Transformational Leadership and Professional Ethics as a Strategy for Preventing Sexual Crimes in Secondary Education Institutions in Kayong Utara Regency

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

The increasing prevalence of sexual violence in secondary school environments reflects the fragility of student protection systems, particularly in geographically challenged regions such as Kayong Utara Regency. This study aims to explore the implementation of transformational leadership and professional teaching ethics in efforts to prevent sexual violence in schools. Employing a qualitative approach with a multi-site case study design, the research was conducted in three secondary schools and one provincial education office. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis, and subsequently analyzed using data reduction, open coding, axial coding, and methodological triangulation, with validation through member checks and peer debriefing. The findings reveal that some schools have integrated protection values into their school visions and leadership cultures. However, weaknesses persist in the reporting systems and external collaborations. These findings underscore the necessity of strengthening value-based governance and implementing systemic training in transformational leadership. The study recommends the institutionalization of professional teaching ethics, the development of standard operating procedures for student protection, and the establishment of safe and collaborative reporting channels. In conclusion, leadership and ethics are not merely technical strategies but moral foundations of an education system that prioritizes the safety and dignity of students.

INTRODUCTION

The safety and security of students have become a primary concern in the management of secondary education institutions in Indonesia. In recent years, the emergence of various cases of sexual violence within schools has highlighted the weakness of child protection systems in educational institutions. Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) recorded 859 cases of sexual violence against children throughout 2021 (Stephanus, 2023), while a study by Nesongano et al. (2022) indicated that sexual violence has long-term implications on children's participation and well-being, including in education.

This phenomenon is no longer incidental but reflects a structural crisis that has yet to be addressed comprehensively through conventional administrative approaches. Educational administration, which ideally ensures the physical and psychological safety of students, often becomes entangled in bureaucratic mechanisms that lack sensitivity to the threat of sexual violence. As emphasized by Ayu Wijayanti and Safitra (2023), the absence of effective risk management systems in secondary schools increases the likelihood of unreported and unaddressed incidents.

In the context of education management, educational administration plays a vital role in shaping governance that is accountable, ethical, and responsive. The core functions of planning, organizing, leadership, and supervision must go beyond academic outcomes to include student protection and well-being (Ismail, 2018; Berger, 2019). A reliable administrative system ensures that preventive measures against sexual violence are embedded in every school policy—from ethical recruitment of educators to comprehensive training on sexual violence awareness (Snieder & Zhu, 2020; Mohamad et al., 2020).

The weakness of educational administration is evident in the many unhandled cases resulting from the limited capacity of school principals to systematically implement protective policies (Endang et al., 2023). The study by Herman Komba and Mukadi (2021) further illustrates that weak compliance with teachers' professional ethics exacerbates school climate and diminishes public trust in educational institutions.

In such circumstances, transformational leadership emerges as a key strategy to shift the educational managerial paradigm from bureaucratic to more humanistic and proactive. School principals must go beyond administrative roles to become change agents capable of breaking the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence (Effendi & Sahertian, 2022; Sahertian & Effendi, 2022). The literature affirms that transformational leaders positively influence the development of safe, inclusive, and character-building school environments (Anticona-Valderrama et al., 2023; Brazill & Ruff, 2022). Chan (2020) even suggests that transformational leadership can enhance teacher self-efficacy and team solidarity in handling violence-related cases. In Indonesia, studies by Megowanto (2023) and Saputra (2022) reinforce the importance of inspirational and visionary leadership in fostering violence-free school cultures. The values of justice, transparency, and care embedded by transformational leaders foster a collective awareness among teachers and students to reject deviant behavior.

A key component in strengthening the prevention of sexual violence through educational administration is the enforcement of teachers' professional ethics. Ethics are not merely normative guidelines, but value systems that shape educators' professional conduct inside and outside the classroom (Maxwell, 2020; Sethy, 2018). Al-Hothali (2018) and Al-Smadi & Al-Hiyari (2023) found that teachers' perception of the importance of professional ethics strongly correlates with school safety. When ethics are upheld through transparent recruitment and career development systems, the incidence of sexual misconduct decreases significantly.

In the context of human resource development, educational administration must integrate regular training on professional ethics, reinforce ethical codes, and establish fair and non-repressive reporting systems (Friedland & Jain, 2022; Kim, 2022; Bazohoori et al., 2021). Involving school supervisors, school committees, and local authorities creates an external control system that reinforces institutional accountability (Jarihi, 2018; Liu & Wang, 2019). This study specifically highlights the context of Kayong Utara Regency in West Kalimantan as a region facing administrative challenges in protecting students. Due to its vast geography and limited transportation access, educational oversight is often structurally constrained (Pulungan et al., 2023).

Moreover, a patriarchal local culture and the taboo surrounding discussions of sexuality contribute to conditions where victims of sexual violence are reluctant to report, and perpetrators frequently go unpunished (Awaru, 2020; Rachmawati & Nurhidayah, 2020; Rizky, 2023). Local studies by Jamaludin (2022) and Pohan & Hidayani (2020) also show weak coordination between schools, law enforcement, and communities in upholding legal protection for children. This

situation is worsened by the lack of leadership training that equips school leaders with transformational approaches, and the suboptimal integration of ethical systems in school governance (Deswita & Jamilus, 2023; Ramazannia et al., 2022).

Given this complexity, the current study is essential in constructing an adaptive, collaborative, and value-driven educational administrative system. Relying solely on formal regulations is insufficient to address hidden and recurrent sexual offenses. Transformational leadership and professional ethics should not be treated as personal strategies but as managerial pillars that must be institutionalized within the national education system. By developing contextually relevant and value-based administrative models, schools in regions such as Kayong Utara can evolve into safe and dignified spaces for all students (Suwanmanee et al., 2023; León Smith, 2020; Owusu-Agyeman, 2021).

As a concrete step, this study aims to explore how principals, teachers, and education personnel in Kayong Utara practice transformational leadership and uphold professional ethics in managing their schools, as well as how these strategies influence efforts to prevent sexual violence. The findings are expected to provide a meaningful contribution to the development of a more humane and protective education policy framework.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a multi-site case study design to explore preventive practices against sexual violence in secondary schools through the integration of teachers' professional ethics and school principals' transformational leadership. This design was selected for its capacity to uncover the meanings behind educators' subjective experiences within complex and sensitive social contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2012).

The primary focus lies in the narratives and practices of principals, teachers, and educational personnel as strategic actors in shaping a safe and ethical school culture (Effendi & Sahertian, 2022; Maxwell, 2020; Al-Smadi & Al-Hiyari, 2023). Data sources include school principals, teachers, staff, and students from junior high, senior high, and vocational schools in Kayong Utara Regency, characterized by narrative, contextual, and experiential data that reflect the real-world application of ethical and transformational values (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Pulungan et al., 2023; Kim, 2022).

The research was conducted in three secondary schools and the Provincial Education Office of West Kalimantan, from June to October 2025, covering stages from pre-research and data collection to initial reflection (Yin, 2018). Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis methods chosen to gain a holistic and profound understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kim, 2022).

The research instruments consisted of semi-structured interview guides, observation sheets, and document analysis formats developed based on trustworthiness principles to ensure the production of consistent, meaningful, and verified data (Patton, 2002; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study was carried out in five main phases from May to October 2025, following a systematic sequence typical of interpretive qualitative approaches to maintain the depth and sensitivity of the social context surrounding the phenomenon.
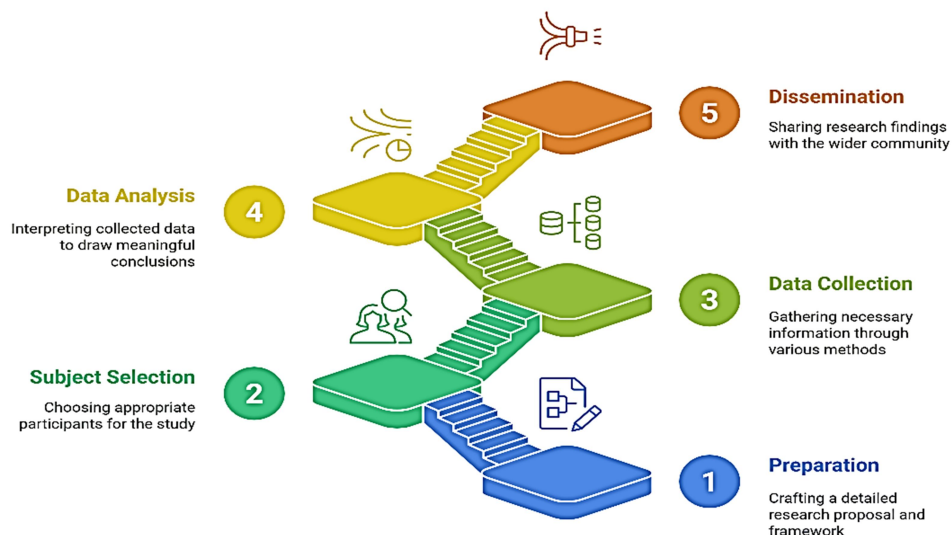
Figure 1 – Research Procedure

The research began with a preparation phase, including proposal development and theoretical framework construction based on scholarly references, obtaining permissions from the Education Office and schools, and designing instruments such as interview guides, observation sheets, and document analysis formats, which were piloted beforehand.

The second phase involved the purposive selection of research subjects across three secondary schools in Kayong Utara Regency SMPN 2 Pulau Maya, SMAN 1 Pulau Maya, and SMKN 1 Teluk Batang along with the Provincial Education Office of West Kalimantan, for triangulation and policy validation purposes. This site selection followed the principle of bounded context, as articulated by Yin (2018) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016), to allow in-depth understanding within a defined and relevant social setting.

In the third phase, field data collection took place between July and August 2025 through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and documentation studies. The fourth phase, dedicated to data analysis (August–September 2025), included data reduction, open coding, axial coding, and cross-method triangulation, followed by validation through member checks and peer debriefing. Finally, in the fifth phase (October 2025), findings were analyzed reflectively using the lenses of transformational leadership and professional ethics, culminating in the development of policy recommendations and a final report for dissemination.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research procedure began with a preparatory phase, encompassing the development of a proposal and theoretical framework grounded in recent scholarly literature on transformational leadership and teachers' professional ethics in the context of preventing sexual violence in secondary education institutions. This phase emphasized the importance of integrating administrative governance with ethical values as foundational principles for student protection (Maxwell, 2020; Snieder & Zhu, 2020). The researcher subsequently obtained formal research permits from the Provincial Education Office of West Kalimantan and participating schools, as an initial step to ensure the legitimacy of field activities (Pulungan et al., 2023). The research instruments were then developed, including semi-structured interview guides, participatory observation sheets, and document analysis formats, all designed to capture the social dynamics and in-depth narratives of school principals, teachers, and education personnel regarding ethical practices and transformational leadership in preventing sexual violence (Al-Hothali, 2018; Al-Smadi & Al-Hiyari, 2023; Anticona-Valderrama et al., 2023).

Table 1 – Research Instrument Blueprint

No	Instrument Type	Explored Aspect	Key Indicators	Sample Inquiry or Observation	Supporting References
1	Interview Guide	Transformational Leadership	Vision, inspiration, empowerment	How does the principal promote a culture of protection in your school?	Bass & Riggio (2006); Artanti & Noviana (2024)
		Teacher Professional Ethics	Compliance, integrity, responsibility	How is the teachers' code of ethics implemented in mentoring students?	Ligiero et al. (2023); Sumiyarrini et al. (2022)
		Administrative Barriers	Regulation, HR limitations, reporting systems	What are the major challenges in implementing student protection policies?	Grant et al. (2023); Al-Hothali (2018)
		Collaborative Strategies	Synergy of leadership and ethics	How do you collaborate with teachers to prevent sexual violence?	Johns (2024); Friedland & Jain (2022)
2	Observation Guidelines	Transformational Leadership	Role modeling, open communication	Principal participates in student advocacy activities	Creswell & Poth (2018); Merriam & Tisdell (2016)
		Teacher Professional Ethics	Ethical teacher-student interactions, reflective conduct	Teacher corrects students using ethical and educational approaches	Kim (2022); Awaru (2020)
		Administrative Barriers	Institutional response to reporting	Reporting system appears inactive or centralized	Snelling (2024); Anticona-Valderrama (2023)
		Collaborative Strategies	Team meetings, collective action	Coordination meetings are held regularly to discuss student protection	Pulungan et al. (2023); Gonzalez (2023)
3	Document Analysis	Transformational Leadership	Vision, mission, SOP integration	School vision document includes child protection principles	Friedland & Jain (2022); Ligiero et al. (2023)
		Teacher Professional Ethics	Ethics code, training records	Official teacher ethics code and training documentation are available	Johns (2024); Effendi & Sahertian (2022)
		Administrative Barriers	Program planning, budget allocation	No child protection program found in school's annual plan	Grant et al. (2023); Al-Hothali (2018)
		Collaborative Strategies	MoUs, documentation of external partnerships	Partnership agreements with child protection institutions are documented	Sumiyarrini et al. (2022); Gonzalez (2023)

All instruments were piloted in advance to ensure data reliability and validity, in accordance with the trustworthiness principles of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). This procedure was not merely technical but also reflective, given the sensitivity of the topic and the socio-cultural complexities of the research setting in Kayong Utara Regency an area characterized by limited access and a local culture that continues to regard issues of sexuality as taboo (Awaru, 2020; Rizky, 2023). The preparatory stage served as a critical foundation to ensure that subsequent stages were conducted ethically, effectively, and contextually aligned with the study's primary objective: to promote a more humanistic, collaborative, and responsive education administration system for child protection (Effendi & Sahertian, 2022; Kim, 2022; León Smith, 2020).

In-depth interviews were conducted from July to August 2025 in three secondary schools in Kayong Utara, SMPN 2 Pulau Maya, SMAN 1 Pulau Maya, and SMKN 1 Teluk Batang as well as the Provincial Office of Education and Culture of West Kalimantan. The interview subjects included school principals, teachers, education staff, students, and government representatives. All participants were purposively selected for their direct involvement in the implementation of student protection programs and transformational leadership practices. The interviews focused on

aspects of leadership, professional ethics, administrative constraints, and collaborative strategies related to efforts in preventing sexual violence in schools.

Table 2 – Interview Findings

No	Aspect	Subject	Key Findings
1	Transformational Leadership	Principal of SMPN 2 Pulau Maya	Embedded child protection values in the school's vision and character education programs.
2	Teacher Professional Ethics	Teacher at SMAN 1 Pulau Maya	Actively instills integrity through ethical approaches in student guidance.
3	Administrative Barriers	Education Staff at SMKN 1 Teluk Batang	No written and procedural system for reporting violence is in place.
4	Collaborative Strategies	Principal of SMAN 1 Pulau Maya	Initiated regular dialogue forums with teachers and the school committee.
5	Transformational Leadership	Provincial Education Office of West Kalimantan	Promotes value-based leadership training for school principals.
6	Teacher Professional Ethics	Student at SMKN 1 Teluk Batang	Some teachers tend to reprimand students in an intimidating manner.
7	Administrative Barriers	Provincial Education Office of West Kalimantan	Limited supervisory staff and remote geography pose major challenges.
8	Collaborative Strategies	Teacher at SMPN 2 Pulau Maya	No active involvement of external organizations such as child protection NGOs.

The interview findings indicate that transformational leadership has begun to be implemented by school principals, as demonstrated at SMPN 2 Pulau Maya, where the principal consciously integrates child protection principles into the school vision and daily activities. This aligns with Bass & Riggio's (2006) assertion that transformational leaders foster a shift in organizational culture toward ethical and inclusive visions. The West Kalimantan Provincial Education Office also emphasized the importance of value-based training for principals as part of the region's broader educational reform agenda.

In terms of teacher professional ethics, educators at SMAN 1 Pulau Maya were found to uphold the code of ethics through non-repressive, educational approaches, in accordance with the recommendations of Ligiero et al. (2023). However, students at SMKN 1 Teluk Batang reported that not all teachers adhere to ethical standards; some still use intimidating tones when reprimanding, suggesting inconsistency in the perception and application of teacher ethics.

On the other hand, administrative barriers remain a persistent challenge. Staff members at SMKN 1 Teluk Batang admitted that no clear, documented system exists for reporting incidents of violence. This was corroborated by officials from the Provincial Education Office, who acknowledged the limited number of supervisors and the difficult geographical conditions that hinder regular monitoring—a structural issue also highlighted by Al-Hothali (2018).

From a collaborative strategy perspective, some positive initiatives have emerged. The principal of SMAN 1 Pulau Maya has established regular forums for dialogue between teachers and the school committee to address child protection issues. Meanwhile, teachers at SMPN 2 Pulau Maya revealed that they have never involved external organizations such as NGOs in student protection efforts. This underscores the suboptimal engagement of external partnerships, despite multisector collaboration being a key strategy as emphasized by Friedland & Jain (2022).

Overall, the interviews suggest that while promising practices are gradually being introduced, significant gaps remain in reporting systems, ethics training, and collaborative networks. A collective commitment is needed to institutionalize transformational leadership and professional ethics as the standard framework for educational management that prioritizes student safety.

Field observations were conducted participatively between July and August 2025 in three secondary education institutions: SMPN 2 Pulau Maya, SMAN 1 Pulau Maya, and SMKN 1 Teluk Batang. The aim was to identify real-world practices related to principals' transformational leadership, implementation of teacher ethics, administrative constraints, and collaborative strategies in the context of protecting students from sexual violence. Observations were based on direct interactions within the school environment, including teaching and learning activities, teacher-student interactions, and school coordination meetings. These findings provide authentic insights into the extent to which protection values, role modeling, and ethical practices are manifested in actual school operations.

Table 3 – Observation Findings

No	Aspect	Subject	Key Findings
1	Transformational Leadership	SMPN 2 Pulau Maya	The principal actively participated in advocacy and character education activities.
2	Teacher Professional Ethics	SMAN 1 Pulau Maya	Teachers reprimanded students using humanistic and dialogical approaches.
3	Administrative Barriers	SMKN 1 Teluk Batang	No visible reporting system or child protection SOP displayed.
4	Collaborative Strategies	SMAN 1 Pulau Maya	Weekly meetings discussed support for at-risk students and bullying cases.

The observation conducted at SMPN 2 Pulau Maya revealed a strong practice of transformational leadership. The principal was directly involved in student mentoring sessions, offering motivation and fostering values of empathy and care among students. His presence was not merely symbolic but actively encouraged open communication between students and teachers. This aligns with Creswell and Poth (2018) as well as Merriam and Tisdell (2016), who emphasize that exemplary leadership serves as a critical driver in shaping school culture.

Meanwhile, at SMAN 1 Pulau Maya, the teacher-student interaction was largely characterized by reflective and ethical approaches. Teachers, for instance, who addressed students for tardiness, did so through dialogic engagement that promoted self-awareness rather than punitive measures. This reflects the internalization of professional ethics in classroom relationships, as recommended by Kim (2022) and Awaru (2020).

In contrast, a different situation was observed at SMKN 1 Teluk Batang, where the reporting system for violence was not visibly or administratively implemented. No bulletin boards, complaint procedures, or dedicated support units were present. This finding reflects a weak enforcement of reporting systems, echoing criticisms from Snelling (2024) and Anticona-Valderrama (2023), who argue that the absence of centralized reporting mechanisms hinders the disclosure of cases.

On a more positive note, SMAN 1 Pulau Maya demonstrated a commendable collaborative strategy by conducting weekly meetings to assess the condition of students, particularly those facing bullying or socio-emotional challenges. These meetings served as a platform for coordination among teachers and staff to plan preventive interventions. Such practices align with the recommendations of Pulungan et al. (2023) and Gonzalez (2023), who assert that sustained team discussions strengthen collective commitment to ensuring school safety.

Overall, the observations suggest that the cultural transformation of student protection in secondary schools in Kayong Utara remains partial. Transformational leadership and teacher ethics emerged as key strengths, yet significant improvements are needed in the implementation of reporting systems and external collaborative networks to ensure effective and sustainable child protection efforts.

Document analysis was conducted to complement interviews and observations, aiming to gather written evidence regarding policies, regulations, and the implementation of student protection from sexual violence. Documentation was directly examined at SMPN 2 Pulau Maya,

SMAN 1 Pulau Maya, SMKN 1 Teluk Batang, and the West Kalimantan Provincial Office of Education and Culture. The analysis focused on documents such as school vision and mission statements, standard operating procedures (SOPs), teacher codes of ethics, annual work plans, and external collaboration agreements that reflect the application of transformational leadership and teacher professional ethics in school governance.

Table 4 – Documentation Study Findings

No	Aspect	Subject	Key Findings
1	Transformational Leadership	SMPN 2 Pulau Maya	The school's vision and mission documents include a commitment to child protection and a safe school culture.
2	Teacher Professional Ethics	SMAN 1 Pulau Maya	Official decree on the teacher code of ethics and records of ethics training over the past two years are available.
3	Administrative Barriers	SMKN 1 Teluk Batang	The school's work plan does not include a specific program for student protection.
4	Collaborative Strategies	SMPN 2 Pulau Maya	A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the local health center and child protection agency supports routine outreach.

The vision and mission documents of SMPN 2 Pulau Maya clearly reflect an institutional concern for student protection. The documents explicitly state the school's commitment to creating a safe, violence-free environment as part of its cultural values. Moreover, the internal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) assign the principal the responsibility of initiating child protection education. This supports the argument of Friedland & Jain (2022) and Ligiero et al. (2023) that child protection values must be embedded within institutional education policies.

At SMAN 1 Pulau Maya, the research team identified an official decree concerning the teacher code of ethics, along with documentation of professional ethics training held over the past two years. Attendance records and materials from a training session titled "Professional Ethics and Child Protection," which involved school supervisors and external facilitators, were found. These findings affirm that values of professionalism and integrity have been formalized through targeted training to support ethical teaching practices, as emphasized by Effendi & Sahertian (2022) and Johns (2024).

In contrast, SMKN 1 Teluk Batang lacks adequate documentation regarding student protection. The School Work Plan (RKS) contains no specific budget allocation or program dedicated to the prevention of sexual violence or child protection. Moreover, there is no annual planning related to external collaboration or strengthening teacher ethics. This reflects the administrative barriers described by Grant et al. (2023) and Al-Hothali (2018), who noted that many schools have yet to prioritize child protection as part of their budgeting and policy frameworks.

Nevertheless, SMPN 2 Pulau Maya demonstrates promising practices in collaborative strategies. The school has a formal MoU with the local health center and the Child Protection Agency (LPA), which includes regular outreach activities for students and teachers. This partnership reinforces a community-based protection system and indicates proactive efforts by the school. Such practices align with recommendations by Gonzalez (2023) and Sumiyarrini et al. (2022), who advocate for the synergy between schools and external institutions to establish a safe and ethical educational ecosystem.

Overall, the documentation study supports the findings from interviews and observations, indicating that although several positive initiatives exist, not all schools possess adequate documentation systems and budgeting mechanisms to ensure systemic and sustainable child protection.

The next stage of the study was conducted from August to September 2025, focusing on the qualitative data analysis process derived from in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation reviews at three secondary schools and the Provincial Office of Education in West Kalimantan. The analysis followed a layered and systematic approach through data

reduction, open coding, axial coding, and methodological triangulation to integrate multiple data sources. To ensure validity, the analysis was supplemented by member checking with key informants and peer debriefing with academic colleagues to maintain consistency, credibility, and contextual relevance of the findings.

Table 5 – Results of Data Reduction, Open Coding, Axial Coding, and Data Triangulation

No	Stage of Analysis	Focus of Analysis	Key Findings
1	Data Reduction	Filtering information from three techniques	Four main themes were identified from three sources (interviews, observations, documents).
2	Open Coding	Initial code development based on field narratives	Eighteen initial codes emerged, such as "principal's role," "ethical reprimand," and "inactive SOP."
3	Axial Coding	Grouping and linking codes	Synthesized into four major categories: Leadership, Ethics, Barriers, Collaboration.
4	Technique Triangulation	Cross-instrument findings comparison	High consistency between interviews, observations, and documentation.
5	Findings Validation	Member check and peer debriefing	Majority of informants agreed with the researcher's interpretations; minor revisions applied.

The data reduction process began by sorting and filtering relevant transcripts from interviews, field notes from observations, and policy documents. The researcher focused on identifying statements, actions, and regulations explicitly or implicitly related to transformational leadership practices, teacher professional ethics, administrative barriers, and collaborative strategies. The outcome of this stage was the condensation of information into more focused and meaningful units.

The next stage, open coding, involved labeling field narratives. Codes such as "principal as child protection facilitator," "teacher delivers reflective reprimands," and "absence of reporting SOP" represented the rich empirical data collected. A total of 18 initial codes reflected the social and institutional dynamics within each school.

During axial coding, these codes were grouped into four main categories: (1) Transformational Leadership, (2) Teacher Professional Ethics, (3) Administrative Barriers, and (4) Collaborative Strategies. Each category was constructed based on the frequency of codes, consistency across sites, and alignment with the research objectives and theoretical framework.

To ensure the consistency of findings, technique triangulation was applied by comparing data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. For instance, the claim about the absence of protection SOPs at SMKN 1 Teluk Batang was supported by the lack of visible information boards (observations) and absence of related documents in the school's work plan (documentation). These findings were confirmed to be consistent and complementary.

Finally, validation was carried out through member checks with school principals and lead teachers at each research site. They affirmed most of the interpretations and suggested minor clarifications in the presentation of results. Peer debriefing sessions with two research colleagues were also conducted to minimize interpretative bias and enhance the objectivity of the findings.

Overall, this analysis phase resulted in a robust thematic mapping that reveals the actual dynamics of sexual violence prevention in secondary schools through the integration of transformational leadership and the enforcement of teacher professional ethics. The process underscores the urgency for administrative system improvements that are contextual, values-based, and inclusive of the social realities in regions like Kayong Utara Regency.

Research Findings

This study found that the practices of transformational leadership and teacher professional ethics in secondary schools in Kayong Utara Regency have not yet been fully institutionalized as a robust system for preventing sexual violence. In terms of leadership, the principals of SMPN 2

Pulau Maya and SMAN 1 Pulau Maya demonstrated a strong commitment to a protective school culture, actively engaging in character development activities and integrating child protection values into the school's vision. These findings align with the studies of Anticona-Valderrama et al. (2023) and Effendi & Sahertian (2022), who emphasized that transformational leaders have the capacity to steer school ecosystems toward inclusivity and ethicality. Conversely, the principal of SMKN 1 Teluk Batang lacked a formal and active reporting system for violence, reflecting a weakness in the administrative dimension of child protection management (Snelling, 2024; Al-Hothali, 2018).

Regarding teacher professional ethics, positive practices were observed at SMAN 1 Pulau Maya, where teachers addressed students with humanistic and reflective approaches. However, interviews with students at SMKN 1 Teluk Batang revealed the continued presence of authoritarian disciplinary methods, causing discomfort and indicating that the internalization of professional ethics among educators remains uneven. This reinforces the findings of Al-Smadi & Al-Hiyari (2023), who highlighted the variability of school leaders' commitment to ethical training and enforcement. In terms of collaborative strategies, only SMPN 2 Pulau Maya possessed formal partnerships with external institutions such as community health centers and child protection agencies, whereas other schools lacked such engagement. This disparity indicates that multi-stakeholder involvement in sexual violence prevention is not yet systemic.

Research Implications

These findings carry significant implications for the educational field, particularly in the development of responsive school management systems addressing the issue of sexual violence. First, there is a need to redefine educational administration not merely as a document- and report-based process but one grounded in values and collective school culture (Maxwell, 2020; Snieder & Zhu, 2020). Second, it is crucial to position transformational leadership as a central element in school policy-making, as emphasized by Bass & Riggio (2006), given its capacity to foster safe, supportive, and dignified learning environments (Dr. Alainati et al., 2023; León Smith, 2020).

Another critical implication lies in the need to reform the teacher professional ethics system, ensuring it is not reduced to an administrative formality but embedded within a reflective and humanistic learning ecosystem. As Bazohoori et al. (2021) noted, teacher ethics plays a mediating role in shaping self-efficacy and professional conduct. Moreover, the findings strengthen the urgency of implementing a comprehensive, rights-based sexuality education, as argued by Zhang & Yu (2023) and Anindya et al. (2020), to ensure that students are not only protected but also empowered with awareness.

Research Recommendations

Based on the findings and their implications, this study offers three main recommendations. First, local governments and educational institutions should develop and implement integrated, contextually grounded standard operating procedures (SOPs) for student protection, involving external agencies such as the Women's Empowerment Office, law enforcement, and child protection NGOs (Pulungan et al., 2023; Gonzalez, 2023). Second, transformational leadership and ethics training should be conducted regularly and facilitated by independent institutions to go beyond knowledge transmission and foster changes in mindset and sensitivity among school leaders and teachers (Al-Hothali, 2018; Al-Smadi & Al-Hiyari, 2023; Sahertian & Effendi, 2022).

Third, schools must cultivate a culture of collaboration and transparency in reporting, including the provision of safe and accessible complaint channels for students. This is essential to ensure that victims do not feel isolated and that reporting is not hindered by a culture of silence (Awaru, 2020; Ayu Wijayanti & Safitra, 2023). In the long term, the success of such systems will depend on a collective commitment to place student safety and dignity at the heart of all educational practices.

In sum, the approach of integrating transformational leadership and teacher ethics should not be viewed as merely a technical strategy but rather as a moral and cultural foundation for developing a child-centered, violence-sensitive, and institutionally resilient education system.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study conclude that transformational leadership and teacher professional ethics play a crucial role in establishing a responsive and equitable student protection system in secondary schools. Although some school leaders have incorporated child protection values into their visions and leadership practices, and certain teachers have adopted ethical approaches in student interactions, disparities in implementation persist especially in areas such as violence reporting systems and external collaboration.

These findings underscore the urgent need for a paradigm shift in education management, from bureaucratic-administrative approaches to value-based governance. Conceptually, this study highlights the importance of institutionalizing professional ethics and providing transformational leadership training as integral efforts to strengthen safe and inclusive school cultures. The impact of this research lies in its contribution to expanding the understanding of how ethics and leadership can serve as a policy framework for preventing sexual violence, and as a foundation for renewing the education system to become more humanistic, adaptive, and dignified particularly in regions facing geographical and cultural challenges such as Kayong Utara Regency.

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