
The Relationship Between Asta Brata Leadership, School Culture, and The Character of Elementary School Students in Pupuan Tabanan

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Abstract

Character education constitutes a fundamental component of the educational system, as it plays a vital role in fostering students' moral, ethical, and human values. The persistence of behavioral issues among elementary school students, including low levels of discipline, dishonesty, and bullying, indicates that efforts to strengthen character education continue to face challenges. The development of students' character is shaped by multiple factors, particularly school culture and principals' leadership practices. Asta Brata leadership, rooted in Balinese local wisdom, embodies noble values that are considered relevant for cultivating a positive school culture and promoting students' character development. This study seeks to investigate the relationships among Asta Brata leadership, school culture, and the character of elementary school students in Pupuan, Tabanan. A quantitative approach was adopted, employing an ex post facto research design with a survey method. Data were gathered through questionnaires and analyzed using correlation analysis. The findings reveal significant relationships between Asta Brata leadership and school culture, Asta Brata leadership and students' character, as well as school culture and students' character, with correlation levels ranging from strong to very strong. These results demonstrate that stronger implementation of Asta Brata leadership values, accompanied by a more positive school culture, contributes to improved character development among elementary school students. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for school principals and educational policymakers in enhancing character education at the elementary school level.

Keywords: Asta Brata Leadership, School Culture, Student Character

INTRODUCTION

Character education has now become a strategic issue in the world of education. The focus is no longer solely on academic development, but also on the formation of morals, ethics, and human values (Sutino et al., 2021). As a form of commitment to building the nation's character, the government has established Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 concerning the National Education System, which explains that education functions and aims to shape the character of students by having a strong character and noble character, it is hoped that they will be able to create a dignified national civilization (Depdiknas, 2003). Character education in Indonesia has become an integral part of the national education system. Kurikulum 2013 explicitly incorporates character education into the learning process, while the Kurikulum Merdeka implements a holistic approach to assessment that emphasizes students' overall personal development. Therefore, character education is an essential component of the curriculum, aimed at fostering positive values and behaviors that students can apply in their everyday lives (Mustoip, 2023).

Based on various findings at schools, many students still struggle with self-control. They frequently engage in inappropriate behavior, such as fighting, skipping class, harassing friends, and even cheating on exams (Hamidayati & Hidayat, 2020). The habit of cheating has a negative impact on the development of students' character, including making students lazy to study, accustomed to lying, justifying any means, dependent on others, and lacking in self-confidence (Putri & Safrizal, 2023). In addition to cheating, bullying among elementary school students has

recently become a frequent topic of discussion. The impact of this behavior can continue into subsequent levels of education. Children who engage in bullying in elementary school are at risk of repeating similar behaviors when they enter higher education (Putri, 2018). Bullying in schools often occurs because the perpetrators lack empathy, while prevention efforts by schools are suboptimal. One contributing factor is a lack of concern among students (Rahayu & Permana, 2019).

Based on observations and interviews at an elementary school in Pupuan District, Tabanan Regency, students' character is considered difficult to control. This condition is influenced by excessive gadget use, lack of parental supervision, an unsupportive social environment, and personal, family, and economic factors. Furthermore, the implementation of character education in elementary schools still faces obstacles, particularly a weak school culture, suboptimal leadership practices, and limited teacher training in consistently integrating character education (Mustoip, 2023). The formation of student character is influenced by various factors, one of which is school culture (Simbolon et al., 2023). School culture plays an important role in shaping students' character by creating a conducive learning environment and positive habits through daily routines, so that students' behavior is more focused and makes it easier to instill character values (Amelia & Ramadan, 2021). Character building through school culture has proven effective because a strong culture serves as an internal control for students. The values instilled through this culture indirectly guide students' behavior and encourage them to develop positive character in various situations (Pramana & Trihantoyo, 2021).

Character building through school culture has proven effective because a strong culture serves as an internal control for students. The values instilled through this culture indirectly guide students' behavior and encourage them to develop positive character in various situations (Isnaeni, 2024). The behavior and attitudes of teachers and school staff also have a direct impact on student character development. Teachers who demonstrate positive values such as compassion, tolerance, honesty, empathy, discipline, and cooperation serve as role models for students to emulate (Sarah et al., 2024). This role model reinforces the internalization of character values already established through school culture. Students tend to admire and emulate teacher behavior, such as arriving on time, being polite, and working well together, thus fostering positive character traits both inside and outside the classroom. Conversely, a less supportive school culture or negative behavior from educators and staff can negatively impact students' moral and social development (Saryanto et al., 2023).

Social interactions at school play a crucial role in shaping the norms and values held by students. On a daily basis, students interact with peers, teachers, and the entire school community, thus learning to understand what behaviors are socially acceptable. Students tend to choose to befriend individuals whose values and character align with their own, so this process naturally helps strengthen the moral values that develop within them (Simbolon et al., 2023). In order for school culture to function optimally in shaping character, close collaboration and cooperation is required between all elements of the school, starting from the principal, teachers, staff, to parents (Saryanto et al., 2023). Character building doesn't happen instantly; it requires a consistent process that ultimately forms a habit. One concrete example is students' habit of greeting teachers and staff every morning upon arrival at school. This simple habit has profound meaning because it teaches children the values of respect, courtesy, and good communication (Tisngati, 2024).

Teachers who consistently demonstrate positive attitudes and actions are able to become real examples for students, thus encouraging them to imitate and internalize good moral values (Arif et al., 2024). The next factor is the role of the principal, as they hold the key to building a school culture that plays a vital role in shaping student character. The principal is a reflection of the school they lead (Werang et al., 2023d). A principal with good thinking skills understands how each part of the school is connected to the wider educational system (Werang et al., 2023e). Effective leadership is crucial for improving teacher performance and shaping student

personality. The principal's leadership style significantly influences the school environment and educational outcomes (Sutino et al., 2021). A principal who has a strong leadership vision can create a learning environment that supports the formation of student character (Arrasyid & Karwanto, 2021). As school leadership is increasingly prioritized in education systems around the world, it is clear that strong leadership is key to creating effective and successful learning environments (Werang et al., 2023c). Effective leadership is essential in directing a school towards achieving its goals (Werang et al., 2023a). Moreover, effective leaders demonstrate the courage to take calculated risks and confront challenges in the decision-making process (Werang et al., 2023b). In addition, leadership not only plays a role in creating a positive and innovative learning environment, but also in facilitating quality teaching and learning (Sutino et al., 2021). Strengthening character education largely depends on the leadership of the principal. As the key policymaker, the principal has the authority to ensure that character education is implemented in accordance with students' needs. Additionally, principals who encourage teachers and staff to serve as behavioral role models play an important role in the successful implementation of character education in schools (Fajri & Dafit, 2022).

Any effort to improve school culture depends on the ability to build trusting relationships between all parties (Prokopchuk, 2016). Effective principal leadership includes authority, flexibility, skills, and behaviors that support the success of the overall school culture (Megawati et al., 2021). One approach that can be explored for the success of a school culture is Asta Brata leadership, which embodies local wisdom values and is believed to strengthen character education in schools. Local wisdom values in Bali, such as Asta Brata, have the potential to support character education. Asta Brata is often applied in the context of Hindu leadership (Aryawan et al., 2024). Educational leadership that intersects with Asta Brata and local wisdom provides a deeper understanding of principals' leadership practices and decision-making (Werang et al., 2025). The values of Asta Brata have strong relevance in the leadership of the principal, especially in the formation of student character. Research by Eka et al. (2023) at SMK Negeri 1 Tembuku showed that Asta Brata-based leadership improved the well-being, discipline, and harmony of the school community. Its success was supported by the principal's policies and the role of the school committee, although it still faced the challenge of limited resources.

The novelty of this study lies in the integration of Asta Brata-based principal leadership rooted in local wisdom as a conceptual foundation for strengthening school culture in shaping students' character in elementary schools. This study aims to examine the relationship between Asta Brata leadership, school culture, and students' character in elementary schools in Pupuan District, Tabanan Regency. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on locally grounded leadership models in education and to provide empirical references for school leaders, educators, and policymakers in developing school cultures oriented toward sustainable character education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with an ex-post facto research type and a survey research design. The research population includes all teachers from 29 elementary schools in Pupuan District. These schools were designated as the population because they implement the values of Asta Brata leadership. Based on the existing population of 220 people, referring to the Krejcie and Morgan sample table, the required sample size is 140 people. Therefore, this study uses simple random sampling, as it gives every individual in the population an equal chance of being selected as a sample member. The data collection technique used was a questionnaire distributed to elementary school teachers in Pupuan District, Tabanan Regency. The Asta Brata leadership variables are measured by developing 20 positive statements which are distributed into 4 measurement indicators which can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Asta Brata Leadership Instrument Grid

Variable	Indicator	Number of Items
School culture	Harmony	5
	Transformative Inclusivity	5
	Professional Integrity	5
	Moral Responsibility	5
Total		20

The School Culture variable is measured by developing 20 positive statements which are distributed into 4 measurement indicators which can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. School Culture Instrument Grid

Variable	Indicator	Number of Items
School culture	Norms	5
	Values and Beliefs	5
	Traditions/Customs	5
	Institutional Rituals	5
Total		20

Student character variables are measured by developing 24 positive statements which are distributed into 7 measurement indicators which can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Students Character Instrument Grid

Variable	Indicator	Number of Items
Studentss Character	Religious	3
	Nationalist	4
	Independent	3
	Mutual Cooperation	4
	Integrity	3
	Discipline	4
	Responsibility	3
Total		24

The validity of the instruments was tested using content validity with Gregory's formula, which involved two experts. The Asta Brata Leadership, School Culture, and Student Character instruments each obtained a content validity score of 1.00 with a very high criterion, so that all items were declared to be in accordance with the indicators measured and suitable for use as data collection. After obtaining expert approval, item validity testing was conducted. The summary of the analysis results is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Instrument Item Validity Test Results

Instrument	Number of Items	r value First Item	r table	Criteria	Description
Asta Brata Leadership	20	0.689	0.361	Valid	All items valis
School Culture	20	0.520	0.361	Valid	All items valid
Students Character	24	0.564	0.361	Valid	All items valid

Reliability testing was conducted to determine the consistency of the questionnaire results when measurements were repeated under different conditions. Reliability refers to the stability of scores and the accuracy of the measuring instrument in producing consistent data. In this study, instrument reliability was tested using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient because the instruments were developed using a Likert scale. The testing process was carried out with the assistance of Microsoft Office Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics 25 to obtain accurate results. The reliability test results showed that the Asta Brata leadership, school culture, and student character instruments had very high levels of reliability. The Asta Brata leadership instrument obtained value of 0.966 from 20 items, the school culture instrument obtained a value of 0.947 from 20

items, and the student character instrument obtained a value of 0.948 from 24 items. All reliability tests were conducted using the Cronbach’s Alpha formula with the assistance of Microsoft Office Excel and were strengthened through analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics 25. Therefore, the instruments were considered consistent and suitable for use in the study.

After the research data were collected, the analysis was conducted using inferential statistics to test the hypotheses and to generalize the research findings. Prerequisite analyses included a normality test using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov method and a linearity test with the assistance of IBM SPSS Statistics 25. The analysis was then continued with a correlation test to determine the relationships among Asta Brata leadership, school culture, and students’ character.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the questionnaire data distributed, the Asta Brata Leadership variable was measured using 20 statements with a four-point scale, resulting in a minimum score of 20 and a maximum score of 80, with respondents' empirical scores ranging from 60 to 80. The School Culture variable was also measured using 20 statements on a four-point scale, with a minimum score of 20 and a maximum score of 80, and empirical scores ranging from 58 to 80. Meanwhile, the Student Character variable was measured using 24 statements on a four-point scale, with a minimum score of 24 and a maximum score of 96, with empirical scores ranging from 63 to 80.

Prerequisite tests were conducted to determine the suitability of the research data before analyzing it using statistical techniques. In this study, the prerequisite tests used included normality and linearity tests. The results of the normality test are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of the Normality Test using the One Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov Z method

		One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
		Asta Brata Leadership	School Culture	Student Character
N		140	140	140
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	74.8786	74.2643	85.9571
	Std. Deviation	7.00613	6.79569	8.86174
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.275	.202	.158
	Positive	.232	.199	.129
	Negative	-.275	-.202	-.158
Test Statistic		.275	.202	.158
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c

Based on Table 5, it can be concluded that the research data is not normally distributed because the significance value obtained is less than 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$). This condition indicates that the data does not meet the requirements for a normality test, so parametric statistical techniques cannot be used in the analysis. Therefore, in the next stage, data analysis was carried out using non-parametric statistical techniques as a more appropriate alternative for processing non-normally distributed data.

Next, a linearity test is performed to determine whether two variables have a linear relationship. This test is one of the requirements before conducting pearson correlation analysis or linear regression. Summary of the test results can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Summary of Linearity Test Results

Variable	Sig. Deviation from Linearity	Significance Level	Conclusion
Asta Brata Leadership and School Culture	0.277	0.05	Linier
Asta Brata Leadership and Student Character	0.000	0.05	Not Linier
School Culture and Student Character	0.024	0.05	Not Linier

Based on the results of the linearity test, the relationship between Asta Brata Leadership and School Culture shows a significance value of $0.277 > 0.05$, so the relationship between the two is linear. Conversely, the relationship between Asta Brata Leadership and Student Character has a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$, and the relationship between School Culture and Student

Character has a value of $0.024 < 0.05$, so the two relationships are not linear. Because the research data was not normally distributed and contained a non-linear relationship, hypothesis testing was conducted using a non-parametric statistical technique, namely the Spearman test. This test was chosen because it can measure the closeness and direction of the relationship between variables in data that does not meet the assumption of normality. In this study, the Spearman test was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 25. A summary of the test results can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7. Summary of Spearman Test Results

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Significance Level	Conclusion
Asta Brata Leadership and School Culture	0.793	0.000	0.05	A strong and significant relationship
Asta Brata Leadership and Student Character	0.688	0.000	0.05	A strong and significant relationship
School Culture and Student Character	0.833	0.000	0.05	A very strong and significant relationship

The results of the analysis show that there is a significant relationship between the practice of Asta Brata leadership and school culture in elementary schools in Pupuan District, Tabanan Regency, with a significance value of $0.000 (< 0.05)$ and a correlation coefficient value of 0.793, which is classified as strong, confirming that the more the principal applies Asta Brata leadership values, the more positive the school culture will be. In addition, there is a significant relationship between Asta Brata leadership and the character of elementary school students in Pupuan District, Tabanan Regency, with a significance value of $0.000 (< 0.05)$ and a correlation coefficient value of 0.688, which is classified as strong. This means that the more the principal applies Asta Brata leadership values, the more the character of elementary school students will develop. Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between school culture and the character of elementary school students in Pupuan District, Tabanan Regency, with a significance value of $0.000 (< 0.05)$ and a correlation coefficient value of 0.833, which is in the very strong category, indicating that the more positive the school culture, the more the formation of good student character increases.

The study provides evidence of a positive and significant relationship between Asta Brata leadership and school culture, indicating that Asta Brata leadership plays a crucial role in building and strengthening school culture. Principals who embody the values of Asta Brata are able to foster a sense of togetherness, discipline, and responsibility within the school environment. The more consistently principals apply the principles of Asta Brata leadership, the stronger the school culture that develops. Teachers perceive that principals demonstrate leadership characterized by harmony, transformative inclusivity, professional integrity, and moral responsibility. These four dimensions have been shown to contribute significantly to the development of a well-structured school culture through the establishment and reinforcement of norms, shared values and beliefs, traditions or habitual practices, and institutional rituals. These core values constitute the foundation of the Asta Brata leadership style practiced by elementary school principals in Bali (Werang et al., 2024). Furthermore, previous studies indicate that effective school leadership positively influences school culture by increasing mutual trust, strengthening organizational commitment, enhancing adaptability and capacity for change, reducing organizational silence, improving collective efficacy, increasing organizational

flexibility, promoting organizational health, and raising work motivation among school members (Heenan et al., 2023).

The relationship between Asta Brata leadership and school culture found in this study is consistent with the findings of Eka et al. (2023), which show that the implementation of Asta Brata principles is able to create harmonious relationships within the school environment and encourage increased discipline and harmony among school members. This finding is supported by the study of Cahyani et al. (2024), which revealed that values such as integrity, responsibility, and exemplary conduct embedded in Asta Brata are capable of shaping an ethical, cooperative, and mutually respectful school culture. The alignment of these findings reinforces the conclusion that the values of Asta Brata leadership have strong implications for fostering a positive school culture. Furthermore, based on the data analysis showing a positive and significant relationship between Asta Brata leadership and student character, it can be understood that the better the implementation of Asta Brata values by school principals, the stronger the student character that is formed. The results indicate that teachers perceive principals as having applied Asta Brata leadership reflected in attitudes of harmony, a transformative and inclusive leadership style, integrity, and moral responsibility. The application of these Asta Brata values creates a conducive and character-based school environment, thereby contributing to the development of student character, particularly in aspects of religiosity, nationalism, independence, cooperation, integrity, discipline, and responsibility.

In Hindu, there is a leadership concept known as Asta Brata, which consists of eight leadership principles adapted from the attributes of the gods. Asta Brata serves as a guideline for leaders in realizing welfare and harmony within society (Purnomo, 2021). These eight principles reflect the characteristics of an ideal leader who is capable of creating balance in leading an organization. The role of the school principal is very important in building and shaping students' character. The principal represents the school they lead; therefore, good leadership will be reflected in the overall school environment. Effective leadership plays a major role in improving and developing students' personalities through a positive and conducive school climate (Sutino et al., 2021). Principals with a strong leadership vision are able to create a learning environment that supports character education. Factors contributing to this success include firmness in implementing character education policies, the ability to motivate teachers and educational staff, and exemplary behavior in instilling moral values (Arrasyid & Karwanto, 2021).

The findings of this study regarding the relationship between Asta Brata leadership and student character are consistent with the results of Nigraha et al. (2024), who emphasized that the implementation of Asta Brata values is able to create a harmonious, inclusive, and motivating educational environment for all members of the school community. Values such as welfare, exemplary conduct, and courage have been shown to contribute to the development of positive student behavior. Furthermore, the study by Werang et al. (2024) revealed that aspects of harmony, transformative inclusivity, professional integrity, and moral responsibility serve as important foundations of Asta Brata leadership practiced by school principals in Bali. Ultimately, this leadership strengthens the moral and spiritual dimensions of the educational environment. These findings indicate that the consistent application of Asta Brata values has a positive impact on the development of students' character.

Furthermore, the analysis results indicate a positive and significant relationship between school culture and student character. This finding suggests that school culture plays a crucial role in shaping students' character. The better the school culture that is implemented, the stronger the character development of students. Teachers perceive that schools have established a well-structured culture, encompassing discipline, mutual respect, politeness, and responsibility, thereby creating an environment conducive to character formation. A positive school culture is able to create a supportive learning environment and foster good habits among students. Through consistent habituation, student behavior can be guided and controlled, making the internalization of character values easier to achieve (Amelia & Ramadan, 2021). Character education through

school culture has proven to be effective because school culture indirectly helps direct and regulate students' behavior from within themselves (Pramana & Trihantoyo, 2021). As a formal educational institution, schools play a strategic role in instilling moral values through school culture, both through the physical environment and social interactions within it. Values such as honesty, politeness, cooperation, and social responsibility become part of daily practices that support the development of positive student character (Simbolon et al., 2023).

Social interactions within the school environment also support the internalization of these values through students' learning to model positive behaviors demonstrated by teachers and staff who serve as role models (Saryanto et al., 2023). School culture that is implemented consistently such as greeting practices, collective prayers, cleanliness activities, and recognition of student achievements can effectively cultivate character values. Character education integrated through school culture not only shapes individual morality but also fosters social awareness and concern for local culture so that it can be passed on to future generations. The relationship between school culture and student character is also consistent with previous studies. Indriani et al. (2025) found that school culture manifested through practices such as the 5S program, collective prayers, and religious activities has a significant influence on students' character development. These activities indirectly nurture religious values, cooperation, independence, and nationalist attitudes, which are core components of the Pancasila Student Profile. This finding is further strengthened by the quantitative study of Istiqomah et al. (2022), which showed that school culture contributes significantly to student character formation with an influence of 17.4%, while improvements in school culture lead to a 0.384% increase in character development. These findings provide a strong foundation that a robust school culture is a crucial factor in building students' character in a sustainable manner.

Nevertheless, these findings should be interpreted by considering several existing limitations. This study is correlational in nature; therefore, the results are only able to explain the relationships among variables without confirming causal relationships between Asta Brata leadership, school culture, and student character. In addition, the data were obtained from teachers' perception-based questionnaires, which may involve subjective bias that can affect the objectivity of respondents' answers. This study was conducted in public elementary schools in Pupuan District, and the results of the normality test indicated that the data were not normally distributed, leading to the use of nonparametric analysis. These conditions limit the generalizability of the findings, so the results cannot yet be broadly applied to other regions.

Based on the conclusions of the study, which indicate strong relationships among Asta Brata leadership, school culture, and the character of elementary school students in Pupuan District, Tabanan Regency, several implications can be drawn from these findings. The discovery of a strong relationship between Asta Brata leadership and school culture emphasizes that changes in school culture are closely linked to the quality of the principal's leadership. Logically, this implies that principals need to implement leadership strategies capable of fostering a harmonious, fair, and integrity-based school environment. Improvement efforts include applying leadership strategies grounded in Asta Brata values, strengthening collaboration with teachers, and reinforcing the integration of these values into both learning activities and other school programs.

Furthermore, the finding that Asta Brata leadership is significantly related to student character indicates that the development of students' character is strongly influenced by the role modeling and leadership values demonstrated by the principal. Therefore, improvement efforts are needed in the form of strengthening leadership practices that reflect Asta Brata values, enhancing moral exemplarity, and promoting wise and effective communication in guiding teachers and students. Another finding showing that school culture has a very strong relationship with student character implies that students' character can develop optimally only within a school environment that consistently upholds a positive culture. Accordingly, schools need to reinforce a culture of discipline, literacy, cleanliness, and mutual respect. These improvement

efforts require collaboration among principals, teachers, school committees, and parents so that the values instilled at school are also supported within the home environment. Overall, the implications of this study indicate that character building requires synergy among principal leadership, a positive school culture, and the active participation of all school members. Therefore, schools need to design habituation programs that support character strengthening, develop collaborative strategies, and establish consistent internal policies in implementing Asta Brata values and sustainably reinforcing school culture

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study and data analysis on the relationship between Asta Brata leadership, school culture, and the character of elementary school students in Pupuan District, Tabanan Regency, it can be concluded that these three variables are significantly interrelated and mutually reinforcing. The findings indicate a significant relationship between the practice of Asta Brata leadership and school culture. A significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05) and a correlation coefficient of 0.793, which falls into the strong category, confirm that the better principals implement Asta Brata leadership values, the stronger and more positive the school culture that is formed. In addition, this study reveals a significant relationship between Asta Brata leadership and the character of elementary school students. A significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05) with a correlation coefficient of 0.688, classified as strong, indicates that increased implementation of Asta Brata leadership values by principals contributes to better development of students' character. Furthermore, the analysis shows a significant relationship between school culture and students' character. A significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05) and a correlation coefficient of 0.833, which falls into the very strong category, suggest that a positive and consistent school culture plays a crucial role in shaping students' character. Thus, the better the school culture that is developed, the more optimal the formation of students' character in elementary schools.

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