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Principal Leadership Integrity in the Sustainability of the Adiwiyata Program: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

This study addresses the critical challenge of program stagnation in the Adiwiyata (Green School) initiative, situating the inquiry within the discipline of educational leadership. It aims to deconstruct the role of principal integrity in fostering sustainable pro-environmental behaviors, moving beyond just administrative compliance. Employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) guided by the PRISMA 2020 protocol, the research analyzed 37 high-impact articles published between 2020 and 2026. The findings reveal a fundamental paradigm shift from technical management to value-based leadership, identifying Moral Potency as a core determinant. Specifically, integrity operates through two distinct psychological mechanisms: creating Psychological Safety for teacher innovation and facilitating Social Learning for student value internalization. A significant contribution to this work is the proposal of the Eco-Integrity Leadership Model, which posits that environmental sustainability relies more on the ethical consistency of leaders than on physical infrastructure. Consequently, these results emphasize the necessity for educational policymakers to reform principal recruitment by prioritizing ecological integrity, thereby ensuring that environmental education evolves from symbolic gestures into authentic character development.

Keywords:
Integritas Kepemimpinan; Program Adiwiyata; Pendidikan Keberlanjutan.

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Abstrak

Studi ini merespons tantangan kritis berupa stagnasi program Adiwiyata (Sekolah Hijau), dengan menempatkan analisisnya pada ranah disiplin kepemimpinan pendidikan. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendekonstruksi peran integritas kepala sekolah dalam membina perilaku pro-lingkungan yang berkelanjutan, melampaui batas kepatuhan administratif semata. Menggunakan metode Systematic Literature Review (SLR) yang dipandu protokol PRISMA 2020, penelitian ini menganalisis 37 artikel bereputasi tinggi yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2020 hingga 2026. Temuan mengungkap adanya pergeseran paradigma fundamental dari manajemen teknis menuju kepemimpinan berbasis nilai, dengan mengidentifikasi Moral Potency sebagai determinan inti. Secara spesifik, integritas beroperasi melalui dua mekanisme psikologis distingtif: penciptaan Psychological Safety bagi inovasi guru dan fasilitasi Social Learning untuk internalisasi nilai pada siswa. Kontribusi signifikan studi ini adalah usulan The Eco-Integrity Leadership Model, yang mempostulatkan bahwa keberlanjutan lingkungan lebih bergantung pada konsistensi etis pemimpin daripada infrastruktur fisik. Konsekuensinya, hasil ini menekankan urgensi bagi pembuat kebijakan pendidikan untuk mereformasi rekrutmen kepala sekolah dengan memprioritaskan integritas ekologis, guna memastikan pendidikan lingkungan berevolusi dari gestur simbolis menjadi pengembangan karakter yang otentik.

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INTRODUCTION

Global environmental degradation is no longer merely a narrative of future threats, but rather an existential crisis that demands a radical transformation in human behavior. In efforts to mitigate ecological damage, the education sector stands as the last line of defense and the most crucial instrument for instilling sustainable values, aligning learning quality with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Biermann et al., 2023). Schools are no longer viewed narrowly as channels for academic knowledge transfer but have transformed into social laboratories where environmentally conscious character is cultivated. In Indonesia, this commitment is realized through the Adiwiyata program, designed to create an environmentally friendly school culture by integrating conservation education into daily activities (Herliana & Suriansyah, 2025). However, the qualitative and quantitative reality on the ground often demonstrates a crucial phenomenon known as green on the surface. The Adiwiyata implementation is frequently trapped in physical and ceremonial symbolism without addressing the deeper behavioral foundations. Consequently, structured environmental education programs still face immense challenges in shaping genuine conservation awareness (Huang et al., 2024).

The biggest challenge within this crucial phenomenon is how to transform green infrastructure into a genuine green culture that is deeply internalized in the pulse of the school community. The gap between environmental knowledge and concrete student actions remains a significant anomaly (Rushayati et al., 2023; Widodo, 2026), complicated by a lack of systemic support that hinders teachers as primary agents of change (Surjanti et al., 2024). Success in bridging the gap between green school policies and actual behavior depends heavily on a central figure: the principal. As the leader, the principal acts as a cultural architect and innovator, setting long-term goals for educational sustainability. Complex environmental innovations require leadership capable of uniting various school elements into harmonious collaboration (Megawati et al., 2022). Recent empirical findings indicate that the effectiveness of Adiwiyata schools is linearly correlated with the leadership commitment implemented (Nursofah et al., 2025). Principal leadership plays a central role because it directly impacts school climate, discipline, and work motivation, ultimately determining teacher performance quality (Urrea-Solano et al., 2026).

Although the role of leadership is widely recognized, current educational literature is still dominated by a transactional managerial approach. Many studies focus on administrative aspects, neglecting the moral and integrity dimensions that underline leadership itself. Behavioral transformation in an organizational environment does not arise from rigid instructions, but rather from the integrity of leaders engaging the psychological aspects of subordinates (Choi, 2021). Ethical leaders create psychological safety that encourages teachers to innovate. While participatory leadership is relevant in Adiwiyata schools, where the principal's vision and concrete actions motivate the community (Nursofah et al., 2025), comprehensive studies linking moral integrity specifically to green behaviors remain scarce. As values-based school models increasingly emphasize integrating morality into environmental curricula (Junaidah et al., 2025; Purnomo et al., 2024), this significant literature gap serves as the precise starting point for this current study.

Recognizing the limitations of previous transactional-focused research, the specific purpose of this paper is to conduct a systematic literature review that completely addresses the shortcomings of existing literature. This study aims to establish a robust conceptual framework mapping the relationship between school leadership integrity

and the development of green behaviors within the Adiwiyata program. This paper differentiates itself by offering a comprehensive synthesis on how leadership integrity functions directly as a catalyst within the school ecosystem, shifting the focus away from mere administrative compliance (Dami, 2024; Widodo, 2026). Principal integrity, which this study discusses specifically in terms of providing ecological meaning, is investigated as the missing link in current educational theories. Furthermore, the focus of this paper is to explore how strong, integrity-driven leadership can effectively orchestrate synergy among diverse stakeholders, thereby adapting the educational process to meet the demands of 21st-century skills based on long-term sustainability and environmental consciousness (Chatterjee, 2024).

Consequently, this paper intends to test the argument that principal integrity is the most dominant independent variable capable of accelerating the adoption of green behaviors in schools. Through in-depth analysis, this article will examine and prove the theoretical mechanisms by which visionary leadership directly influences teacher professionalism and student character development (Siregar et al., 2022). It hypothesizes that teacher performance in environmental education is fundamentally dictated by leadership strength, moral courage, and work motivation rather than structural mandates alone. By proving this argument, the findings of this systematic review are expected to provide a transformative perspective for educational policymakers. Ultimately, this study postulates that the true success of Adiwiyata schools must be measured not only by standard technical-administrative criteria, but fundamentally by the quality of leadership integrity and the maturity of the green skills possessed by their school leaders (Mutohhari et al., 2025).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) design to identify, evaluate, and interpret all relevant research evidence related to leadership integrity in promoting the sustainability of the Adiwiyata program. This approach was chosen to minimize subjective bias and provide a replicable synthesis of the dynamics of leadership integrity within an environmentally conscious school ecosystem. The research protocol was developed following the *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses* (PRISMA) 2020 standard guidelines to ensure transparency and validity of the data selection process (Wu et al., 2026).

Data collection was conducted exclusively through a globally reputable database, namely Scopus, using Boolean Operators techniques with keywords specifically formulated to capture integrity and environmental context variables: *("Principal Leadership" OR "Ethical Leadership" OR "Integrity") AND ("Adiwiyata Program" OR "Green School" OR "Eco-School") AND ("Sustainability" OR "Environmental Behavior" OR "Character Building").*

Eligibility Criteria

To ensure the internal validity and substantive relevance of the analyzed literature, this study applied multilevel selection parameters through the establishment of strict inclusion and exclusion criteria (*Table 1*). The temporal boundaries were set within the last decade, from 2021 to 2025, with the aim of capturing the dynamics of post-pandemic school management and the latest trends in Education for Sustainable Development.

In terms of publication type, the analysis was limited exclusively to *peer-reviewed* scientific journal articles (*research articles),* while secondary documents such as conference proceedings, book chapters, editorials, and review articles *were* excluded to

maintain the empirical quality of the data. Furthermore, accessibility and language comprehension were key technical considerations, with only articles available in full text *and* written in English or Indonesian included in the review (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Contextual criteria served as a final substantive filter; studies focused on primary and secondary educational institutions implementing environmental programs. Articles set in purely business organizations, technical sectors, or non-educational contexts that did not offer relevant theoretical implications for Adiwiyata school management were automatically eliminated from the study sample.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Time span	2021 – 2026	Published before 2021
Document Type	Research Journal Articles (*Research Article*)	Proceedings, Book Chapter, *Review*, Editorial, Opinion
Language	English & Indonesian	Languages other than English/Indonesian
Access	Open Access	Abstract Only (*No Full Text*)
Study Context	Adiwiyata/ *Green School School*/ Education Management	Non-Educational Pure Business/Medical/Technical Organizations

Source: inclusion and exclusion criteria

Publication Results and Data Filtering

The literature search was conducted using a structured database search exclusively in Scopus. This strategy used a combination of specific keywords covering the variables of ethical leadership, green school programs, and sustainability. Details of the search results based on keywords and database sources are presented in *Table 2*.

Table 2. Literature Search Results Based on Keywords

No	Search Keywords (*Search String*)	Year	Database	Number of Results
1	*("Principal Leadership" OR "Ethical Leadership" OR "Integrity") AND ("Adiwiyata" OR "Green School") AND ("Sustainability" OR "Environmental Behavior")*	2021–2026	Scopus	589
	Total			589

Source: Scopus literature results

Articles that passed the initial screening stage were then assessed for eligibility *through* full-text review. At this stage, researchers applied further exclusion criteria to ensure data quality, with articles lacking full-text access, non-journal articles, and articles with language or methodological limitations being excluded from the sample. Based on this rigorous selection process, a final number of articles (included) met all inclusion criteria for further analysis in this systematic review. A detailed distribution of the number of articles at each stage is presented in *Figure 1*.

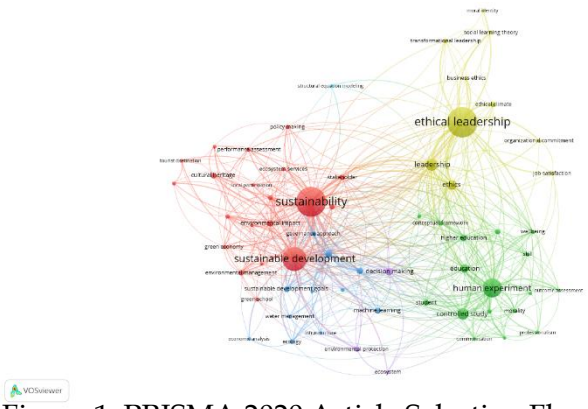

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Article Selection Flowchart

PRISMA Analysis

PRISMA (*Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses*) analysis was used to conduct an in-depth analysis of the research data collection process from a global database: Scopus. The detailed flow of the selection process is presented as follows (Page et al., 2020):

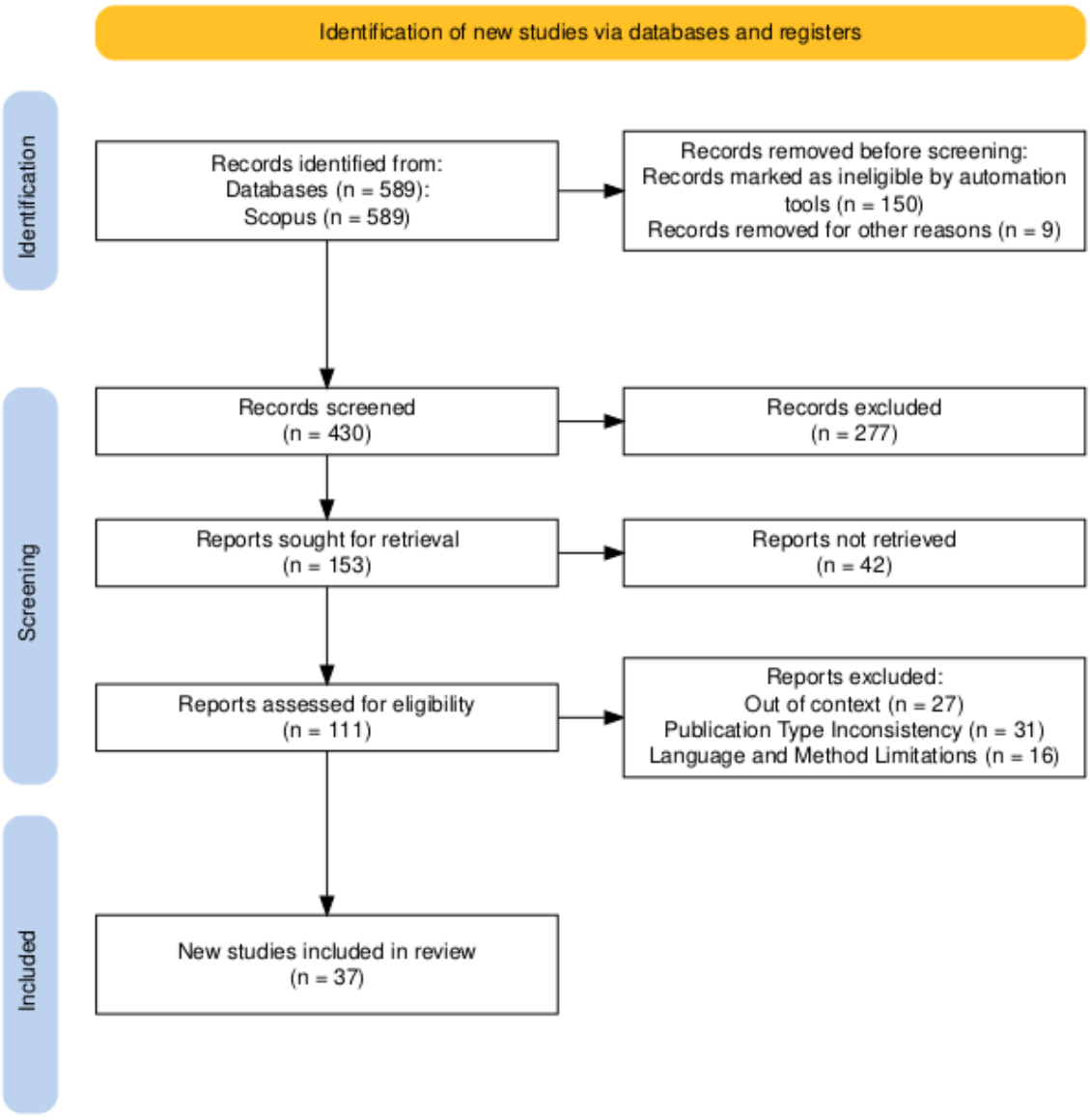

Figure 2. PRISMA analysis flowchart in research

The article selection process was carried out in stages, as illustrated in the PRISMA 2020 flowchart (*Figure 2*). In the initial identification stage, this study collected a total of 589 documents from the Scopus database. During the initial identification phase, 150 records were marked as ineligible by automation tools, and 9 were removed for other reasons, leaving 430 articles for the screening stage. Initial screening was conducted by reading the titles and abstracts, which resulted in the exclusion of 277 articles. A total of 153 reports were sought for retrieval, but 42 reports could not be accessed in full text (not retrieved). In the eligibility stage, a total of 111 articles were assessed in depth.

Next, the researchers excluded another 74 articles based on the following exclusion criteria: (1) 27 articles due to context inconsistency (Context *inconsistency*); (2) 31 articles due to publication type inconsistency (*Publication Type Inconsistency*); and (3) 16 articles due to language and method limitations (*Language and Method Limitations*). The final result, 37 new studies were included in the review (*included*). Based on this selection process, 37 articles were determined as the final sample (s*tudies included*) that met all inclusion criteria for analysis in this systematic review.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the findings from a systematic review of 37 selected articles and discusses their implications in the context of leadership integrity among principals in the Adiwiyata program. The discussion is divided into two main segments: mapping the characteristics of the literature and a critical analysis of the role of leadership integrity in shaping environmentally friendly behavior. The research questions (RQ) that guide this review are as follows: (1) how are the characteristics of leadership integrity among principals conceptualized in the Adiwiyata management literature? (2) Through what mechanisms do leadership integrity influence the development of pro-environmental behavior among teachers and students? (3) What are the implications of integrity-based leadership for the sustainability and effectiveness of the Adiwiyata program implementation in schools? These questions aim to deepen the understanding of how leadership integrity influences environmental education and sustainable practices in school settings, providing valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers involved in environmental management and leadership development in educational institutions.

Conceptualization of Integrity in Green School Leadership

Thematic analysis of selected literature reveals a fundamental paradigm shift in conceptualizing the role of the principal in environment-based educational units, in this case Adiwiyata. (Herliana & Suriansyah, 2025). While previous literature the author found in her reference search limited the principal's role to the realm of administrative management and compliance with physical assessment instruments, recent studies from 2021-2025 highlight the urgency of a deeper ethical dimension , such as leadership integrity (Alene et al., 2025; Su et al., 2021). Integrity in this context is no longer understood simply as the absence of corrupt behavior, but rather is reinterpreted as value-based leadership that demands coherence between the rhetoric of an ecological vision and the reality of the leader's daily behavior. (Huang et al., 2024; Setiadi et al., 2023).

The main manifestation of this integrity is what is referred to in the literature as Moral Consistency. (Wibowo et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2021). The findings show that leadership effectiveness in Adiwiyata schools is highly dependent on the principal's ability to explain the difference between what is said and what is done (Herliana &

Suriansyah, 2025). Effective principals not only formulate environmental policies on paper, but also practice an environmentally friendly culture in practice, such as direct involvement in waste management and energy conservation. (Liang et al., 2023; Siregar et al., 2022). This consistency serves as a strong visual signal to the school community that the environmental program is a substantial commitment, not just a formality to gain awards (Utomo et al., 2023).

Furthermore, data analysis identified the Moral Potency dimension as a crucial characteristic that differentiates transformational leaders from ordinary administrators. (Halkos et al., 2025; Xue et al., 2021). In the context of limited resources that schools often experience, integrity manifests as a form of moral courage to continue prioritizing budget allocation and policies for environmental sustainability. (Junaidah et al., 2025), despite facing internal resistance or external pressure to shift focus to other, more pragmatic aspects (Surjanti et al., 2024) . This moral potential serves as an anchor that keeps schools on track with the Adiwiyata vision even as the initial enthusiasm for the program begins to fade. (Herliana & Suriansyah, 2025; Wang & Yanai, 2023).

Finally, leadership integrity also includes aspects of Ethical Transparency. in green resource governance (Purnomo et al., 2024). The study confirms that trust from stakeholders can only be built through openness in the management of funds and environmental assistance. (Choi, 2021). This transparency is not only about financial accountability, but also a testament to the leadership's commitment that every resource is fully dedicated to improving the quality of the learning environment, not just for the sake of the institution's image. (Alene et al., 2025; Megawati et al., 2022).

Table 3. *Key Characteristics of Leadership Integrity in the Context of Adiwiyata Schools*

No	Key Characteristics of Integrity	Conceptual Description	Main References
1	Moral Consistency	Full alignment between the campaigned ecological vision and the leaders' actual daily behavior (walking the talk).	(Herliana & Suriansyah, 2025; Liang et al., 2023; Utomo et al., 2023; Wibowo et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2021)
2	Moral Potential	The courage of leaders to make difficult decisions for the sake of the environment and resilience in facing challenges or staff resistance.	(Halkos et al., 2025; Junaidah et al., 2025; Surjanti et al., 2024; Wang & Yanai, 2023)
3	Ethical Transparency	Openness and accountability in the management of school resources focused on environmental educational values.	(Alene et al., 2025; Choi, 2021; Dami, 2024; Purnomo et al., 2024; Ur Rehman et al., 2024; Widodo, 2026)

Source: Synthesized by the authors based on literature review, 2026

Mechanisms of Influence: From Integrity to Ecological Behavior

If integrity is the moral foundation of leadership, then the next crucial question is: through what psychological mechanisms can this integrity be converted into concrete stakeholder behavior? The in-depth literature analysis in this section successfully deconstructs the black box of how it can influence these stakeholders. The findings indicate that the principal's integrity does not affect all school members in a uniform manner. (Liu et al., 2023). Rather, this influence is distributed through two distinct yet interacting

psychological mechanisms: the creation of psychological safety for educators and the stimulation of social learning for students. These two mechanisms work simultaneously to shift school norms from mere compliance with rules to a deeper cultural awareness. (Han & Yang, 2025).

In the context of human resource management in schools, leadership integrity serves as a primary catalyst for the formation of a climate of psychological safety. The Adiwiyata program requires teachers to step out of their pedagogical comfort zones, create environmentally integrated learning modules, and manage complex recycling projects. (Surjanti et al., 2024). The literature confirms that this type of innovation carries a high risk of failure. This is where the vital role of leaders with integrity lies , leaders who are able to convince teachers that new initiatives or ideas will be valued as a learning process, not as mistakes deserving of administrative sanctions. (Liu et al., 2023). Without this sense of security, teachers tend to be passive and only carry out environmental programs as bureaucratic routines without innovative spirit. (Molnár et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the transmission of values to students occurs through a more observational mechanism, namely Social Learning Modeling. (Gelmez Burakgazi & Reiss, 2024; Wibowo et al., 2023). Unlike adults who may respond to written policies, students internalize character values through the process of vicarious learning. (Al-Husain et al., 2025). Empirical studies in this review consistently show that principal behavior that exemplifies concrete realization has a much stronger persuasive impact than verbal instructions during flag ceremonies or morning roll calls (Surjanti et al., 2024). When school leaders visualize their integrity in concrete actions, it breaks down the perception that protecting the environment is solely the job of a janitor, and reconstructs it as a collective moral responsibility worthy of emulation by every student. (Wu et al., 2021).

Table 4. *Psychological Mechanisms of the Influence of Leadership Integrity on School Residents*

No	Influence Target	Main Psychological Mechanisms	Process Description	Supporting References
1	Teachers & Staff	Psychological Safety	Leaders create a fear-free atmosphere, facilitating teachers to dare to take risks in creating innovative learning environments without fear of being blamed.	(Liu et al., 2023; Molnár et al., 2021; Surjanti et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2021)
2	Student	Social Learning Modeling	Students adopt pro-environmental behavior through direct observation of the principal's consistent actions, not through verbal instructions alone.	(Al-Husain et al., 2025; Gelmez Burakgazi & Reiss, 2024; Surjanti et al., 2024; Wibowo et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2021)
3	School Culture	Value Internalization	The process in which external values (school rules) are absorbed into the internal motivation of school residents because of trust in the leader.	(Chatterjee, 2024; Han & Yang, 2025; Liu et al., 2023)

Source: Synthesized by the authors based on literature review, 2026

Implications for Sustainability Programs: Beyond Symbolism

One of the most pointed criticisms of green school program implementation in developing countries is the phenomenon of post-award stagnation. The literature analysis in this study confirms that the sustainability of the Adiwiyata program is often threatened by its ceremonial orientation. Many schools are trapped in a short-term cycle: mobilizing massive resources in the lead-up to the accreditation assessment, only to experience a drastic decline in activity immediately after receiving the award. (Balqis et al., 2025; Nursofah et al., 2025). In this context, research findings provide a crucial insight: leadership integrity is not only an ethical complement, but rather the most accurate predictor for differentiating between schools that stop at symbolism and schools that succeed in building an ecological culture that is ingrained in the mind (Wibowo et al., 2023).

Comparative data from various articles shows that schools led by principals with high integrity show a stable sustainability curve, even increasing over time. (Mutohhari et al., 2025). The mechanism lies in a shift in motivation. Leaders with integrity are able to transform the motivation of the academic community from extrinsic or existential to intrinsic or substantive motivation. When leaders consistently position environmental issues as part of the school's moral identity. So, environmental programs are no longer considered an additional burden by teachers, but rather as standard operational norms that must be implemented without the need for strict supervision. (Nursofah et al., 2025; Setiadi et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the implications of these findings challenge the common assumption that the failure of the Adiwiyata program was due to a lack of infrastructure funding. Instead, this study found that incompetence in the substance of commitments made the culture built by leaders far more damaged than mere budget constraints. Schools with modest physical facilities but led by figures with moral potential proved more effective in producing environmentally conscious graduates than elite schools with sophisticated greenhouse facilities but neglected leaders. (Mutohhari et al., 2025; Setiadi et al., 2023). This confirms that investing in leadership integrity is a more cost-effective and long-term sustainability strategy than mere physical investment. (Molnár et al., 2021; Ur Rehman et al., 2024).

In closing, this analysis concludes that the future of the Adiwiyata program depends heavily on the education system's ability to recruit and develop principals who are not only managerially competent but also ethically mature. Sustainability cannot be achieved through top-down bureaucratic mandates; rather, it must grow organically from the exemplary leadership rooted at the educational unit level. Without this foundation of integrity, the green school program is feared to be merely a passing trend that leaves no lasting mark on the character of its students (Amrane-Cooper et al., 2021).

Table 5. *Implications of Leadership Integrity on the Sustainability of the Adiwiyata Program*

No	Dimensions of Sustainability	Description of the Phenomenon of the Findings	Supporting References
1	De-symbolization of the Program	Shifting focus from the pursuit of symbolic awards to the substance of changing the behavior of school residents.	(Utomo et al., 2023; Wibowo et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2021)
2	Cultural Resilience	The ability of a school's culture to maintain environmentally friendly	(Molnár et al., 2021; Mutohhari et al., 2025;

		practices despite changes in leadership or decreases in external funding.	Nursofah et al., 2025; Setiadi et al., 2023; Ur Rehman et al., 2024)
3	Motivational Transformation	Changes in the drivers of school community participation from extrinsic motivation (fear of sanctions/wanting rewards) to intrinsic motivation (value awareness).	(Bui et al., 2024; Choi, 2021; Dami, 2024; Urrea-Solano et al., 2026)
4	Long-Term Effectiveness	Leader integrity has been shown to be positively correlated with the retention of students' pro-environmental behavior into the post-school period.	(Al-Husain et al., 2025; Nursofah et al., 2025; Setiadi et al., 2023)

Source: Synthesized by the authors based on literature review, 2026

Discussion

This study aims to deconstruct the role of principal leadership integrity in the successful implementation of the Adiwiyata program. Through a systematic synthesis of current literature, this discussion highlights how integrity serves as a key variable bridging the gap between formal environmental policies and the reality of stakeholder behavior. Unlike conventional managerial approaches that focus on physical infrastructure, the study's findings underscore the urgency of the ethical-psychological dimension in environmental education leadership.

Redefining Leadership in Green Schools: From Compliance to Conscience

The main findings of this study confirm that the transactional leadership model, based on punishment and rewards, is no longer sufficient to maintain the sustainability of green schools (Alene et al., 2025; Su et al., 2021). This discussion extends transformational leadership theory by proposing that in an ecological context, charisma and inspiration alone are insufficient without moral consistency (Wibowo et al., 2023).

Literature shows that teacher and student skepticism often arises not because they don't care about the environment, but because they detect a dissonance between the leader's rhetoric and their actual actions (Herliana & Suriansyah, 2025). Therefore, integrity here must be understood as a core competency, not simply a personality trait. Effective principals are those who are able to transform administrative compliance into conscience, where school members protect the environment because they feel it is the right thing to do, not because they fear official inspections (Balqis et al., 2025).

The Psychological Architecture of Change

This discussion also highlights the complex psychological mechanisms behind behavioral change. The findings on Psychological Safety provide significant theoretical contributions: environmental innovation in schools will not thrive in a soil devoid of trust (Wu et al., 2021). Teachers need emotional safety to experiment with Green Teaching methods.

If leaders fail to provide this sense of security, the Adiwiyata program will only result in monotonous and rigid replication of activities (Amrane-Cooper et al., 2021). For students, findings on Social Learning confirm that knowledge of a local wisdom-based curriculum has a stronger educational impact than the formal classroom curriculum (Wibowo et al., 2023). This implies that character education interventions can no longer rely solely on teaching modules but must begin with improving the exemplary behavior of school leaders.

Best Practices and Managerial Implications

Based on the synthesis of these findings, several best practices and managerial implications emerge for education practitioners and policymakers to enhance the efficacy of green school programs. The foundation of effective implementation begins at the recruitment level, where educational authorities should prioritize a candidate's track record in socio-environmental initiatives and moral integrity over purely technical managerial competencies during the selection of school principals (Setiadi et al., 2023). Once leadership is established, sustained evaluation becomes imperative. Schools are advised to expand their assessments beyond routine physical environmental inspections by instituting periodic, large-scale audits of the school climate. This approach is essential to gauge the academic community's perception of leadership integrity and to ensure the cultivation of a psychologically safe environment (Mutohhari et al., 2025).

Furthermore, in their day-to-day managerial practices, principals should avoid micromanagement within environmental initiatives such as the Adiwiyata program. Instead, leaders must decentralize innovation by granting teacher teams the autonomy to design projects tailored to their specific local contexts, underpinned by the assurance of comprehensive institutional support (W. Xu et al., 2025). Ultimately, this support must be materialized through exemplary leadership behavior. Principals can foster a culture of active participation by establishing regular collaborative community service activities, wherein leaders work actively alongside students, thereby reinforcing emotional bonds and solidifying a shared commitment across the school community.

Theoretical Proposal: The Eco-Integrity Leadership Model

Based on the synthesis of the empirical findings presented, this study proposes a new conceptual framework called The Eco-Integrity Leadership Model. This model was born in response to the limitations of classical transformational leadership theory, which often fails to explain the implementation gap in environmental education (Amrane-Cooper et al., 2021). In the context of green schools, charisma and verbal motivation alone are insufficient to overcome organizational cynicism. This proposed model postulates that the success of the Adiwiyata program is determined not by how often leaders talk about the environment, but by Moral Potency, which is the core of that leadership (Su et al., 2021; Widodo, 2026). Moral potency is defined as a leader's psychological capacity to overcome fear, fatigue, or external pressures to consistently maintain pro-environmental policies.

In its operationalization, Moral Potency does not stand alone but is supported by three interactive dimensions that ensure effective influence. The first dimension is Ethical Transparency. In many case studies, program failures are often triggered by suspicions among school residents that environmental programs are merely "funded projects" by the principal. Ethical transparency serves to neutralize this toxic cynicism by providing public access to resource governance (Wu et al., 2021).

The second construct is Psychological Nurturing. This model emphasizes that teacher innovation in environmental learning requires a safety net. Leaders must act as protectors, ensuring that failure in green project experiments is part of the learning curve, not an object of punishment, thus creating an organic culture of innovation (Alene et al., 2025).

The third, and often overlooked, element is Visionary Consistency. This research found that students detect values not through the written curriculum, but through the curriculum localwisdom of a leader's body language and micro-behaviors (Herliana & Suriansyah, 2025). Visionary consistency demands absolute alignment between verbal messages and daily actions. When a principal picks up trash in the middle of the street without being asked, he is sending a signal of validity far stronger than thousands of urging banners. The interaction between the core of Moral Potency and these three foundational components creates a robust ecosystem of trust, transforming apparent compliance into inner commitment (Wibowo et al., 2023).

The theoretical significance of the Eco-Integrity Leadership Model lies in its ability to explain why schools with limited financial resources can be more successful in environmental character education than wealthy schools (Z. Xu et al., 2024). This model challenges materialistic assumptions by arguing that integrity capital is the most dominant independent variable. Thus, this model offers a new roadmap for educational leadership development: a shift in focus from technical managerial training to strengthening the ethical capacity and moral courage of leaders in addressing global ecological challenges.

Table 6. *Theoretical Framework of the Eco-Integrity Leadership Model*

No	Model Components	Conceptual Definition	Theoretical Functions in the School Ecosystem
1	Core: Moral Potency	The internal capacity of leaders to act according to environmental ethical principles despite facing social, financial, or bureaucratic pressures.	Stability Anchor: Prevents environmental programs from stalling when external incentives (such as competitions/prizes) are removed.
2	Ethical Transparency	Practice radical openness in resource management and decision-making regarding school environmental policies.	Trust Builder: Eliminates cognitive dissonance and cynicism in teachers/staff regarding the motivation behind the program.
3	Psychological Nurturing	Providing emotional support and security for school residents to innovate without fear of punishment.	Innovation Incubator: Facilitating the transition from conventional teaching methods to experimental, nature-based methods.
4	Visionary Consistency	Full coherence between the rhetoric of the school's vision and mission and the non-verbal behavior of leaders in everyday life.	Value Validator: Confirming to students that environmental awareness is a norm of life, not just a written rule.

Source: Synthesized by the authors based on literature review, 2026

CONCLUSION

This study found that the integrity of principal leadership has a far more fundamental impact on the sustainability of the Adiwiyata program than previously assumed. Ethical variables proved to be significantly more decisive in determining the success of student character development than simply the availability of physical infrastructure or the size of the school budget. These findings reveal the reality that program failure is often caused not by a lack of facilities, but by a local wisdom curriculum in the form of incoherent leadership examples, which ultimately fuels skepticism among the school community.

This study strengthens the argument that values-based leadership is key to character education, while also offering a new perspective by introducing the Eco-Integrity Leadership Model. This model challenges the conventional view that separates managerial competence from moral quality, postulating that in the context of environmental education, Moral Potency is a strategic foundation that cannot be replaced by verbal charisma alone. This contribution enriches the scientific discussion on green school management or the Adiwiyata program by shifting the focus from fulfilling administrative instruments to strengthening the ethical capacity of leaders.

This research is limited to a systematic literature analysis (SLR) of published articles, which may not fully capture the complex dynamics of local culture. The data are also limited to secondary documents and does not include long-term behavioral measurements in the field. Therefore, future research with a broader empirical sample,

involving various educational levels, and utilizing novel approaches is urgently needed to comprehensively test the validity of this model and formulate more precise policies.

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