

Principal's strategies for cultivating a sustainable quality culture in primary school within under-resourced area

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ABSTRACT: Primary education as the foundation for human resource development requires strategies for improving quality culture in a sustainable manner, particularly in eastern Indonesia, which faces limitations in terms of resources and infrastructure. This study aimed to analyze school principal's strategies for sustaining educational quality culture amid limited resources and infrastructure. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis involving principals, teachers, educational staff, students, and parents. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through credibility measures, including source and technique triangulation, member checking, and extended engagement. The findings revealed that principals implemented integrated leadership strategies focused on: (1) enhancing student academic achievement through structured National Science Olympiad (OSN) coaching, routine literacy and numeracy strengthening, differentiated learning, and consistent data-driven evaluation; (2) fostering shared habits and values through the habituation of the 5S culture, modeled by principals and teachers and reinforced through daily routines; (3) applying positive discipline by cultivating intrinsic motivation, building shared agreements, using restorative methods, engaging in dialogic communication, and committing to non-physical punishment, thereby creating a supportive and conducive school climate; and (4) utilizing school artifacts such as logos, posters, school rituals, and facilities as mediums to reinforce values and school identity, supporting the sustainable internalization of a quality culture. These findings highlight that an integrative, culturally embedded, and internalization-oriented leadership approach is a key factor in sustaining educational quality culture, particularly in resource-constrained contexts.

KEYWORDS: 5S Culture, Sustainable Quality Culture, Positive Discipline, School Leadership, Academic Achievement

I. INTRODUCTION

Primary education serves as the fundamental cornerstone in shaping a nation's generation to be character-driven, intelligent, and future-competitive. This is emphasized in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System that education must holistically develop students' potential to become individuals of faith, noble character, competence, creativity, and responsibility (BPK, 2003). Therefore, a quality culture in education that prioritizes continuous improvement across all aspects of educational services is essential to ensure the attainment of high-quality educational standards. However, sustainable quality culture can only be realized if an education system possesses a robust quality culture defined as a shared set of values, habits, and practices that guide all members in maintaining and enhancing the quality of educational services continuously (Bendermacher et al., 2017; European University Association, 2020). This concept of quality culture integrates technical dimensions including systems, procedures, and accountability, with cultural dimensions including values, attitudes, and norms. Consequently, interventions must adopt a socio-technical approach which harmonize systemic changes with behavioral shifts in a holistic and integrated manner (Meethong et al., 2024).

Quality education is an integral part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, which emphasizes access to and the quality of education for all children. However, global progress remains suboptimal, with only about 58% of students worldwide achieving minimum proficiency in reading, and many countries facing challenges related to educational infrastructure and uneven teacher quality (United Nations, 2024). Furthermore, UNESCO reports that education quality is determined not only by academic achievement but also by the availability of adequate learning environments, such as sanitation facilities, clean water, and school safety, to create effective learning conditions across all regions of the world (UNESCO, 2024). In Indonesia, over the past decade, the government has endeavored to improve education quality through data-driven policies. One key initiative is the launch of the Rapor Pendidikan (Education Report) as a tool for evaluating education quality at national and regional levels, with a focus on student literacy and numeracy across various school levels (Kemendiknasmen, 2025). Data from the Rapor Pendidikan indicate an increase in the proportion of students achieving minimum competency in literacy from 59.49%

Principal's strategies for cultivating a sustainable quality culture in primary school within under-resourced area

in 2022 to 70.03% in 2024, and in numeracy from 45.24% to 67.94% during the same period (Kemendiknasmen, 2025). Nevertheless, these improvements have not been evenly distributed across all districts and cities in Indonesia.

At the regional level, disparities in education quality in Indonesia tend to be more pronounced in the eastern part of the country, where students often struggle to achieve basic literacy and numeracy competencies. For instance, in Eastern Indonesia, approximately three out of five students are reported to have difficulty understanding simple texts and solving basic contextual mathematics problems, reflecting learning challenges that are more severe compared to other regions (Medcom, 2025). This gap is exacerbated by limited facilities, inadequate educational infrastructure, and geographical conditions that hinder access to quality education services. Consequently, students in several eastern Indonesian regions, including Sulawesi, have less equitable educational opportunities (Save the Children Indonesia, 2025). It indicates that despite national-level improvements, interregional educational inequality remains a critical issue. It demands contextual and sustainable policy strategies and school leadership to ensure fair and equitable education quality across all of Indonesia.

In addressing the disparity in education quality between Eastern Indonesia and other regions, efforts to enhance quality culture of education must consider the capacity of school principals to overcome existing limitations. Schools in areas with constrained resources and infrastructure are required to develop adaptive, contextual, and sustainable internal strategies to ensure effective learning processes continue, where, at this situation, school leadership, particularly the role of the principal as the primary decision-maker at the institution level, becomes the key factor in bridging the gap and ensuring that tangible and sustainable quality culture improvement is realized at the school level. This underscores that a sustainable quality culture serves as a critical foundation for educational accountability. Without it, barriers stemming from inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and weak professional collaboration are likely to persist, especially when school leadership is weak and quality improvement efforts remain temporary and unintegrated within the school system (Holst et al., 2025).

Previous studies have already shown the important roles of school principal in strengthening educational quality culture. Findings show that a principal serving as a leader in directing the planning, organizing, supervision, and evaluation of all teaching and learning activities can achieve optimal educational quality and plays a strategic role in enhancing the quality of elementary education (Kurniawati et al., 2020; Riani & Ain, 2022; Wibowo & Wakhudin, 2021). Another finding show that a principal who integrates the functions of educator, manager, supervisor, and motivator can drive more effective school management, which impacts overall educational quality (Widiyanto, 2023). Moreover, a principal with clear leadership, strong managerial skills, and the ability to motivate have a significant influence on graduate quality (Suryanto et al., 2025). A study showed that a principal who can develop a quality culture through adaptive and collaborative leadership, accompanied by continuous evaluation, teacher professional development, and the involvement of all stakeholders within the educational institution can enhance both academic and non-academic student achievement (Tristiandari et al., 2025). Another study shows that there are strategies that can be taken to foster quality culture in elementary schools, namely strengthening the vision and mission, empowering educators, collaborating with parents and the community (Supryanti et al., 2024). A study shows that data-based supervision can strengthen accountability and the sustainability of educational quality in elementary schools (Pujaningsih et al., 2024). On the other hand, study by Nasution & Siregar (2023) emphasizes the importance of academic supervision in improving the quality of learning through coaching and mentoring approaches.

While various studies have affirmed the strategic role of school principal leadership in fostering a quality culture, the majority of prior research has focused on the application of specific leadership styles or internal quality assurance in relatively well-resourced contexts. These studies offer limited insight into strategies for ensuring the sustainability of a quality culture under conditions of constrained resources and infrastructure, particularly in regions located in Eastern Indonesia. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by conducting an in-depth examination of the strategies employed by school principals to strengthen a sustainable quality culture in schools with limited resources and infrastructure. The findings are expected to serve as a practical reference for principals and educational stakeholders in designing contextual, adaptive, and sustainability-oriented quality improvement strategies. Furthermore, the results aim to inform policymakers in formulating educational quality enhancement policies for regions with similar characteristics.

II. METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. This methodological choice is justified as the research focuses on an in-depth exploration of school principals' strategies in strengthening a quality culture within schools, requiring detailed consideration of the cultural, social, and organizational context, an approach supported by Yin (2018). The research was conducted at SDN Pembina Banggai, located in Lompio Village, Banggai District, Banggai Laut Regency, Central Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. This study was conducted from August 2025 to December 2025, with the selection of the research site based on the school's characteristics as a reference school with A accreditation, having the largest student population of 408 students across 18 classes, supported by 31 teachers and educational staff, and demonstrating consistent academic and non-academic achievements despite being located in an area with limited infrastructure and resources.

Principal's strategies for cultivating a sustainable quality culture in primary school within under-resourced area

From a socio-demographic perspective, data from the BPS - Statistics Indonesia Banggai Regency 2024/2025 show that Banggai Regency has 337 public primary schools and 25 private primary schools. The number of teachers is 3,512 in public schools and 151 in private schools, while student enrollment comprises 31,912 in public schools and 2,380 in private schools (BPS - Statistics Indonesia Banggai Regency, 2025). Notably, the quality of education in Banggai District is reported to be the highest among all districts within Banggai Laut Regency. In terms of human resources, as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI), Banggai Regency scores 72.68 (BPS - Statistics Indonesia Banggai Regency, 2025). The HDI of Central Sulawesi Province is 71.56, which is higher than that of Gorontalo (71.23) and West Sulawesi (68.20). However, when compared to provinces such as North Sulawesi (75.03), Papua (73.00), Bangka Belitung Islands (73.33), Bengkulu (73.39), Jambi (73.43), and Aceh (74.03), Central Sulawesi's HDI remains relatively low (BPS Statistics, 2024). When viewed in terms of facilities and infrastructure, including education, health services, food production, clean water facilities, electricity, and other infrastructure, the Central Sulawesi Province remains at a lower level compared to other provinces in Indonesia. Electricity distribution in Central Sulawesi Province (1,804.62 GWh) is lower than that of its neighboring provinces, such as North Sulawesi (2,164.19 GWh) and South Sulawesi (8,732.55 GWh) (BPS Statistics, 2026), even though the land area of Central Sulawesi Province is larger than that of North Sulawesi (North Sulawesi: 14,500.28 km²; Central Sulawesi: 45,330.55 km²; South Sulawesi: 61,605.72 km²) (BPS Statistics, 2024). This socio-demographic made the school a unique case for investigation to examine the principal's strategies used to maintain and enhance its school culture, despite being located in an area with significant limitations in resources and infrastructure.

The data sources in this study were obtained from the school principal, three classroom teachers, one educational staff member, two students, and two parents, and were supported by official school documents such as the school vision and mission, work programs, school regulations, achievement records, and school cultural artifacts that provide a comprehensive picture of quality culture practices within the school. Data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth data on the principal's strategies and participants' experiences, as described by DeJonckheere & Vaughn (2019); passive participant observation to examine behavioral patterns of school members, forms of role modeling, disciplinary practices, and consistency in the implementation of quality values, as outlined by Uwamusi & Ajisebiyawo (2023); and document analysis to support interview and observational data, as recommended by Brooks et al. (2015) to ensure data credibility.

Data analysis used content analysis conducted through three iterative and interactive stages: data reduction involving the selection and simplification of data in accordance with the research focus; data display in the form of narratives, tables, diagrams, and direct quotations; and conclusion drawing and verification carried out progressively alongside deeper analysis. Data trustworthiness was ensured through source and technique triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement, as recommended by Miles et al. (2014), to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

III. RESULTS

The findings indicated that several strategies were implemented by the school principal to strengthen the quality culture at SDN Pembina Banggai, Banggai Laut Regency, including the improvement of students' academic achievement; the development of 5S cultural habituation (*Senyum, Sapa, Salam, Sopan, and Santun* or smile, greet, salute, politeness, and courtesy); the implementation of positive discipline strategies; and the use of school artifacts to support the continuity of the quality culture.

A. Principal's Strategies for Improving Student Academic Achievement

The findings indicated that strategies to improve academic achievement at SDN Pembina Banggai were implemented through integrated and sustainable programs, beginning with the structured coaching of the National Science Olympiad (OSN) conducted through academic extracurricular activities with regular training sessions held once a week. OSN coaching was not solely oriented toward competition participation but emphasized strengthening students' academic readiness prior to competitions which reflected a developmental approach that focuses on learning processes and the enhancement of fundamental competencies as essential prerequisites for achievement. In line with OSN coaching, the school also consistently strengthened basic literacy and numeracy skills through routine activities conducted every Friday morning and involving all students, which served as a simple yet continuous practice to build foundational competencies that supported students' learning across subjects and ensured more equitable basic academic skills among students.

To accommodate the diversity of students' characteristics, the school implemented differentiated instruction adjusted to students' abilities, interests, and learning needs through two forms of support: enrichment programs for high-achieving students and remedial programs for students experiencing learning difficulties. This approach enabled teachers to provide more personalized and adaptive learning services, which ensured that each student had optimal learning opportunities according to their developmental level. All of these programs were subsequently monitored and evaluated through periodic data-based academic performance evaluations, which were used to identify strengths and weaknesses in the learning process and to inform instructional improvement decisions at both the school and classroom levels. Through the use of learning outcome data, the principal and teachers were able to formulate follow-up actions that were more objective, measurable, and targeted in order to improve the overall and sustainable quality of instruction and students' academic achievement. The principal's commitment to strengthening

Principal's strategies for cultivating a sustainable quality culture in primary school within under-resourced area

quality culture at SDN Pembina Banggai, Banggai Laut Regency, is also reflected in the school's attainment of A accreditation and its designation as a reference school for other primary schools in the region.

B. Principal's Strategies in Implementing the 5S Habituation

The findings indicated that the strategy of habituating the 5S culture at SDN Pembina Banggai was implemented through mutually reinforcing approaches, beginning with the exemplary behavior of the principal and teachers as central figures in shaping school culture. This was manifested through the practice of welcoming students every morning at the school gate with smiles, greetings, and salutations. Based on observational data, this activity was carried out consistently and continuously, creating an orderly, supportive, and warm atmosphere at the start of the learning day. This demonstrates that the internalization of the 5S culture was conveyed not merely through verbal instruction but, more importantly, through concrete examples that could be observed and emulated by students. This exemplary practice was further strengthened through the routine habituation of the 5S culture integrated into all school activities, including classroom learning, interactions within the school environment, and communication between the school and parents, thereby allowing the values of the 5S culture to be consistently embedded in students' daily experiences. Interview findings revealed that students had a good understanding of the meaning of the 5S culture and were able to relate it to concrete behaviors in everyday life, such as smiling, offering greetings, initiating friendly interactions, and speaking politely and courteously to teachers and peers which indicated that the values of the 5S culture were not only understood conceptually but had also been internalized in students' behavior.

The internalization of these values was further strengthened through the active involvement of all members of the school community in reinforcing and sustaining the 5S culture. As this culture evolved into a form of collective awareness, students not only practiced the 5S values individually but also demonstrated social responsibility by reminding and encouraging one another.

C. Principal's Strategies in Implementing Positive Discipline

The findings indicated that the implementation of positive discipline at SDN Pembina Banggai was carried out through interrelated and mutually reinforcing strategies, beginning with the cultivation of students' intrinsic motivation as the foundation for disciplined behavior. Rather than merely emphasizing compliance with rules, the school encouraged students to understand the meaning and benefits of discipline for their personal development and future aspirations. Interview findings revealed that students were able to consciously reflect on the reasons behind their disciplined behavior, such as arriving at school on time due to their motivation to learn and achieve future goals, which indicated that the discipline developed was rooted in students' internal awareness rather than external control or fear of punishment. This intrinsic motivation was further strengthened through a shared-agreement approach in establishing and implementing school rules, whereby regulations were not imposed unilaterally but were collectively socialized and understood by all members of the school community, including students. This participatory approach fostered a sense of ownership over the agreed rules and enhanced students' voluntary and responsible commitment to complying with them. When violations occurred, the school applied a restitution-based method implemented through systematic stages, including inviting students to recount the incident, identifying their level of awareness regarding the mistake, exploring the underlying causes of the violation, and facilitating reflection on the consequences of the behavior as well as the formulation of corrective actions. Through this process, each violation was positioned as a meaningful learning opportunity that encouraged students to develop self-reflection skills and personal responsibility.

In the process of enforcing discipline, the school demonstrated a strong commitment to avoiding physical punishment by adopting an educational and persuasive disciplinary approach that upheld students' dignity. The principal and teachers believed that physical punishment was ineffective in fostering long-term discipline and had the potential to damage trust between educators and students; therefore, the handling of violations was focused on developing awareness and improving behavior. This positive discipline approach was further strengthened through the reinforcement of *gotong royong* values via collective activities that promoted social discipline. Rather than being conveyed merely at a conceptual level, these values were internalized through various collaborative activities that required cooperation among students, enabling them to develop social responsibility, care for others, and the ability to work together toward shared goals.

D. School Artifacts that Support the Implementation of the 5S Habituation and Positive Discipline

School artifacts played a strategic role in strengthening the internalization of a quality culture through various mutually reinforcing forms, beginning with the school logo, which functioned as a symbol of identity embodying values of discipline, responsibility, and *gotong royong*. The logo not only served as a visual identity of the school but also represented the values upheld by the institution and acted as a constant reminder for all members of the school community. This symbolic identity was further reinforced through posters and visual artifacts displayed in strategic locations throughout the school environment, including the school's vision and mission statements, school rules, explanations of the 5S culture, motivational messages, and student achievement boards. These artifacts functioned as continuous educational media that students encountered daily, allowing repeated exposure to gradually internalize quality-related values into students' awareness. The internalization of these values was further strengthened through routinely and consistently implemented school rituals and traditions, such as morning assemblies, welcoming students at the school gate, and the weekly "Cultural Thursday" activities. These rituals served as mechanisms for

Principal's strategies for cultivating a sustainable quality culture in primary school within under-resourced area

institutionalizing positive values, ensuring that they were not merely abstract concepts but were practiced in collective moments involving the entire school community and became part of the school's collective identity through consistent repetition.

All symbolic artifacts and rituals were further supported by well-maintained school facilities that functioned as indirect media for character education, whereby the cleanliness and orderliness of school facilities taught students the importance of environmental care, shared responsibility in maintaining school assets, and a sense of ownership toward the school. The well-maintained physical condition of the school also created a comfortable and conducive learning environment that supported the learning process. Consequently, all school artifacts, symbolic, visual, ritual, and physical, worked synergistically to form a comprehensive quality culture ecosystem, in which each element reinforced one another in the process of internalizing positive values that were not only cognitively understood but also internalized and practiced in the daily lives of all members of the school community in a sustainable manner.

The interrelationship and integration of these four strategies in realizing quality culture at SDN Pembina Banggai can be visualized in the following diagram:

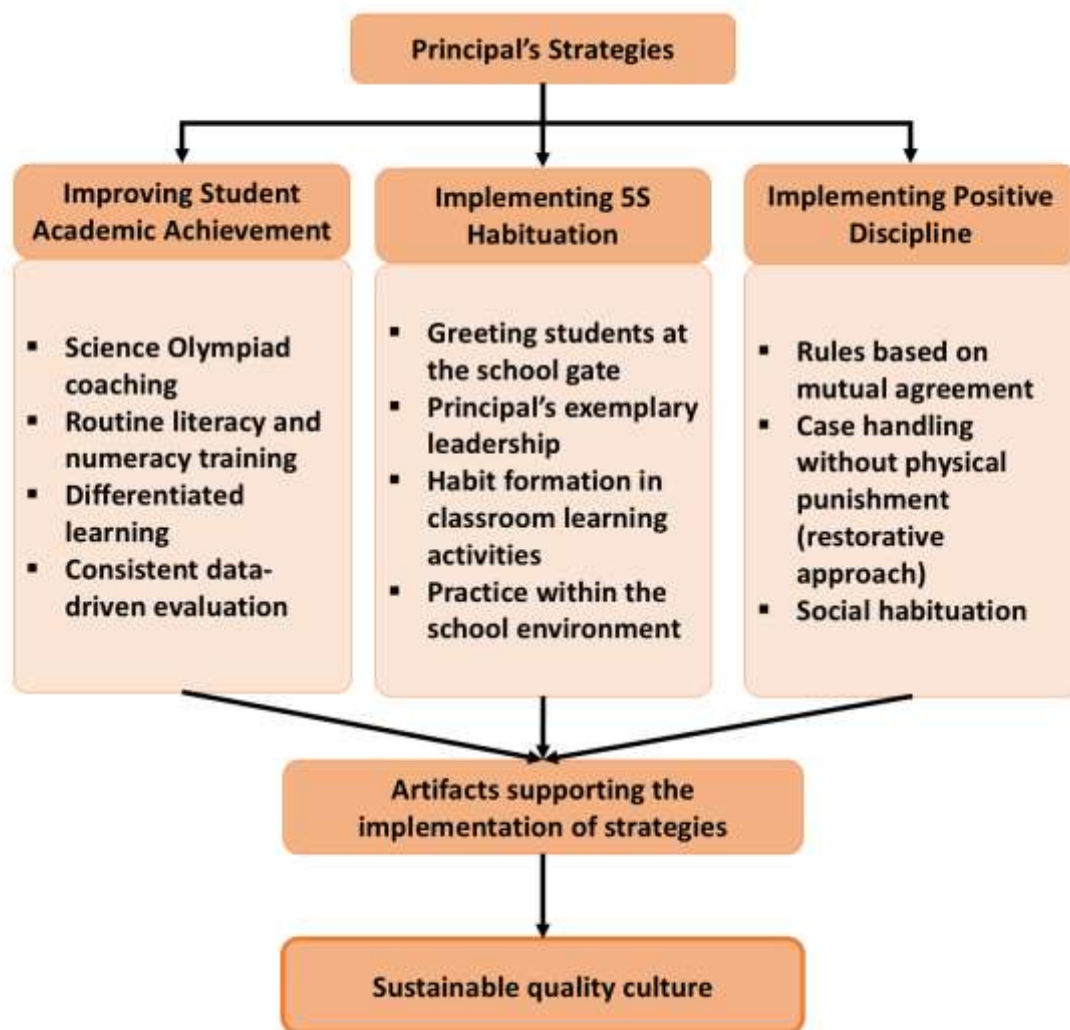


Figure 1. The principal's strategies in continuously improving the quality culture at SDN Pembina Banggai

IV. DISCUSSION

A. Principal Strategies for Improving Student Academic Achievement

The principal's strategy for enhancing students' academic achievement at SDN Pembina Banggai was implemented through a systematic, planned, and sustainable approach that positioned academic achievement as the result of a continuous cultivation process rather than an instant outcome. Consistent with the instructional leadership perspective (Mas & Zulystiawati, 2022), the principal acted as a learning leader by ensuring ongoing mentoring and support for teachers to deliver high-quality instruction. This strategy was operationalized through integrated initiatives, particularly structured OSN coaching conducted via academic extracurricular activities with regular practice schedules and intensive guidance from supervising teachers. In this process, the principal performed managerial leadership functions by planning the program, assigning competent teachers, monitoring

Principal's strategies for cultivating a sustainable quality culture in primary school within under-resourced area

implementation, and periodically evaluating students' progress, reflecting a comprehensive mobilization of school resources to support sustained academic improvement (Lamatenggo et al., 2022)..

The second approach was the routine reinforcement of foundational literacy and numeracy skills, conducted every Friday morning. This program reflected the principal's understanding that sustainable academic achievement had to be built upon a solid foundation of basic competencies. Through consistent habituation, students were not only trained technically in reading, text comprehension, and arithmetic and reasoning skills, but also developed a positive learning culture from the very start of the school day. This finding reinforced the principle of effective learning, where mastery of foundational skills served as a critical prerequisite for student success across various subjects (Faisal et al, 2025).

The third approach was the implementation of differentiated instruction, adjusted to students' abilities, interests, and learning needs. The principal actively encouraged teachers to design varied learning strategies in terms of content, process, and learning outcomes. This approach aligned with responsive instructional leadership that addressed the diverse characteristics of students, as emphasized by Mas and Zulystiawati (2022), who positioned student learning outcomes as the primary indicator of successful school leadership. At SDN Pembina Banggai, differentiated instruction was implemented through enrichment programs for high-achieving students and remedial programs for those experiencing learning difficulties, thereby ensuring that every student received an equitable opportunity to develop according to their potential..

The fourth approach was the implementation of data-driven achievement evaluation, conducted periodically and systematically. The principal emphasized that every evaluation result had to be followed up through improvements in learning strategies, enrichment programs, or remedial interventions. In practice, the principal promoted the use of technology in the assessment process and the documentation of learning evaluation results as a foundation for academic decision-making within the school. This approach aligned with the principle of continuous quality improvement proposed by Goetsch and Davis (2014), which stated that quality had to be embedded within all organizational processes to maintain consistency and sustainability. This finding was also in line with the study results of Kurniasari et al. (2024), which showed that data-driven strategic planning contributed to improving educational quality and could serve as a model for other schools.

These approaches reflected a transformational leadership style, as articulated by Bush (2020), which fostered motivation, commitment, and a quality orientation among school members. This was achieved as the leader modeled exemplary behavior, built trust, and inspired subordinates to transcend personal interests for the sake of organizational goals. It also indicated that the impact of these strategies extended beyond students' academic achievement to include the development of reflective learning attitudes and a long-term orientation. In other words, consistency, learning-oriented instructional-transformational leadership, collaborative inquiry, and data utilization were essential for achieving a sustainable educational quality culture (Pujiningsih et al., 2024; Piranggada et al., 2025).

Furthermore, collaboration between the school and parents in consistently applying disciplinary values created a mutually supportive learning ecosystem. This finding aligned with the concept of whole-school community participation in quality development proposed by Goetsch and Davis (2014), who asserted that sustainable quality improvement required the full engagement of all organizational members. Parental participation was not merely passive but active, facilitated through school-designed programs that supported children's learning and character formation. Therefore, the principal's leadership strategy, which contributed significantly to creating consistent and sustainable improvements in student learning achievement, aligned with the view of Lamatenggo et al. (2022) that effective school leadership was realized through the ability to internalize quality values into the daily practices of school management.

B. Principal's Strategy in Implementing the 5S Habituation

The principal's strategy for strengthening 5S habituation at SDN Pembina Banggai demonstrated a deep understanding of the importance of character building through the habituation of simple values in daily life. The principal viewed the 5S Culture as a vital foundation for building character, social ethics, and a humanistic school climate. This perspective aligned with the concept of quality culture proposed by Deal and Peterson (2016), who asserted that a school's quality culture was reflected in the symbols, rituals, traditions, and habits consistently enacted by its community. The implementation of the 5S Culture at SDN Pembina Banggai was carried out through three interrelated main strategies. The first strategy was exemplary modeling by the principal and teachers, demonstrated through courteous attitudes and personally greeting students each morning at the school gate. This finding was in line with the results of Bush (2020), which showed that a strong school culture was formed when the principal's leadership created participatory spaces and empowered all school members. In the context of SDN Pembina Banggai, exemplary leadership was not merely a slogan or verbal exhortation but was consistently practiced by the principal and teachers in their daily interactions with students, parents, and fellow school community members.

Observational results indicated that the practice of greeting students at the school gate functioned not only as a symbol of hospitality but also built emotional closeness between teachers and students from the very start of the day. The morning atmosphere at the school, which was orderly, conducive, and filled with warmth, reflected the internalization of the values of smile, greeting, salute, politeness, and courtesy within the school's organizational culture. This finding aligned with the concept of

Principal's strategies for cultivating a sustainable quality culture in primary school within under-resourced area

positive behavior habituation proposed by Mahmudah et al. (2025), who asserted that habituating positive behavior was an effective strategy for building a school quality culture through consistent practices that were continuously repeated and reinforced in school life.

The second strategy was routine habituation embedded in various consistent school activities. The 5S Culture was not applied only during specific moments but was integrated into all school activities, whether inside the classroom, within the school environment, or during interactions with parents. Students demonstrated a good understanding of the 5S Culture concept and were able to relate it to concrete behaviors in their daily lives. This indicated that the school's habituation process had successfully helped students grasp the essence of the culture, rather than merely memorizing its principles. This effective habituation process required a systematic approach involving modeling by school leaders, consistent positive reinforcement, and the creation of an environment that supported the formation of positive behavior. This finding aligned with the view of Mahmudah et al. (2025), which indicated that the involvement of all stakeholders, including parents and the school committee, in supporting habituation programs was crucial for successfully establishing a sustainable quality culture. At SDN Pembina Banggai, parental involvement was evident from their positive assessment of the 5S Culture implementation, which was not only applied to students but was also reflected in the attitudes of teachers and educational staff when communicating with parents.

The third strategy was the active involvement of the entire school community in strengthening the 5S Culture. This culture had evolved into a collective consciousness among students, where they not only practiced its values personally but also demonstrated social concern by courageously reminding their peers when they observed non-compliance. This peer-reminding attitude was carried out appropriately and with full awareness, not due to coercion, but because of a shared understanding of the importance of maintaining proper conduct and ethics within the school environment. This finding was in line with the study by Goetsch and Davis (2014), who asserted that the active participation of all school members in quality development fostered a sense of ownership toward the school's vision, programs, and goals. When members felt involved, they did not merely become policy implementers but also integral participants in decision-making and continuous improvement processes. At SDN Pembina Banggai, this sense of ownership manifested in the students' voluntary efforts to uphold and enforce the 5S Culture values, both for themselves and by reminding their peers.

The impact of implementing the 5S Culture was evident in the formation of students' respectful, caring, and responsible character, as well as in the creation of a school climate that was safe, comfortable, and conducive to learning. Students directly experienced the effect of this atmosphere on their learning comfort, where a school environment filled with smiles, greetings, and courteous interactions made them feel safe, comfortable, and accepted. This finding aligned with the view of Williams et al. (2021), who stated that a positive school climate, characterized by safety, mutual respect, and collaboration, served as a vital prerequisite for the formation of positive habits. Furthermore, parents observed that the implementation of the 5S Culture had become a distinctive hallmark of SDN Pembina Banggai, setting it apart from other schools. This culture created a school atmosphere that was friendly, orderly, and marked by mutual respect, thereby generating positive impressions and strong parental trust in the school. This demonstrated that the 5S Culture impacted not only students but also parental perceptions and confidence in the school's educational quality.

The integration of modeling, routine habituation, and the involvement of the entire school community in implementing the 5S Culture created a holistic quality culture ecosystem. This finding aligned with the concept of culture embedding proposed by Williams et al. (2021), which stated that embedding culture into daily practices was a process that required time, consistency, and strong structural support. The process of embedding the 5S Culture at SDN Pembina Banggai was carried out systematically through leader modeling, consistent habituation, and the creation of an environment that supported the formation of positive behavior. Consequently, the habituation of the 5S Culture contributed significantly to creating a positive school climate, shaping students' respectful and caring character, and enhancing parental trust in the school.

C. Principal's Strategy in Implementing Positive Discipline

The principal's strategy in implementing positive discipline at SDN Pembina Banggai demonstrated a progressive understanding of discipline as a character education process, not merely rule enforcement through punishment. The principal believed that effective discipline was built through an understanding of values, mutual agreements, and intrinsic motivation that grew from within students. This perspective aligned with the concept of positive discipline, which emphasized fostering student awareness, responsibility, and self-control over their own behavior. The application of positive discipline at SDN Pembina Banggai used an educational and persuasive approach that emphasized behavior coaching rather than punishment. The primary focus was on cultivating discipline through students' self-awareness and responsibility. Implementation was carried out through five main strategies that were mutually supportive and integrated into the school's leadership system.

The first strategy was instilling intrinsic motivation in students as the primary foundation for developing disciplined behavior. Interview results with students indicated that they were able to explain their reasons for being disciplined in a reflective manner, where adherence to rules stemmed not from fear of punishment but from a personal drive to learn and achieve future goals. This finding reinforced the concept proposed by Goetsch and Davis (2014) that quality had to be embedded in all organizational

Principal's strategies for cultivating a sustainable quality culture in primary school within under-resourced area

processes through internal awareness and commitment, not solely through external control. Students recognized that discipline, such as being on time, following rules, and completing tasks responsibly, directly impacted their learning success and personal development. This understanding signified that discipline had been internalized, becoming part of the students' intrinsic motivation to behave well and responsibly.

The second strategy was a collaborative agreement approach in establishing school rules. School rules were not imposed unilaterally but were socialized and understood as shared agreements to be upheld collectively. Students were able to clearly articulate the school rules and, more importantly, comprehend the rationale behind them. This approach aligned with the concept of quality culture emphasized by Deal and Peterson (2016), which stated that a school's organizational culture was built through consistent daily practices based on mutual agreement. Observational results showed that students appeared disciplined in following the school schedule, behaving orderly in class, maintaining environmental cleanliness, and being responsible for assigned tasks. Their compliance with rules was not driven merely by strict supervision, but more by an awareness of the importance of those rules for the comfort and smoothness of the learning process.

The third strategy was implementing the restitution method as an educational form of consequence. The principal applied this method through five systematic steps. The first step was inviting the student to share their story to understand the context of the problem. The second step was ensuring the student's level of awareness regarding the mistake made. The third step was asking the student to openly explain the background of the issue. The fourth step was guiding the student toward realization through deep reflection on the impact of their actions. The fifth step was asking the student to formulate a way to rectify the mistake made. This five-step approach aligned with the principle of continuous improvement proposed by Goetsch and Davis (2014), in which every mistake was viewed as a learning opportunity for correction rather than a reason for punishment. The restitution method implemented at SDN Pembina Banggai emphasized correcting mistakes through constructive actions; for instance, students were asked to repair or replace damaged items, clean the environment, or engage in beneficial activities for the school and their peers. This approach aimed to help students learn from mistakes, understand the consequences of their behavior, and develop responsibility and self-awareness without instilling fear or relying solely on punitive measures.

The fourth strategy was a firm commitment against using physical punishment. Observational results showed that no use of physical punishment was found in handling student violations, either in the classroom or within the school environment. The approach without physical punishment and the use of dialogic communication demonstrated the principal's effort to create a positive school climate. Teachers did not use punishment as the primary approach; instead, they conducted behavioral guidance through warm and dialogic communication. Teachers provided positive reinforcement, invited students to reflect on their behavior, and explained why a certain action was considered inappropriate.

This approach reflected the implementation of positive discipline that emphasized value learning and character development, rather than merely behavioral control through the threat of punishment. This finding aligned with the view of Williams et al. (2021), who stated that a school climate characterized by safety, mutual respect, and collaboration was a crucial prerequisite for forming positive habits. The fifth strategy was strengthening the value of gotong royong (mutual cooperation) in every school activity. Students voluntarily maintained school cleanliness, helped friends in need, and actively participated in communal work and group activities. This behavior reflected the growth of social discipline rooted in collective awareness, where each student understood the importance of shared responsibility in creating a comfortable and orderly school environment. This finding reinforced the concept of whole-school participation proposed by Goetsch and Davis (2014), which emphasized that a quality culture required the involvement and collective commitment of all organizational members. Communication with parents was a crucial aspect of implementing the restitution method as part of positive discipline at SDN Pembina Banggai. Parents explained that when behavioral issues arose with a student, the school did not immediately impose sanctions but instead invited parents to engage in discussion, evaluate the situation, and seek constructive solutions together. This step ensured that follow-up actions for violations were approached collaboratively, allowing students to understand the consequences of their actions while still feeling supported.

This finding strengthens the participation concept put forward by Bush (2020), who asserts that effective leadership creates a participatory space and empowers all school members, including parents. By implementing discipline through agreements and restitution, the school embeds quality into all organizational processes, which is key to maintaining consistency and sustainability. The approach not only shapes students' external disciplinary behavior but also fosters self-awareness, a sense of responsibility, and enduring positive character. Discipline is understood not as blind obedience to rules, but as the consciousness to do what is right because it is considered valuable and beneficial for oneself and others. Through consistent and comprehensive strategies, positive discipline becomes an integral part of the school culture, supporting the creation of a conducive, safe, and dignity-respecting learning environment for every student.

D. School Artifacts Supporting the Implementation of the 5S Habituation and Positive Discipline

School artifacts played a strategic role in strengthening the internalization of the 5S Culture and the application of positive discipline at SDN Pembina Banggai. These artifacts were not only visual symbols but also functioned as educational,

Principal's strategies for cultivating a sustainable quality culture in primary school within under-resourced area

motivational, and reminder media that fostered student awareness, responsibility, and positive behavior. This finding aligned with the concept of cultural artifacts proposed by Hofstede et al. (2010), which explained that artifacts constituted the outermost layer of organizational culture, being the most easily observable and serving as markers of organizational identity as well as a means of communicating values to all organizational members and external parties.

School artifacts at SDN Pembina Banggai manifested in various forms that mutually supported and reinforced the overall quality culture. The first form was the school logo as the primary identity symbol, containing philosophical values, educational goals, and the school's distinctive character. The principal emphasized that the logo was intended as a medium for teaching values encompassing discipline, responsibility, and mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*). However, the research findings revealed that while students were aware of the school logo's existence and recognized its shape and appearance, their understanding of its embedded meaning remained limited. This indicated the need for further guidance from teachers and the school so that students could fully comprehend and internalize the logo's meaning.

This finding aligned with the view of Schein (2010), who stated that although artifacts resided at the surface level of organizational culture, their existence played a crucial role in reinforcing the organization's core values and basic assumptions, provided they were supported by consistent leadership practices and policies. Artifacts aligned with the actual values and behaviors of the school community strengthened the quality culture, whereas artifacts that were merely symbolic without real practice support risked losing their significance. Therefore, the school logo needed to be integrated with the school's systems, policies, and leadership behaviors so that it did not merely become a formal symbol but also served as a reminder and driver of positive behavior ingrained in students' character.

The second form consisted of posters and visual artifacts in various school areas, serving as essential tools for instilling the 5S Culture and positive discipline. Observational results showed that vision-mission posters, school rules, 5S Culture displays, motivational learning materials, achievement boards, and student work exhibits were all in neat condition, easily accessible, and clearly visible to all students. The placement of these artifacts was strategic, ensuring students saw and were reminded of their educational messages daily, whether in classrooms, corridors, or open school spaces. Teachers and educational staff emphasized that these posters were not merely decorations but served as ongoing educational media that constantly reminded students to be orderly, maintain cleanliness, and strive for achievement.

Students demonstrated a high awareness of the presence of these posters and visual artifacts in school, viewing them as part of the educational media that continually reminded them of 5S cultural values, discipline, and achievement. They not only noticed the existence of these posters but also understood the messages conveyed, allowing these messages to be applied in their daily behavior at school. This awareness simultaneously fostered a sense of pride in the school environment, as these posters and visual artifacts reflected the care and dedication of teachers and the school in guiding and educating students. This finding strengthened the view of Bush (2020), who emphasized that effective school leadership utilized symbols and artifacts as part of a cultural strategy to build shared identity and commitment.

The third form was school rituals and traditions, which acted as an effective mechanism for instilling achievement motivation, positive discipline, and the 5S Culture. Observational results indicated that routine activities, such as flag ceremonies, group prayers, student greetings at the gate, and friendly interactions between teachers and students were consistently conducted as forms of positive behavior habituation. This practice was reinforced by the *Budaya Kamis* (Culture Thursday) tradition, where traditional attire was worn once a month, providing meaningful experiences for students to cultivate pride, discipline, and appreciation for cultural values. Student statements revealed that morning rituals and *Budaya Kamis* were carried out with full awareness and were perceived as beneficial in building discipline, togetherness, and mutual respect.

The principal affirmed that morning activities were designed as character learning spaces, where students were habituated to arrive on time, be orderly, follow teacher instructions, and interact politely and courteously. Thus, school rituals and traditions did not merely function as daily routines but also served as a leadership strategy of the principal in strengthening positive discipline, the 5S Culture, and the sustainable formation of student character. This finding aligned with the concept of habituation proposed by Mahmudah et al. (2025), who stated that habituating positive behavior was an effective strategy for building a school quality culture through consistent routine practices that helped students internalize these values until they became part of their character and identity.

The fourth form was school facilities that supported the implementation of the 5S Culture and positive discipline. Observational results showed that classrooms, libraries, sports facilities, places of worship, cafeterias, and toilets were in good, clean, and neatly organized condition. Educational staff affirmed that school facilities were always kept clean and orderly so that students could learn practically about cleanliness and tidiness. With a clean and orderly environment, students more easily understood the importance of maintaining classroom cleanliness, organizing equipment, and disposing of waste properly. This finding reinforced the concept of supporting systems and processes proposed by Goetsch & Davis (2014), which stated that quality must be embedded in all organizational processes to ensure consistency and sustainability. Adequate and well-maintained facilities not only supported the learning process but also served as indirect media for character education. Students learned values of cleanliness, orderliness, and responsibility through direct experience interacting with a conducive physical school environment.

Principal's strategies for cultivating a sustainable quality culture in primary school within under-resourced area

Overall, school artifacts at SDN Pembina Banggai, ranging from logos, posters, rituals, to facilities, formed an interconnected support network to foster achievement motivation, the 5S Culture, and positive discipline. These artifacts functioned as educational media that instilled values, cultivated student awareness and pride, and encouraged consistent positive behavior. The impact of implementing these artifacts was reflected in the improvement of students' academic and social achievements, as well as increased parental trust and satisfaction with the school's educational quality. This finding strengthened the view of Hofstede et al. (2010) that school cultural artifacts were an essential component in shaping and reinforcing a quality culture. Artifacts served as tangible representations of organizational values, which, when supported by shared values, systems, and consistent leadership, helped strengthen school identity and embed a quality culture sustainably. Consciously designed and managed cultural artifacts became strategic instruments in supporting the habituation of positive behavior and the achievement of school quality.

CONCLUSION

Strengthening the quality culture at SDN Pembina Banggai is achieved through the principal's systematic and sustainable leadership strategy, which integrates four interconnected pillars. The first pillar focuses on enhancing academic achievement through structured Science Olympiad coaching, routine literacy and numeracy reinforcement, differentiated instruction, and consistent data-driven evaluation. This is complemented by the development of the 5S Culture, which is cultivated through the exemplary modeling of the principal and teachers, daily habituation in school activities, and the active involvement of the entire school community and parents, fostering a friendly and conducive learning environment. Simultaneously, positive discipline is implemented by instilling intrinsic motivation, establishing mutual agreements, applying restorative methods, maintaining dialogic communication, and upholding a firm commitment against physical punishment, all aimed at nurturing student awareness and responsibility. Furthermore, the strategic use of school artifacts, such as the logo, posters, rituals, and facilities, serves to reinforce institutional values and identity, supporting the continuous internalization of a quality culture. Together, these elements form a cohesive and integrated leadership system that effectively improves students' academic and social outcomes, shapes their character positively, and strengthens parental trust in the school.

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