



Toward Mental Health-Oriented School Management: Systematic Review and Development of the MH-OELF

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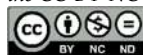
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Abstract: This study systematically reviews literature on educational leadership in school mental health contexts and develops the Mental Health-Oriented Educational Leadership Framework (MH-OELF) for Indonesian secondary schools. Guided by PRISMA 2020, the review searched Scopus, Web of Science, SSCI/ESCI, PubMed, DOAJ, and SINTA for English articles published from 2020–2025. From 212 records, 23 studies met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed through thematic coding. The synthesis yielded five interrelated dimensions: wellbeing-oriented vision, collaborative and distributed structures, tiered and systemic management, data-informed reflective practice, and cultural-contextual alignment. Findings show that effective mental health leadership depends on integrating these dimensions into a coherent whole-school ecosystem rather than applying isolated interventions. The proposed MH-OELF positions principals as adaptive system leaders who align policy, culture, and practice to sustain mentally healthy schools. The framework offers theoretical and practical guidance for school leaders, teachers, and policymakers in designing context-responsive mental health management in secondary education settings.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menelaah secara sistematis literatur tentang kepemimpinan pendidikan dalam konteks kesehatan mental sekolah dan merumuskan Mental Health-Oriented Educational Leadership Framework (MH-OELF) bagi sekolah menengah di Indonesia. Dengan pedoman PRISMA 2020, penelusuran dilakukan pada Scopus, Web of Science, SSCI/ESCI, PubMed, DOAJ, dan SINTA terhadap artikel berbahasa Inggris terbitan 2020–2025. Dari 212 rekaman, 23 studi memenuhi kriteria inklusi dan dianalisis melalui coding tematik. Sintesis menghasilkan lima dimensi yang saling berkaitan, yaitu visi kesejahteraan, struktur kolaboratif dan terdistribusi, manajemen bertingkat dan sistemik, praktik reflektif berbasis data, serta keselarasan budaya-kontekstual. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan kesehatan mental yang efektif bergantung pada integrasi seluruh dimensi ke dalam ekosistem sekolah yang utuh, bukan intervensi yang terpisah. MH-OELF memposisikan kepala sekolah sebagai pemimpin sistem adaptif yang menyelaraskan kebijakan, budaya, dan praktik untuk mewujudkan sekolah yang sehat mental secara berkelanjutan, relevan, dan kontekstual bagi pendidikan menengah serta dapat menjadi dasar pengembangan program dan kebijakan sekolah berbasis kesejahteraan komprehensif.

A. Introduction

In the context of globalization and rapid digital transformation, adolescent mental health has emerged as a major challenge for education systems worldwide. According to the [World Health Organization \(2021\)](#), approximately one in seven adolescents experiences a mental health disorder, with many conditions developing before the age of fourteen. As primary institutional environments for young people, schools play a critical role in promoting, preventing, and supporting mental health while shaping students' psychological well-being and socio-emotional development ([Cefai et al., 2021](#)). Despite this important role, many education systems still lack comprehensive management frameworks that systematically integrate mental well-being into leadership practices, policies, and school culture. Furthermore, as open systems interacting with families, communities, and digital environments, schools face increasingly complex pressures that require adaptive and sustainable responses ([OECD, 2023](#)).

Empirical evidence across different regions consistently indicates a decline in student mental health alongside limited institutional preparedness. In the United States, approximately 40% of high school students report persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness ([Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023](#)). Similarly, European reports have documented post-pandemic increases in mental health and well-being concerns accompanied by insufficient systemic support mechanisms ([NESET, 2021](#)). In Australia, the effectiveness of school mental health initiatives has been found to depend significantly on principal leadership ([Johnson et al., 2025](#)). Meanwhile, in Indonesia, nearly one in four adolescents' experiences moderate to severe anxiety symptoms ([Health Collaborative Center, 2022](#)). Collectively, these findings suggest that many schools remain inadequately equipped with sustainable systems for managing and promoting mental health.

Within the field of educational leadership, principals have traditionally been viewed as instructional leaders whose primary responsibility is improving academic outcomes. However, contemporary educational challenges require a broader leadership orientation that integrates mental health and well-being into all dimensions of school management ([Stones & Glazzard, 2020](#)). Research has demonstrated that transformational and empathetic leadership positively influence teacher motivation, well-being, and organizational effectiveness ([Leithwood & Jantzi, 2019](#)). From an open-systems perspective, schools transform external pressures into organizational outcomes through leadership, culture, and internal processes ([Katz & Kahn, 1978](#)). In this process, principals function as adaptive agents who balance external demands with internal capacities ([Tyler, 1988](#)). Such transformation is further supported by organizational change literature emphasizing collaboration, distributed leadership, and data-informed decision-making ([Conley, 1993](#); [Green, 1994](#)).

A growing body of literature highlights the effectiveness of Whole-School Approaches and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) in promoting student mental health. Evidence indicates that leadership-supported MTSS implementation improves

student well-being and reduces behavioral problems (Weist et al., 2024). In addition, sustained professional development, peer-support systems, and systematic monitoring contribute to positive educational and psychosocial outcomes (Kern et al., 2024; Stones & Glazzard, 2020). Programs such as PROMEHS in Europe further demonstrate that principal leadership is a critical factor in successful implementation (Cefai et al., 2022). Nevertheless, in many Asian countries, including Indonesia, such approaches remain fragmented and heavily dependent on individual initiatives rather than institutionalized systems (Shibuya et al., 2025). Mental health programs are frequently implemented as short-term or isolated activities rather than being embedded within broader school management systems (NCES, 2022; Wardani et al., 2023). Consequently, their long-term effectiveness is often limited.

Conceptually, mental health-oriented leadership encompasses interconnected dimensions, including transformational vision, collaborative structures, tiered support systems, data-informed reflection, and cultural integration (Kern et al., 2024). However, existing studies tend to examine these dimensions separately rather than integrating them into a comprehensive leadership framework (Berger et al., 2022). In Indonesia, leadership practices related to mental health are often confined to moral support and counseling initiatives rather than systemic organizational transformation (Sasaki, 2024). At the same time, local cultural values such as gotong royong, religiosity, and social solidarity provide considerable potential for strengthening school mental health systems, although these resources remain underutilized (Yan, 2025). Community-based partnerships have also been shown to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of mental health interventions (Shibuya et al., 2025).

Despite the growing body of research on school mental health and educational leadership, an important gap remains in the literature. Existing studies have generally examined leadership, school climate, well-being promotion, or mental health interventions as separate constructs, with limited attention to how these elements interact within a comprehensive whole-school system. Furthermore, most studies have been conducted in Western contexts, while relatively little research has explored how leadership processes can be adapted to the socio-cultural realities of Indonesian secondary schools. Consequently, the relationship between educational leadership, organizational structures, and sustainable school mental health management remains conceptually fragmented and insufficiently contextualized.

To address this gap, the present study develops the Mental Health-Oriented Educational Leadership Framework (MH-OELF) as an integrative and adaptive conceptual model. The framework synthesizes five interconnected dimensions, namely wellbeing-oriented vision, collaborative and distributed leadership structures, tiered and systemic management systems, data-informed reflective practices, and cultural-contextual integration, into a coherent whole-school approach. Its novelty lies not only in integrating these dimensions into a single framework but also in reconceptualizing educational leadership as a mental health-oriented system that combines global leadership perspectives with local cultural values, particularly gotong royong, religiosity, and social solidarity

within the Indonesian context. Through this perspective, principals are positioned as adaptive system leaders who facilitate the development of sustainable and mentally healthy school ecosystems.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) What dimensions of educational leadership support whole-school mental health ecosystems? (2) How are these leadership dimensions operationalized across different educational contexts, particularly in Europe, Australia, and Asia? and (3) What conceptual framework can guide Indonesian secondary school leadership toward mental health-oriented management? By addressing these questions, the study contributes to the advancement of educational leadership theory through the integration of open-systems thinking, transformational and distributed leadership, and school mental health perspectives within a unified conceptual framework. In addition, it provides practical guidance for policymakers, school leaders, and practitioners seeking to develop sustainable, culturally responsive, and mentally healthy school systems.

B. Method

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework (Page et al., 2021) to ensure a systematic, transparent, and replicable process for synthesizing literature on educational leadership in school-based mental health contexts. The literature search was conducted across six major databases: Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), SSCI/ESCI, PubMed, DOAJ, and SINTA. The search was carried out between 26 December 2025 and 16 January 2026, focusing on studies published between 2020 and 2025. The search strategy utilized Boolean operators with the following keywords: (“educational leadership” OR “school leadership” OR “principal leadership”) AND (“mental health” OR “well-being” OR “psychosocial well-being”) AND (“school-based” OR “whole-school approach” OR “secondary school”).

The initial search identified 212 records. After removing 37 duplicate records, 175 articles remained for title and abstract screening. A total of 128 articles were excluded because they were not relevant to the study focus, leaving 47 articles for full-text assessment. Subsequently, 24 articles were excluded due to a lack of leadership focus ($n = 9$), non-school contexts ($n = 6$), the absence of an explicit mental health linkage ($n = 5$), or insufficient conceptual and empirical contributions ($n = 4$). As a result, 23 studies were included in the final review.

Studies were included if they explicitly addressed educational leadership or school management, demonstrated a clear connection to mental health or psychosocial well-being, were situated within school-based or whole-school approaches, and were published as peer-reviewed journal articles in English between 2020 and 2025. Studies were excluded if they were non-peer-reviewed publications, conducted outside school settings, lacked a leadership dimension, or did not provide access to the full text. Several included studies examined related constructs, such as school climate, well-being, and socio-emotional development, which were conceptually aligned with school-based mental health

frameworks and were therefore considered relevant. This approach ensured conceptual inclusiveness while maintaining alignment with the review objectives.

To enhance methodological rigor, all selected studies were appraised using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist. All included articles met at least a moderate level of methodological quality. Relevant data were systematically extracted into a structured matrix, including information on authors, publication year, country, research design, study context, leadership focus, mental health approach, and key findings.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun & Clarke (2006). The analytical process involved open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to identify recurring patterns and higher-order themes across the selected studies. The analysis resulted in the identification of five core themes: transformational well-being-oriented vision, collaborative organizational structures, tiered management systems, data-informed reflective practices, and cultural contextualization. Coding was conducted iteratively through repeated reviews and validation procedures to enhance consistency and transparency. Although the analysis was undertaken by a single researcher, potential bias was minimized through the use of systematic audit trails and detailed documentation of coding decisions. The synthesis of these themes across global and Indonesian contexts informed the development of the Mental Health-Oriented Educational Leadership Framework (MH-OELF), a conceptual framework designed to support adaptive, sustainable, and contextually responsive school mental health management.

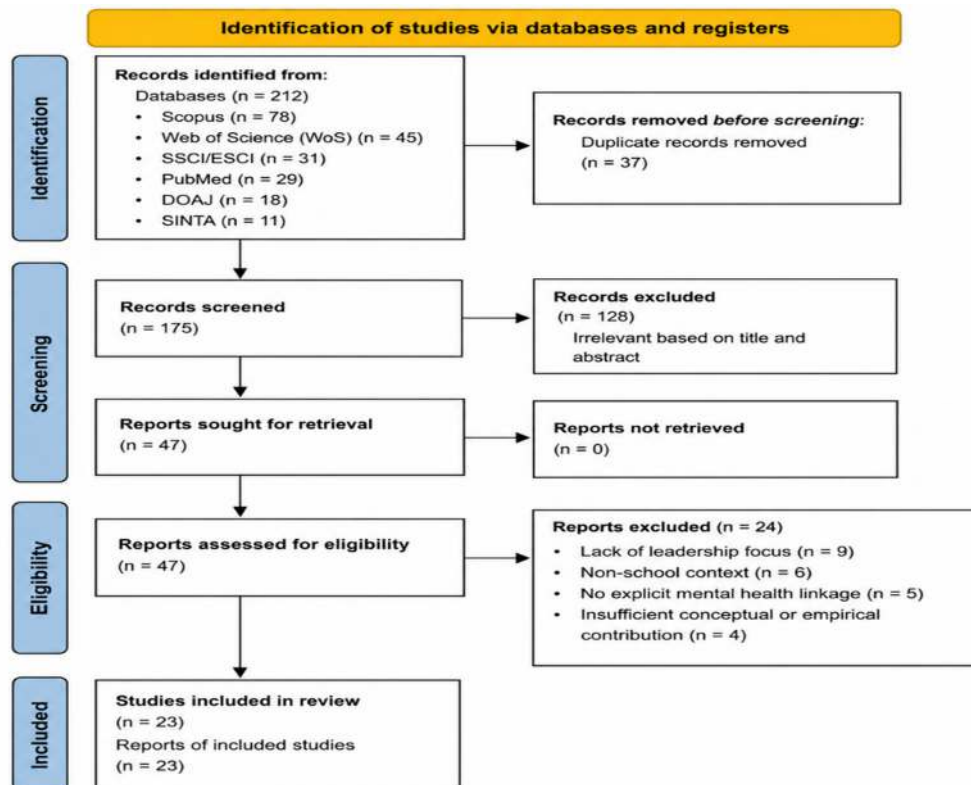


Figure 1. Prisma Flow Diagram

C. Result

Study Selection

The study selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines to ensure a systematic and transparent review procedure. A total of 212 records were initially identified through searches conducted across Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), SSCI/ESCI, PubMed, DOAJ, and SINTA databases. After removing 37 duplicate records, 175 articles remained for title and abstract screening. Subsequently, 128 articles were excluded because they did not meet the relevance criteria, leaving 47 articles for full-text assessment. Following the eligibility review, 24 studies were excluded due to a lack of leadership focus, non-school contexts, insufficient linkage to mental health, or limited conceptual and empirical contributions. Consequently, 23 studies met all inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis

Characteristics of Included Studies

The 23 studies included in this review represented diverse geographical contexts, including Europe, the United States, Asia, the Middle East, Indonesia, and several global studies. Most studies employed empirical research designs, while others consisted of review, conceptual, and intervention studies. In terms of leadership orientation, the literature demonstrated a transition from traditional instructional leadership toward more comprehensive approaches, including transformational, distributed, strategic, empathetic, and system leadership. The reviewed studies also reflected various school mental health approaches, such as whole-school frameworks, MTSS, SEL, mental health literacy, wellbeing promotion, and crisis-responsive interventions. Overall, the findings indicate a growing recognition of school leadership as a key driver in creating supportive, sustainable, and mentally healthy school environments. A detailed summary of the characteristics of the included studies is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Data Analysis Mapping Compiled from the Articles Reviewed in this Study

No	Authors (Year)	Country/Context	Design	Leadership Focus	Mental Health Approach	Key Findings
1	Barker et al (2023)	UK/Europe	Empirical	Cultural leadership	School climate	Leadership shapes authentic wellbeing culture
2	Cefai et al (2022)	Europe	Intervention study	Whole-school leadership	Universal intervention	Leadership critical for implementation success
3	Kirnan et al (2025)	Global	Empirical	System coordination	Mental health literacy	Leadership promotes help-

No	Authors (Year)	Country/Context	Design	Leadership Focus	Mental Health Approach	Key Findings
						seeking behaviour
4	Wang et al (2020)	Global	Review	Instructional + climate	Wellbeing-achievement link	Climate mediates wellbeing & performance
5	Loades et al (2020)	Global	Review	Crisis leadership	Social connectedness	Schools buffer mental health during crisis
6	Toprak (2020)	Global	Conceptual	Distributed leadership	Whole-school approach	Leadership shapes psychosocial climate
7	Mäkelä et al (2025)	Europe	Empirical	Strategic leadership	Holistic wellbeing	Leadership builds wellbeing ecosystems
8	Ghamrawi et al (2023)	Middle East	Empirical	Teacher-focused leadership	Educator wellbeing	Teacher wellbeing linked to leadership
9	Ertem (2024)	Global	Empirical	Crisis leadership	Stress resilience	Leadership bridges policy & psychosocial needs
10	Laursen (2025)	Europe	Conceptual	System leadership	Wellbeing integration	Leaders balance wellbeing vs performance
11	Plaku & Leka (2025)	Europe	Empirical	Empathetic leadership	Teacher wellbeing	Leadership creates safe school climate
12	Reinke et al (2025)	USA	Empirical	Data-driven leadership	MTSS	Leadership enables system-wide MH support
13	Garbacz et al (2025)	USA	Empirical	System leadership	Integrated MH system	Leaders align PBIS & MH services
14	Carlson et al (2021)	Global	Implementation study	Cultural leadership	Intervention adoption	Leadership determines implementation success
15	Cavioni et al (2020)	Europe	Empirical	SEL leadership	Prevention approach	Leadership integrates

No	Authors (Year)	Country/Context	Design	Leadership Focus	Mental Health Approach	Key Findings
						SEL into systems
16	Sun et al (2024)	Asia	Empirical	Policy leadership	MH service development	Leaders shift from reactive to proactive MH
17	Fosco (2022)	Global	Review	Climate leadership	Socio-emotional learning	Climate supports emotional competence
18	Simbre et al (2023)	Indonesia	Empirical	Leader wellbeing	Organisational wellbeing	Leader wellbeing affects school climate
19	McKay et al (2023)	Global	Empirical	Transformational leadership	Psychological safety	Leadership fosters safe environments
20	Wardani et al (2023)	Indonesia	Empirical	Crisis leadership	School MH support	Leadership integrates MH into policy
21	Daly et al (2025)	USA	Empirical	System coordination	MH implementation	Leadership drives cross-sector integration
22	Schäfer et al (2025)	Europe	Empirical	System leadership	MH promotion	Leaders shape MH ecosystems
23	Laurenzi et al (2024)	Global	Review	Structural leadership	System implementation	Leadership addresses organisational barriers

Thematic Findings

The thematic analysis identified five interrelated themes that characterize mental health-oriented educational leadership across diverse educational contexts. These themes emerged through an iterative coding process involving open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Initially, a large number of concepts related to educational leadership and school mental health were identified from the selected studies. These concepts were subsequently grouped into broader categories and synthesized into five higher-order themes: (1) Wellbeing-Oriented Vision, (2) Collaborative and Distributed Leadership Structures, (3) Tiered and Systemic Management Systems, (4) Data-Informed Reflective Practices, and (5) Cultural and Contextual Integration.

The first theme, wellbeing-oriented vision, emphasizes the role of school leaders in embedding mental well-being as a strategic priority within school policies and organizational goals. The second theme highlights the importance of collaboration among teachers, counselors, families, and external stakeholders through distributed leadership structures. The third theme focuses on the implementation of systematic support mechanisms, including MTSS, to provide preventive and responsive mental health services. The fourth theme underscores the significance of data-informed decision-making, monitoring, and evaluation in sustaining mental health initiatives. Finally, the fifth theme emphasizes the integration of local cultural values and contextual factors to ensure the relevance, acceptance, and sustainability of school mental health programs.

Collectively, these themes suggest that effective school mental health leadership extends beyond individual leadership competencies and requires the integration of vision, systems, collaboration, reflection, and cultural responsiveness within a whole-school ecosystem. The thematic synthesis and coding process are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Thematic Synthesis of Mental Health-Oriented Educational Leadership Literature

Theme	Description	Key Indicators	Representative Studies	Implications for MH-OELF
Wellbeing-Oriented Vision	Leadership prioritizes mental well-being as a core component of school mission, strategic planning, and decision-making.	Wellbeing mission, strategic goals, psychological safety, organizational commitment	Barker et al (2023) ; Mäkelä et al (2025) ; McKay et al (2023) ; Laursen (2025)	Establishes mental health as a strategic priority and guides organizational direction.
Collaborative and Distributed Leadership Structures	School leaders promote shared responsibility and collaboration among teachers, counselors, families, communities, and external agencies.	Stakeholder engagement, distributed leadership, teamwork, family-school partnership	Cefai et al (2022) ; Garbacz et al (2025) ; Daly et al (2025) ; Toprak (2020)	Strengthens collective capacity and support networks for mental health initiatives.
Tiered and Systemic Management Systems	Leadership facilitates structured and sustainable mental health services through integrated support systems.	MTSS, prevention, intervention, referral systems, school mental health teams	Reinke et al (2025) ; Weist et al (2024) ; Johnson et al (2025) ; Garbacz et al (2025)	Provides operational mechanisms for delivering mental health services systematically.
Data-Informed Reflective Practices	Leadership utilizes data to monitor well-being, evaluate	Monitoring, evaluation, wellbeing indicators,	Reinke et al (2025) ; Daly et al (2025) ; Kern et al (2024)	Supports accountability, adaptation, and

Theme	Description	Key Indicators	Representative Studies	Implications for MH-OELF
Cultural and Contextual Integration	programs, and inform continuous improvement.	evidence-based decisions		sustainability of interventions.
	Leadership aligns mental health initiatives with local values, norms, and socio-cultural contexts.	Cultural responsiveness, religiosity, social solidarity, gotong royong, school climate	Sasaki (2024); Wardani et al (2023); Yan (2025); Shibuya et al (2025)	Enhances relevance, acceptance, and long-term sustainability of school mental health programs.

Global-Local Comparison

The thematic synthesis revealed both similarities and differences in the implementation of mental health-oriented educational leadership across global and Indonesian contexts. Across Europe, the United States, and Australia, school mental health initiatives are generally embedded within structured policy frameworks and institutional support systems. Leadership in these contexts functions as a system integrator, coordinating policies, professional development, mental health services, and evaluation mechanisms through whole-school approaches and MTSS. Consequently, mental health promotion is often institutionalized as part of school governance rather than implemented as a stand-alone program.

In contrast, the Indonesian context demonstrates a more fragmented pattern of implementation. Mental health initiatives are frequently dependent on individual leadership commitment and short-term programs rather than systematic organizational structures. Nevertheless, Indonesian schools possess unique socio-cultural resources that can strengthen mental health-oriented leadership, including *gotong royong*, religiosity, social solidarity, and strong community engagement. These values provide opportunities to contextualize global leadership practices within local educational environments. Therefore, while global contexts offer examples of structured and evidence-based mental health systems, the Indonesian context highlights the importance of cultural responsiveness and community-based collaboration. This comparison suggests that an effective framework for Indonesian schools should integrate global best practices with local cultural strengths. The comparative findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of Mental Health-Oriented Educational Leadership Between Global and Indonesian Contexts

Dimension	Global Context (Europe, USA, Australia)	Indonesian Context	Implications for MH-OELF
Leadership Orientation	System leadership and distributed leadership approaches are widely implemented.	Leadership remains largely principal-centered and dependent on individual initiatives.	Strengthen collaborative and distributed leadership structures.

Dimension	Global Context (Europe, USA, Australia)	Indonesian Context	Implications for MH- OELF
Mental Health Governance	Integrated into school policies and strategic planning.	Often implemented through temporary or program-based activities.	Embed mental health into school management systems.
Support Systems	MTSS and whole-school approaches are commonly adopted.	Support services are often fragmented and reactive.	Develop tiered and systematic support mechanisms.
Decision-Making Processes	Data-driven monitoring and evaluation guide interventions.	Evaluation practices are limited and inconsistently applied.	Promote data-informed reflective leadership.
Stakeholder Collaboration	Formal partnerships with families, health services, and communities are well established.	Collaboration is primarily community-based and informal.	Expand multi-stakeholder engagement and coordination.
Cultural Foundation	Policy-driven and institutionally regulated.	Strongly influenced by local values, religiosity, and social solidarity.	Integrate cultural and contextual responsiveness into leadership practices.
School Mental Health Approach	Preventive, promotive, and systemic.	Predominantly reactive and program-oriented.	Shift toward preventive and sustainable mental health management.
Expected Outcomes	Well-established school mental health ecosystems and positive school climate.	Emerging awareness but limited institutionalization.	Create sustainable and mentally healthy school ecosystems.

Development of the MH-OELF Framework

Building upon the thematic synthesis and the comparison between global and Indonesian contexts, this study proposes the MH-OELF as an integrative and adaptive model for school mental health management. The framework positions school leadership as the central mechanism that translates external demands, organizational resources, and cultural values into sustainable mental health practices. Rather than viewing mental health as a supplementary program, MH-OELF conceptualizes it as an integral component of school governance, leadership, and culture.

The framework consists of five interconnected dimensions: (1) Wellbeing-Oriented Vision, (2) Collaborative and Distributed Leadership Structures, (3) Tiered and Systemic Management Systems, (4) Data-Informed Reflective Practices, and (5) Cultural and Contextual Integration. These dimensions interact dynamically to create supportive school environments and foster mentally healthy organizational cultures. Within the framework, principals function as adaptive system leaders who align policies, coordinate stakeholders, facilitate evidence-based decision-making, and integrate local cultural values into daily school practices.

The model further suggests that the integration of these five dimensions promotes the habituation of mentally healthy practices, strengthens positive school climate, and ultimately contributes to student and teacher well-being. In the long term, these processes support sustainable school improvement and organizational resilience. Accordingly, MH-OELF serves as both a conceptual contribution to educational leadership scholarship and a practical guide for implementing school-based mental health management in Indonesian secondary schools. The proposed framework is illustrated in Figure 3.

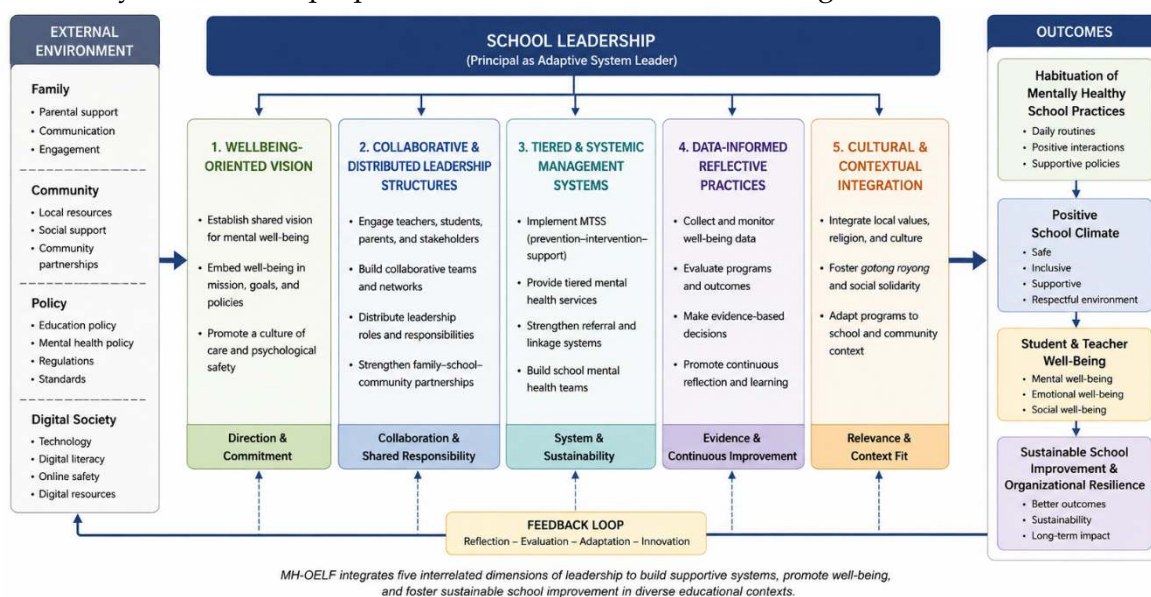


Figure 2. Mental Health-Oriented Educational Leadership Framework (MH-OELF)

D. Discussion

The synthesis of the reviewed studies indicates a clear global shift in educational leadership toward a mental health-oriented paradigm, driven by increasing academic pressures, psychosocial challenges, and organisational complexity within schools. Across diverse contexts, principals are no longer positioned merely as administrative managers but as system leaders responsible for sustaining collective wellbeing and organisational resilience (Cefai et al., 2022; Barker et al., 2023). This transformation reflects the growing recognition that student learning outcomes are mediated by psychological safety, emotional wellbeing, and relational trust, making mental health a foundational condition for effective schooling rather than a supplementary concern. Evidence from North America and Australia demonstrates that whole-school mental health frameworks successfully integrate wellbeing into policy, curriculum, and daily practice, thereby institutionalising mental health within school governance structures (Weist et al., 2017). These findings support educational management theories that emphasise leadership effectiveness as the ability to strategically manage human relationships and organisational culture (Green, 1994). Consistent with open-systems theory, schools must continuously adapt to changing

environmental demands through internal organisational transformation (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

The findings further reveal that effective mental health-oriented leadership is shaped by the interaction of several interconnected dimensions. A wellbeing-oriented vision serves as the foundation for organisational commitment because it establishes shared values and legitimises mental health as a strategic priority. Without a clear vision, wellbeing initiatives are likely to remain fragmented and symbolic rather than embedded in school practices (Barker et al., 2023; McKay et al., 2023). In addition, relational and empathetic leadership fosters trust, psychological safety, and help-seeking behaviours among students and staff, thereby reducing stigma associated with mental health concerns (Fosco, 2022; Kirnan et al., 2025). The importance of collaborative and systemic leadership is equally evident, as mental health challenges require coordinated actions among teachers, counsellors, families, and external agencies (Weist et al., 2017; Garbacz et al., 2025). Furthermore, reflective and data-informed leadership contributes to sustainability by supporting evidence-based decision-making, monitoring, and continuous improvement processes (Reinke et al., 2025; Daly et al., 2025). Collectively, these findings suggest that leadership effectiveness emerges not from isolated competencies but from the integration of vision, relationships, systems, and reflective practices.

The comparison across contexts demonstrates that although the core principles of mental health-oriented leadership are broadly consistent, their implementation is shaped by socio-cultural and institutional conditions. In European and Australian contexts, leadership is typically embedded within welfare-oriented policy systems that support whole-school mental health approaches (McKay et al., 2023; Laursen, 2025). Conversely, many Asian contexts, including Indonesia, continue to rely on individual leadership initiatives and relational approaches due to limited institutional support and persistent mental health stigma (Wang et al., 2023; Ertem, 2024). Nevertheless, Indonesian schools possess distinctive cultural resources, including *gotong royong*, religiosity, and social solidarity, which can strengthen collective wellbeing and community engagement. These findings extend previous studies on supportive school environments (Fosco, 2022; Mäkelä et al., 2025; Barker et al., 2023) by demonstrating that effective leadership must be adaptive and culturally responsive rather than universally prescriptive.

Based on these findings, the Mental Health-Oriented Educational Leadership Framework (MH-OELF) was developed as an integrative model that connects transformational leadership, collaborative structures, systemic management, reflective practices, and cultural responsiveness within a single framework. The model positions principals as adaptive system leaders who align policies, coordinate stakeholders, and institutionalise wellbeing practices throughout the school environment (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Green, 1994). The inclusion of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) provides an operational mechanism through which leadership can be translated into structured prevention, intervention, and support systems (Kern et al., 2024; Weist et al., 2017). Ultimately, the framework suggests that sustainable school improvement is achieved when

mental health becomes embedded within organisational culture, creating positive school climates that enhance the wellbeing of both students and teachers. In this respect, MH-OELF contributes to the literature by reconceptualising educational leadership as a mental health-oriented system rather than a collection of discrete leadership practices.

E. Implication

This study offers significant theoretical implications for the advancement of educational leadership and school management scholarship by reinforcing the argument that school leadership can no longer be conceptualised narrowly as an administrative or instructional function. The formulation of the Mental Health-Oriented Educational Leadership Framework (MH-OELF) extends existing theoretical perspectives by integrating open systems theory, transformational and distributed leadership models, and public health and developmental ecological approaches into a unified conceptual framework. The findings underscore that the mental wellbeing of teachers and students constitutes a structural and cultural variable intrinsically linked to leadership effectiveness, thereby strengthening the scientific legitimacy of whole-school mental health leadership as a core dimension of contemporary educational leadership theory. By positioning mental health as an embedded organisational condition rather than a peripheral outcome, this study advances a more holistic understanding of leadership processes within schools. The MH-OELF contributes a contextually adaptive theoretical model that bridges global leadership theories with socio-cultural realities of schooling, particularly within secondary education systems. As such, the framework enriches and deepens the theoretical foundations of modern educational leadership while offering a novel conceptual contribution that can inform future theory development, empirical research, and comparative studies in school management and education-based mental health.

F. Limitation and Suggestion for Further Research

This study has several limitations. First, the Mental Health-Oriented Educational Leadership Framework (MH-OELF) was developed through a systematic synthesis of existing literature and therefore remains conceptual in nature. The framework has not yet been empirically tested in Indonesian secondary school settings. Additionally, the reviewed studies were drawn from diverse educational and cultural contexts, which may limit the direct generalizability of the findings and require contextual adaptation before implementation in specific school environments.

Future research should focus on empirically validating the MH-OELF through design-based research, multi-site case studies, or mixed-methods approaches across different school contexts. Further studies are also encouraged to develop and validate measurement instruments for mental health-oriented leadership and to examine how cultural values, policy environments, and school characteristics influence the effectiveness and sustainability of the framework. Such efforts would strengthen the practical

applicability and theoretical robustness of MH-OELF in promoting mentally healthy school ecosystems.

G. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that effective educational leadership in secondary schools should be reconceptualized as a mental health-oriented system that integrates wellbeing into the core functions of school management. The synthesis of 23 studies identified five interconnected dimensions, namely wellbeing-oriented vision, collaborative leadership structures, tiered management systems, data-informed reflective practices, and cultural-contextual integration, as critical mechanisms for fostering mentally healthy school ecosystems. Based on these findings, the MH-OELF was developed as an adaptive model that combines global leadership perspectives with the socio-cultural realities of Indonesian schools. Overall, the study highlights that sustainable educational improvement depends not only on academic achievement but also on the capacity of school leaders to create supportive, inclusive, and psychologically healthy learning environments. The MH-OELF therefore provides a conceptual foundation for leadership development, school mental health management, and future policy and research initiatives in education.

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