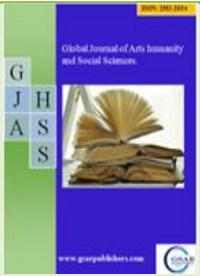
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## Exploring the predicting factors of Indonesian students' character: Empirical proof from Tabanan District, Bali

By

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### Abstract

Character education is fundamental to developing a generation that is both academically competent and morally upright. This study examines the factors that shape the character of elementary school students in Tabanan Regency, Bali, focusing on Asta Brata leadership practices and school culture. Using a quantitative, survey-based design, data were collected through three questionnaires measuring Asta Brata leadership practices, school culture, and student character. The questionnaires were administered to 299 elementary school teachers in Tabanan Regency. The data were analyzed using simple and multiple linear regression to determine the extent to which Asta Brata leadership practices and school culture influence students' character, both individually and jointly. The findings indicate that Asta Brata leadership practices and school culture significantly contribute to the development of elementary students' character, underscoring the importance of leadership grounded in local wisdom and a supportive school culture in strengthening character education.

**Keywords:** Asta Brata leadership practices, school culture, student character, survey

### Introduction

The progress of a nation is largely shaped by the character of its citizens. Societies whose people demonstrate strong character are more likely to establish a social order grounded in ethics and justice. Accordingly, character is widely regarded as a defining virtue that distinguishes a nation's identity and quality from those of others (Dewantara, 1977; UNESCO, 2016). For this reason, character development from an early age is essential, as character is viewed as a primary foundation for forming a generation that is academically capable and demonstrates integrity in conduct and moral values (Lickona, 1991; UNESCO, 2015).

Recent studies on character education highlight an important shift: character is no longer viewed merely as curricular content or moral instruction, but as an outcome of a lived educational ecosystem—particularly school culture, which is shaped through role modeling,

habituation, norms, and the quality of social relationships within the learning environment. From this perspective, schools are most effective when moral values are not only taught but also consistently practiced in everyday school life, enabling children to learn through social experiences, authentic examples, and a supportive school climate (Lickona, 1991; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Consistent with this view, global education agendas and reports position values and character education as prerequisites for building an ethical, just, and sustainable society, while emphasizing the importance of safe and inclusive school environments to support students' holistic development (UNESCO, 2015; UNESCO, 2016).

Within this framework, school leadership is increasingly recognized as a key driver of school culture. Research on educational leadership suggests that principals are not merely administrators; they are instructional leaders and change agents



who influence teaching quality, school climate, and student outcomes by articulating a clear vision, supporting teachers, and consistently managing school systems (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). At the organizational level, leadership also shapes the values a school prioritizes and the recurring patterns of behavior that, over time, become school traditions. Such culture often serves as a powerful vehicle for the internalization of values among all members of the school community, including students (Schein, 2010; Deal & Peterson, 2016).

In the Indonesian context, character development has become increasingly central, as school policies and practices are now oriented toward the Pancasila Student Profile. This profile emphasizes dimensions such as faith and noble character, independence, mutual cooperation, critical reasoning, creativity, and global diversity as key outcomes that should be cultivated through authentic experiences and a consistent learning culture—not merely through didactic instruction about values (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). However, schools also face complex contemporary challenges, including bullying, declining social ethics, and digital distractions, which require more adaptive approaches to character education. In response, social-emotional learning (SEL) has emerged as a major trend because it highlights self-awareness, emotion regulation, empathy, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making as foundations for ethical and character-driven behavior (CASEL, 2022; Durlak et al., 2011). The SEL literature further indicates that character-building outcomes are stronger when schools foster a safe, supportive, and consistent climate—conditions that again depend heavily on leadership and school culture (Durlak et al., 2011; CASEL, 2022).

Another important trend in character education research is the growing emphasis on local wisdom-based approaches. Local wisdom is understood as a source of social values and ethics that is close to children's everyday lives, thereby facilitating the internalization of these values into attitudes and habits. In Indonesia, the idea of education that prioritizes character and holistic human development has long been embedded in national educational thought; education is viewed as an effort to cultivate children's character, intellect, and physical development in harmony, with the aim of forming individuals who are free and civilized (Dewantara, 1977). However, in empirical research, leadership studies grounded in local wisdom often remain at a normative level—describing what is “ideal”—without sufficiently explaining how local values are translated into operational, consistent, and measurable leadership practices in schools, or how these practices shape school culture and, ultimately, students' character.

In this context that *Asta Brata* becomes both relevant and strategically important. As a leadership doctrine grounded in eight core virtues, *Asta Brata* offers a rich value framework to guide leaders in being fair, wise, firm, composed, and protective—qualities that align closely with the goals of character development and the creation of a safe and dignified school environment. However, two major research gaps remain. First, few studies have

operationalized *Asta Brata* into observable indicators of principals' leadership behaviors in elementary school governance (e.g., setting a values-based direction, implementing positive discipline, developing teachers, managing conflict, and addressing social problems such as bullying). Second, although many studies claim that “leadership influences character,” they have not systematically examined *how* this influence operates through school culture. Yet organizational culture theory emphasizes that leaders' values become influential when they are enacted through repeated practices, systems, symbols, and routines—processes that eventually form culture and shape the behavior of organizational members (Schein, 2010; Deal & Peterson, 2016).

Thus, the novelty of this study lies in its attempt to position *Asta Brata* not only as a philosophical construct, but as a set of leadership practices whose influence can be traced along a clear pathway: *Asta Brata* leadership practices → school culture → student character. This study also makes a contextual contribution by focusing on elementary schools in Tabanan, enabling a richer understanding of how locally grounded leadership values operate in everyday school practice, while also testing their relevance in addressing contemporary challenges such as bullying and digital distractions through the strengthening of school climate and students' social-emotional competencies (Kemendikbudristek, 2022; CASEL, 2020; Durlak et al., 2011). Through this focus, the study is expected to enrich scholarship on values- and local wisdom-based leadership and to offer a more practical explanation of how school culture is cultivated to support the consistent development of students' character (Hallinger, 2003; Robinson et al., 2008; Schein, 2010).

This research attempts to bridge the knowledge gap in the literature by analyzing the influence of *Asta Brata*'s leadership practices on school culture and student character with elementary school teachers in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia, as the research population and sample. To guide the implementation of this research, we formulated four research questions as follows: (a) Do *Asta Brata*'s leadership practices have a significant influence on elementary school culture in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia? (b) Do school principals' *Asta Brata* leadership practices have a significant effect on the character of elementary school students in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia? (c) Does school culture have a significant effect on the character of elementary school students in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia? (d) Do *Asta Brata* principals' leadership practices and school culture simultaneously and significantly influence the character of elementary school students in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia? To answer this research question, we used a quantitative approach with a survey research design.

## Method

This study employed a quantitative approach to examine the influence of *Asta Brata* leadership practices on school culture and the character of elementary school students in Tabanan, Bali, Indonesia. To achieve this objective, a survey design was selected because prior studies have highlighted several advantages of



survey research, including (a) ease of data collection and (b) the ability to gather information from a large sample efficiently (Margunayasa et al., 2024; Werang et al., 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2026; Wolomasi et al., 2024). Accordingly, the survey design enabled the collection of data from a substantial number of respondents within a relatively short period of time.

Data for this study were collected by administering three questionnaires—on Asta Brata leadership practices, school culture, and student character—to 299 elementary school teachers in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia. The participants were selected through purposive sampling. Teachers were chosen as respondents because their daily interactions with principals and students make them credible informants and close observers of both leadership practices and student behavior. Positioned at the intersection of school leadership and classroom learning, teachers can provide rich, experience-based perspectives on how leadership shapes school culture and, in turn, students’ character. Their direct knowledge is therefore essential for assessing the implementation of Asta Brata leadership principles and understanding their effects within the school context. By involving teachers, this study seeks to offer a more comprehensive and contextual account of leadership dynamics and their influence on educational practice at the school level.

The collected data were analyzed using simple and multiple linear regression to address the research objectives. Simple linear regression was used to test: (a) the effect of Asta Brata leadership practices on school culture in elementary schools in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia; (b) the effect of Asta Brata leadership practices on students’ character; and (c) the effect of school culture on students’ character. Multiple linear regression was then used to

examine the simultaneous effects of Asta Brata leadership practices and school culture on students’ character. These analytical techniques were selected because they provide robust estimates of predictive relationships and quantify the relative contribution of each independent variable, both individually and jointly, to the dependent variable. Accordingly, the analyses enabled a more comprehensive assessment of how Asta Brata leadership practices and school culture contribute to the development of students’ character. All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics to ensure accuracy, consistency, and reliability of the results.

Based on the problem formulation and relevant previous research studies, this research tests four hypotheses as follows: (a) Asta Brata's leadership practices have a significant effect on school culture in elementary schools in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia; (b) Asta Brata's leadership practices have a significant effect on the character of elementary school students in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia; (c) school culture has a significant influence on the character of elementary school students in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia; and (d) Asta Brata's leadership practices and school culture simultaneously have a significant influence on the character of elementary school students in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia.

Results

As noted above, the data were analyzed using simple and multiple linear regression. The results of the simple linear regression analyses are presented in Tables 1–3, whereas the results of the multiple linear regression analysis are presented in Table 4.

Tabel 1. Asta Brata Leadership Practices and Its Influence on School Culture

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.660 <sup>a</sup>	.435	.433	3.74834	.435	228.682	1	297	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Asta\_Brata\_Leadership

The data displayed in Table 1 shows that Asta Brata's leadership practices have a positive and significant influence on elementary school culture in Tabanan Regency, as indicated by the R-Square coefficient value of 0.435 and the Sig coefficient value. F Change is 0.000. This means that 43.5% of the variation that occurs in elementary school culture in Tabanan Regency can be explained by the principal Asta Brata leadership practice variable, while the

other 56.5% is explained by other variables outside this research. Based on the results of this data analysis, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) which states that "Asta Brata's leadership practices have a significant influence on school culture in elementary schools in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia" is accepted, while the opposite is rejected.

**Tabel 2. Asta Brata Leadership Practices and Its Influence on Student Character**

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.617 <sup>a</sup>	.381	.379	3.55873	.381	182.568	1	297	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Asta\_Brata\_Leadership

The data displayed in Table 2 shows that Asta Brata's leadership practices have a positive and significant effect on the character of elementary school students in Tabanan Regency, as indicated by the R-Square coefficient value of 0.381 and the Sig coefficient value. F Change is 0.000. This means that 38.1% of the variation that occurs in the character of elementary school students in Tabanan Regency can be explained by the principal's Asta Brata

leadership practice variable, while the other 61.9% is explained by other variables outside this research. Based on the results of this data analysis, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) which states that "Asta Brata's leadership practices have a significant effect on the character of elementary school students in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia" is accepted, while the opposite is rejected.

**Tabel 3. School Culture and Its Impact on Student Character**

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.881 <sup>a</sup>	.776	.775	2.14016	.776	1029.014	1	297	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), School\_Culture

The data in Table 3 indicate that school culture has a positive and statistically significant influence on the character of elementary school students in Tabanan Regency. This is evidenced by an R-square value of 0.776 and an F-change significance (Sig.) value of 0.000. In other words, school culture explains 77.6% of the variance in students' character, while the remaining 22.4% is

attributable to other factors not examined in this study. Accordingly, the alternative hypothesis (Ha)—stating that school culture has a significant effect on the character of elementary school students in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia—is accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Table 4. Combined Effects of Asta Brata Leadership Practices and School Culture on Students' Character**

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.882 <sup>a</sup>	.778	.777	2.13278	.778	519.606	2	296	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Asta\_Brata\_Leadership, School\_Culture

The data in Table 4 show that Asta Brata leadership practices and school culture jointly have a statistically significant effect on the character of elementary school students in Tabanan Regency. This is indicated by an R-square value of 0.778 and an F-change significance (Sig.) value of 0.000. Thus, 77.8% of the variance in students' character can be explained by the combined contribution of Asta Brata leadership practices and school culture, while the remaining 22.2% is attributable to other factors outside the scope of this study. Accordingly, the alternative hypothesis (Ha)—stating that Asta Brata leadership practices and school culture

simultaneously have a significant effect on the character of elementary school students in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia—is accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

## Discussion

This study aims to examine the influence of principals' Asta Brata leadership practices on school culture and the character of elementary school students in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia. The data analysis indicates that Asta Brata leadership practices have a significant effect on school culture. These findings suggest that principal leadership grounded in Asta Brata values plays an



important role in fostering a positive school climate and culture. Principles such as wisdom, justice, firmness, role modeling, care, and the ability to provide protection and motivation for all members of the school community contribute to creating an orderly, harmonious, and educationally supportive environment. When principals apply these values consistently, teachers and students are more likely to develop positive routines and habits, which over time strengthen a distinctive and character-building school culture. This result is consistent with the findings of Agustina et al. (2026); Fadila et al. (2024); Murtanti et al., 2024; Rahmadani et al. (2026), which show that principals' leadership practices significantly contribute to the development of a school culture that supports learning and student development.

The data analysis further shows that Asta Brata leadership practices have a significant effect on students' character. This finding suggests that the principal plays a strategic role as a role model in cultivating character values among students. By consistently demonstrating integrity, responsibility, fairness, and care, principals provide concrete examples that can be observed and emulated by the entire school community. These values are then internalized through daily interactions, school policies, and a range of educational activities. Consequently, students' character development occurs naturally through a sustained process of modeling and habituation. This result is consistent with previous studies (Azis et al., 2022; Mahadewi et al., 2026; Marmoah et al., 2025; Rahmadani et al., 2026), which emphasize that the quality of school leadership is a key determinant of the effectiveness of character education.

Furthermore, the findings show that school culture has a significant effect on students' character. A positive school culture creates an environment that supports the internalization of moral and social values such as discipline, honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and respect. When these values are embedded as shared norms in everyday school life, students gain authentic opportunities to understand and practice them across a range of situations. As a result, students' character is shaped through a continuous process of habituation within the school environment. This finding aligns with previous studies (Amandani et al., 2026; Mahadewi et al., 2026; Rahayu et al., 2024; Saputra et al., 2025; Saryanto et al., 2023; Wanti & Darmawan, 2024), which identify school culture as a key determinant of students' positive character and behavior.

Finally, the analysis shows that Asta Brata leadership practices and school culture jointly have a significant effect on students' character. These findings indicate that character development is shaped not only by the quality of the principal's leadership or by school culture in isolation, but by the synergy between the two. Effective leadership helps establish a positive school culture, and that culture becomes the primary vehicle through which character values are consistently internalized. Accordingly, the stronger the principal's enactment of Asta Brata principles and the more robust the school culture that is cultivated, the more optimal students' character development is likely to be. Overall, these results reinforce the view that effective character education requires a holistic approach—strengthening leadership grounded in local

cultural values while building a school culture that is conducive, consistent, and sustainable.

## Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, it can be concluded that Asta Brata leadership practices significantly influence both school culture and the character of elementary school students in Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia. In addition, school culture has been shown to have a significant effect on students' character. Taken together, Asta Brata leadership practices and school culture are significant predictors of student character. These findings indicate that the more effectively principals enact Asta Brata values, the more conducive the resulting school culture, and the more optimal students' character development is likely to be. Practically, these findings have important implications for school principals, teachers, and education policymakers. Principals should internalize and consistently enact Asta Brata values in their day-to-day leadership through role modeling, fairness, wisdom, firmness, and genuine care for all members of the school community. Teachers, in turn, should reinforce these values through habituation and by integrating character education into classroom learning and school activities. Meanwhile, education authorities and professional development providers can use these results as a basis for designing principal training programs that explicitly incorporate local wisdom as a source of effective leadership values and actionable practices.

This study strengthens theories of leadership grounded in local values by demonstrating the empirical relevance of Asta Brata principles in educational leadership. The findings extend the school leadership literature by positioning local wisdom as an effective conceptual foundation for cultivating a positive school culture and promoting students' character development. Moreover, the identified influence of school culture on student character supports organizational culture theory in education, which argues that the values, norms, and routines that emerge within a school environment directly shape students' behavior and character. Overall, this study enriches the conceptual model linking principal leadership, school culture, and character education.

This study has several limitations. First, because it employed a quantitative survey design, it was not able to explore in depth how Asta Brata leadership is enacted in everyday school life. Second, the data were based on teachers' perceptions, which may be subject to respondent bias. Third, the study was conducted only in elementary schools in Tabanan Regency, Bali; therefore, the generalizability of the findings to other regions and educational levels should be approached with caution. In light of these limitations, future research is recommended to adopt mixed-methods or qualitative designs to examine more closely the mechanisms through which Asta Brata values are implemented in school leadership practices. Further studies should also broaden the geographical scope, include different levels of education, and incorporate additional variables—such as teacher commitment, parental involvement, school climate, and students' academic achievement—to develop a more comprehensive understanding of

the factors shaping student character. It is expected that such research will strengthen the external validity of the findings and further enrich the theory and practice of local wisdom-based educational leadership.

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