teacher performance. Second, it addresses a critical gap in the literature by focusing on primary and secondary schools in rural, faith-based contexts, which have been underexplored compared to corporate or higher education settings. The VESDA framework offers practical, actionable strategies—such as active listening, mentoring, and resource provision—that are particularly relevant for resource-constrained environments like rural schools in Bondowoso.

Additionally, this study contributes to the theoretical understanding of humanistic leadership by integrating psychological and organizational theories,

such as Self-Determination Theory and servant leadership principles, into the educational context. It provides a model for how empathy, service, and engagement can be operationalized to create inclusive and motivating school environments. Practically, the findings offer school leaders a blueprint for fostering holistic development, with recommendations that can be adapted to diverse educational settings. This research also lays the groundwork for future studies to explore the longitudinal impact of VESDA strategies on school outcomes, particularly in underserved areas.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the SLR is restricted to articles published between 2015 and 2025, potentially excluding earlier foundational works that could provide additional insights. Second, the focus on peer-reviewed articles in English and Indonesian may have overlooked relevant studies in other languages or non-peer-reviewed sources, such as practitioner reports, which could offer practical perspectives. Third, the study's emphasis on primary and secondary schools, particularly in rural faith-based contexts, limits its generalizability to urban or non-faith-based settings. Additionally, the reliance on qualitative thematic analysis using NVivo 12 Pro, while rigorous, may be subject to researcher bias in coding and theme identification. Finally, the small sample size of 10 studies, although carefully selected, may not fully capture the breadth of humanistic leadership practices across diverse educational contexts. Future research could address these limitations by expanding the scope to include a broader range of publication types, languages, and geographic contexts, as well as incorporating quantitative methods to validate the findings.

IV. CONCLUSION

This Systematic Literature Review (SLR) demonstrates that humanistic value-based leadership, operationalized through the VESDA framework (valuing, empathizing, serving, developing, engaging), significantly enhances student well-being and teacher performance in rural faith-based schools, such as those in Bondowoso. Essential humanistic values—empathy, respect, service, development, and engagement—form the cornerstone of transformative school leadership, fostering trust, motivation, and collaboration. By valuing individuals, empathizing with their needs, serving the community, developing potential, and engaging stakeholders, leaders create inclusive environments that balance academic excellence with socio-emotional growth. These findings align with prior research on value-based leadership (Frost, 2014; Snyder et al., 2024) and servant leadership principles (Bano et al., 2020; Alazmi, 2025), extending their application to underserved educational contexts.

Practically, school leaders, particularly principals in rural settings, can implement VESDA by adopting strategies such as active listening to address student and teacher concerns, providing tailored mentoring to enhance skills, and allocating resources like professional training to support growth. Regular stakeholder engagement through community forums or collaborative projects can further strengthen school ecosystems. Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its focus on 2015–2025 literature and English/Indonesian sources, potentially overlooking broader perspectives. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of VESDA strategies, incorporate diverse publication types, and examine applicability in urban or non-faith-based schools to enhance generalizability.

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