



Leading with Local Wisdom: Exploring The Integration of *Tri Hita Karana* Values in School Leadership for Teacher Well-Being and School Effectiveness

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Abstract: This study aims to explore how *Tri Hita Karana* values are integrated into school leadership and how principals and teachers perceive their contribution to teacher well-being and school effectiveness. A qualitative multiple-case study was conducted in four elementary schools in Bali Province, anonymized as SD A, SD B, SD C, and SD D. The participants comprised four principals and twelve teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis, complemented by within-case and cross-case analyses. Trustworthiness was enhanced through source triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, and the maintenance of an audit trail. The findings revealed that *Tri Hita Karana*-based leadership was enacted through three interconnected dimensions. *Parhyangan* strengthened ethical leadership, professional meaning, and emotional calm; *Pawongan* supported respectful communication, teacher participation, collegial trust, recognition, and fair treatment; while *Palemahan* promoted physical comfort, environmental responsibility, and orderly working conditions. Among these dimensions, *Pawongan* was perceived as having the most direct contribution to teachers' everyday well-being. Teacher well-being was also perceived to support school effectiveness by fostering stronger commitment, collaboration, responsibility, and program continuity. However, implementation was constrained by uneven workload distribution, limited teacher participation, inadequate facilities, and a tendency to interpret *Tri Hita Karana* primarily as a ceremonial concept. The study suggests that *Tri Hita Karana* can serve as a culturally grounded leadership framework when its values are consistently translated into school policies, organizational practices, and everyday leadership behaviors.

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Introduction

School leadership plays a central role in determining how educational goals are translated into organizational culture, professional practices, and daily interactions among school members. The role of a school principal is therefore no longer limited to managing administrative activities, facilities, finances, and academic programs (Fahra & Syukri, 2025; Nurjannah & Chandra, 2025). School leaders are also expected to develop a shared vision, foster ethical and collaborative relationships, provide professional support for teachers, and create a safe and meaningful working environment (Hardwick-Franco, 2019; Lushaj & Shatri, 2026). Leadership practices that encourage participation, trust, inclusion, and collective responsibility can strengthen teachers' agency while supporting organizational learning and school effectiveness. Consequently, effective school leadership needs to be understood not only in terms of instructional outcomes but also through its capacity to maintain the well-



being of the people responsible for achieving those outcomes (Alves et al., 2025; Meilani & Koswara, 2026).

Teacher well-being is important because teaching involves substantial emotional, social, and professional demands. At the elementary level, it includes not only the absence of stress but also positive emotions, meaningful engagement, supportive relationships, competence, and physical and psychological well-being (Gámez-Genovart et al., 2025; Thien & Lee, 2023). A systematic review of primary school teachers' well-being found that the concept is multidimensional and needs to be examined through holistic perspectives that combine professional functioning, positive development, and the management of occupational pressures (Ozturk et al., 2024; Thien & Lee, 2023).

Leadership constitutes one of the organizational conditions that can support or undermine teacher well-being. Supportive school leadership can provide teachers with feedback, autonomy, opportunities for professional development, and social support, which function as important resources for dealing with occupational demands (Bagdžiūnienė et al., 2022; Dreer, 2022). In elementary schools, participatory decision-making, formal relationships, goal orientation, and leadership practices have also been associated with differences in teacher well-being (Kwatubana, 2022; Thien & Lee, 2023). Qualitative evidence further indicates that leadership oriented toward health and well-being can create healthier working conditions through supportive relationships, a caring organizational culture, safety, and awareness of teachers' physical and psychological needs (Gámez-Genovart et al., 2025; Kwatubana, 2022). These findings demonstrate that teacher well-being is not exclusively an individual responsibility but is shaped by leadership practices and the organizational environment in which teachers work.

General leadership models may not fully capture the cultural values shaping Balinese schools. *Tri Hita Karana* offers a contextual framework based on harmony with God (Parhyangan), other people (Pawongan), and the environment (Palemahan), providing an ethical foundation for spirituality, mutual respect, shared responsibility, and environmental care in school leadership (Handayani & Arnyana, 2026; Rati et al., 2024). Thus, *Tri Hita Karana* has the potential to position school leadership as a relational practice that balances organizational achievement with human and environmental well-being (Aresta et al., 2025).

Previous studies have demonstrated several forms of *Tri Hita Karana*-based leadership in Balinese schools. (Aresta et al., 2025) Teacher well-being is important because teaching involves substantial emotional, social, and professional demands. At the elementary level, it includes not only the absence of stress but also positive emotions, meaningful engagement, supportive relationships, competence, and physical and psychological well-being (Handayani & Arnyana, 2026). Such studies confirm that *Tri Hita Karana* can be operationalized in daily school leadership rather than being treated merely as an abstract cultural philosophy.

International research on teacher well-being also remains conceptually and methodologically fragmented, with quantitative approaches and established psychological models dominating recent studies. This condition indicates the need for qualitative research that examines teacher well-being within its cultural and organizational context and gives greater attention to the experiences and interpretations of school members (Gámez-Genovart et al., 2025). The scientific novelty of this study lies in examining *Tri Hita Karana*-based school leadership by connecting its spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions simultaneously with teacher well-being and school effectiveness. Rather than assessing *Tri Hita Karana* only through formal school programs or ceremonial activities, this study



investigates how its values are translated into everyday leadership practices, particularly ethical leadership, professional support, relational trust, teacher participation, workload management, and environmental responsibility. Based on this research gap, this study aims to explore the integration of *Tri Hita Karana* values into school leadership and to interpret their contribution to teacher well-being and school effectiveness across four elementary schools in Bali Province.

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a multiple-case study design to explore how *Tri Hita Karana* values were integrated into school leadership practices and how these practices contributed to teacher well-being and school effectiveness. The multiple-case study design was selected because the study examined leadership practices within several bounded school contexts and compared similarities and differences across cases (Creswell, 2021). Each elementary school was treated as an individual case, while the four schools collectively provided a cross-case understanding of culturally grounded school leadership.

The study was conducted in four elementary schools in Bali Province, which were anonymized as SD A, SD B, SD C, and SD D. The use of pseudonyms was intended to protect the identity of the schools, principals, and teachers participating in the study. The schools were selected purposively based on their implementation of activities and leadership practices reflecting the values of *Parhyangan*, *Pawongan*, and *Palemahan*. The schools were also selected to represent different organizational contexts so that the study could capture variations in the implementation of *Tri Hita Karana*-based leadership.

The informants were selected using purposive sampling. They consisted of four school principals and twelve teachers, resulting in a total of sixteen informants. The principals were selected because they were directly responsible for school policies, organizational culture, teacher development, and the implementation of *Tri Hita Karana* values. Teachers were selected because they experienced leadership practices directly and could provide information regarding their well-being, professional relationships, working conditions, and school effectiveness. The participating teachers represented different grade levels and lengths of teaching experience. Principals were required to have served in their current schools for at least two years, while teachers were required to have worked in their respective schools for at least three years.

Table 1. Informant Composition

School	School Status	Location Context	School Size	Informant Code	Position	Number
SD A	Public	Urban	Large	P-A	School Principal	1
SD A				T-A1–T-A3	Teachers	3
SD B	Public	Semi-urban	Medium	P-B	School Principal	1
SD B				T-B1–T-B3	Teachers	3
SD C	Public	Rural	Medium	P-C	School Principal	1
SD C				T-C1–T-C3	Teachers	3
SD D	Public	Rural	Small	P-D	School Principal	1
SD D				T-D1–T-D3	Teachers	3
Total						16



Primary data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews, allowing comparable topics to be explored across cases while giving informants flexibility to explain their experiences in detail. The interviews were supplemented by brief field observations and selected school documents, which were used to provide contextual support for interpreting the interview findings.

The interview guide covered five areas: understanding of *Tri Hita Karana*, its integration into leadership practices, teachers' well-being and professional experiences, perceptions of school effectiveness, and factors supporting or constraining *Tri Hita Karana*-based leadership. Principal interviews focused on leadership practices, decision-making, communication, teacher support, school culture, and environmental management. Teacher interviews explored their experiences of leadership, workplace relationships, participation, working conditions, well-being, and the contribution of leadership to school goals.

Each interview was conducted individually in a setting agreed upon with the informant to ensure privacy and comfort. The interviews lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and, with the informants' permission, were audio-recorded and supplemented with researcher notes. Interviews were primarily conducted in Indonesian, with Balinese expressions used when needed to preserve local cultural meanings. All recordings were transcribed verbatim, and identifying information was anonymized..

Data collection was conducted over approximately three months. The researcher was directly involved in conducting, recording, and interpreting the interviews. Earlier interview findings were clarified in subsequent interviews when necessary. Data collection continued until recurring information emerged and no substantially new themes were identified. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis combined with within-case and cross-case analysis. (Braun (2021) describe thematic analysis as a flexible and recursive process rather than a strictly linear sequence of analytical stages. Their approach involves six phases: familiarization with the dataset, coding, generating initial themes, developing and reviewing themes, refining, defining and naming themes, and writing up the analysis.

Within-case analysis was conducted separately for each school, followed by cross-case analysis to identify common patterns, contextual differences, implementation barriers, and the perceived contribution of leadership to teacher well-being and school effectiveness. The credibility of the findings was strengthened through source triangulation, member checking, peer discussion, and an audit trail. Triangulation compared information from principals and teachers, while member checking confirmed the accuracy of interpretations. Peer discussion reviewed the coding and themes, and the audit trail documented key analytical decisions and supporting records. Ethical principles were maintained through informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the use of pseudonyms and informant codes. Interview data were stored securely and used solely for research purposes.

Results and Discussion

Result

The analysis of interviews with four principals and twelve teachers generated five main themes: the translation of *Tri Hita Karana* into school leadership, the role of *Parhyangan* in developing meaningful work, the contribution of *Pawongan* to teachers' social and professional well-being, the implementation of *Palemahan* in creating a supportive working environment, and the contribution of culturally grounded leadership to school effectiveness. Although the four schools demonstrated similar principles, differences were identified in the intensity, consistency, and formalization of their implementation.



Table 2. Main Themes Emerging from the Interviews

Main Theme	Principal Interview Findings	Teacher Interview Findings
Integration of <i>Tri Hita Karana</i>	Values were incorporated into school vision, decision-making, teacher supervision, religious activities, collaboration, and environmental programs	Teachers experienced the values through daily leadership practices, school routines, collegial interaction, and environmental responsibility
<i>Parhyangan</i> and meaningful work	Principals emphasized ethical leadership, spiritual reflection, gratitude, integrity, and responsibility	Teachers perceived teaching as meaningful service and reported greater emotional calm when spiritual values were consistently practiced
<i>Pawongan</i> and teacher well-being	Principals promoted communication, participation, mutual assistance, recognition, and conflict resolution	Teachers experienced social support, collegial trust, involvement in decisions, and reduced interpersonal tension
<i>Palemahan</i> and the working environment	Principals organized cleanliness, greening, waste management, and maintenance of school facilities	Teachers associated an orderly and comfortable environment with greater concentration, motivation, and work comfort
School effectiveness	Leadership was directed toward program coordination, teacher commitment, community involvement, and achievement of school goals	Teachers perceived improvements in collaboration, program implementation, instructional responsibility, and organizational consistency

The findings showed that *Tri Hita Karana* functioned as a practical foundation for school leadership across the four schools. Its implementation varied by context: SD A showed more systematic integration, SD B emphasized interpersonal relationships, SD C highlighted religious and community involvement, and SD D focused more strongly on environmental management. Across cases, the values were considered meaningful when reflected in fairness, respect, openness, and responsibility.

Parhyangan contributed to teacher well-being through spiritual meaning, ethical conduct, and emotional calm. However, its contribution was stronger when spiritual values were reflected in fair decisions, respectful communication, and sensitivity to teachers' difficulties. Thus, *Parhyangan* was most relevant when translated into consistent leadership behaviour rather than limited to ritual practices. *Pawongan* emerged as the dimension most directly related to teacher well-being. Teachers emphasized respectful communication, participation, collegial support, recognition, and fair treatment. However, unequal workloads, limited feedback, and restricted opportunities to express concerns reduced perceptions of fairness. This suggests that *Pawongan* requires both harmonious relationships and psychological safety. *Palemahan* supported teacher well-being through clean, orderly, and functional working environments. Its contribution depended on adequate facilities, shared responsibility, and fair task distribution. Environmental programs became less supportive when they created additional burdens for particular teachers.

Table 3. Cross-Case Patterns of Teacher Well-Being

Aspect of Teacher Well-Being	SD A	SD B	SD C	SD D
Meaningful work	Strong	Strong	Strong	Moderate
Emotional support from principal	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Moderate



Teacher participation	Strong	Moderate	Moderate	Limited
Collegial support	Strong	Strong	Strong	Moderate
Workload fairness	Relatively balanced	Relatively balanced	Occasionally uneven	Occasionally unclear
Physical work comfort	Strong	Moderate	Moderate	Strong
Professional recognition	Strong	Moderate	Moderate	Limited

The interview findings showed that *Tri Hita Karana*-based leadership contributed to school effectiveness through stronger coordination, teacher commitment, program continuity, collaborative problem-solving, positive school climate, and community participation. School effectiveness was perceived not only through student achievement but also through the capacity of the school to implement programs consistently and mobilize its members toward shared goals.

At SD A, the integration of values into planning and evaluation supported consistency between school goals and daily activities. Teachers understood their responsibilities and were able to coordinate programs with relatively limited conflict. The principal's participatory approach strengthened teacher commitment to school targets.

At SD B, effectiveness was supported by trust and flexible cooperation. Teachers responded quickly when problems occurred because communication channels were open. However, the limited formalization of certain programs created dependence on the principal's personal leadership style.

At SD C, school effectiveness was strengthened by cultural legitimacy and community participation. Activities involving parents and local communities were more easily organized because school programs were connected with familiar values. Nevertheless, reliance on a small group of active teachers created risks for program sustainability.

At SD D, environmental programs were implemented consistently and became a visible strength of the school. Teachers and students shared responsibility for school cleanliness and facilities. However, the limited participation of teachers in broader decision-making reduced the possibility of developing equally strong collaboration in academic and professional programs.

The interviews indicated that teacher well-being and school effectiveness were closely connected. Teachers who felt supported and valued demonstrated greater willingness to accept responsibilities, collaborate with colleagues, participate in school activities, and maintain program continuity. Conversely, unclear workload distribution and limited recognition weakened motivation, even when teachers continued to fulfil formal responsibilities.

The implementation of *Tri Hita Karana*-based leadership was supported by principals' cultural understanding, consistent role modelling, teacher acceptance, collegial relationships, community participation, and the alignment of school programs with local values. The availability of regular communication forums also supported the translation of values into daily practices.

The main constraints were differences in individual understanding, limited school facilities, unequal participation, administrative workload, dependence on particular teachers, and the tendency to treat *Tri Hita Karana* as ceremonial activity. In several cases, teachers understood the cultural values but did not always connect them with professional support, workload management, or participatory leadership.

A further constraint concerned leadership consistency. Teachers were more likely to accept additional responsibilities when principals demonstrated fairness and participated in



collective activities. In contrast, the values were perceived as symbolic when principals emphasized harmony but did not provide opportunities for teachers to express disagreement or concerns.

Table 4. Supporting and Constraining Factors across the Four Schools

Supporting Factors	Constraining Factors
Principals' understanding of local cultural values	Different levels of understanding among school members
Consistent ethical role modelling	Ritual or ceremonial interpretation of <i>Tri Hita Karana</i>
Open communication between principals and teachers	Limited teacher participation in some decisions
Collegial assistance among teachers	Unequal distribution of additional duties
Community and parental participation	Limited facilities and financial resources
Integration with school routines and programs	Dependence on a small number of active teachers
Clear division of responsibilities	High administrative workload
Collective environmental responsibility	Inconsistent documentation and evaluation

The findings demonstrated that *Tri Hita Karana* values were present in the leadership practices of all four schools, but their contribution depended on how consistently the values were translated into concrete actions. *Parhyangan* strengthened ethical responsibility and meaningful work, *Pawongan* provided the strongest contribution to teachers' social and psychological well-being, while *Palemahan* supported physical comfort and collective environmental responsibility. The most effective implementation occurred when the three dimensions were applied in a balanced manner and connected with participatory leadership, fair workload management, professional recognition, and consistent school program coordination.

Discussion

The findings indicate that *Tri Hita Karana* became meaningful in school leadership when *Parhyangan*, *Pawongan*, and *Palemahan* were reflected in everyday practices such as ethical leadership, supportive communication, teacher participation, and environmental responsibility. Although implementation varied across schools, *Tri Hita Karana* functioned as a flexible cultural framework for leadership and school development (Betliani, 2024; Subhaktiyasa et al., 2024).

Parhyangan supported teacher well-being through spiritual meaning, ethical conduct, and emotional calm. Its contribution was strongest when spiritual values were reflected in principals' fairness, respect, and sensitivity to teachers' needs, showing that ethical leadership is more important than ritual practices alone (Aresta et al., 2025; Widyastama et al., 2025).

Among the three dimensions, *Pawongan* was most directly related to teacher well-being. Teachers valued respectful communication, participation, recognition, collegial support, and fair treatment, indicating that well-being is shaped by everyday relational and organizational experiences (R. F. Cann et al., 2021, 2022).

These findings suggest that *Pawongan* combines professional participation and emotional support. Teacher involvement, trust, recognition, and supportive communication create psychological safety and are associated with stronger teacher well-being (R. F. Cann et al., 2021; Meidelina et al., 2023).

Pawongan should not be equated with the absence of disagreement. Genuine harmony requires open communication, respect for different views, transparent decisions, and



psychological safety, allowing disagreement to strengthen trust and organizational decision-making.

Uneven workloads, particularly at SD C and SD D, reduced teacher well-being. Repeated additional duties created fatigue and perceptions of unfairness, indicating that positive relationships cannot fully offset excessive or unclear workloads. (Dreer, 2022; Nwoko et al., 2024).

The findings suggest that Pawongan requires fair and transparent workload management. Responsibilities should be distributed according to teachers' competence and existing workload, with clear explanations to reduce perceptions of unfairness.

Recognition is equally important because teachers may accept additional responsibilities more positively when their contributions are acknowledged. Recognition does not always need to take the form of financial rewards. Constructive feedback, public appreciation, opportunities for professional development, and consideration of teachers' future workload may communicate that their efforts are valued. These practices are consistent with positive and transformational leadership approaches that emphasize appreciation, empowerment, individual consideration, and professional support (R. F. Cann et al., 2021; Meidelina et al., 2023).

This finding extends the educational interpretation of *Palemahan*, which has often been associated with ecological literacy, environmental awareness, and student character development. The present study shows that environmental management also has an occupational dimension. A comfortable environment may reduce daily frustration, facilitate instructional preparation, and create a positive emotional atmosphere. Educational studies based on *Tri Hita Karana* similarly emphasize that environmental values can be developed through learning activities, shared responsibility, ecological practices, and school routines (Astawa, 2022; Widyastama et al., 2025).

Therefore, *Palemahan* needs to be integrated with *Pawongan*. Environmental programs are more likely to support well-being when they are accompanied by fair task distribution, shared ownership, adequate resources, and active participation by the principal. When environmental responsibilities are assigned repeatedly to the same teachers without sufficient support, a program intended to create harmony may become an additional workload. This demonstrates that physical, social, professional, and organizational conditions are mutually connected in shaping teacher well-being (Hascher & Waber, 2021; Nwoko et al., 2024).

This relationship can be understood because school effectiveness depends heavily on teachers' capacity and willingness to implement school policies. A well-designed school program may not achieve its objectives when teachers experience persistent pressure, relational conflict, or inadequate support. Conversely, teachers with positive professional experiences are more likely to maintain constructive relationships with students, sustain teaching enthusiasm, and support organizational improvement. Systematic evidence has connected teacher well-being with retention, teacher-student relationships, professional functioning, and student-related outcomes, although the strength and direction of these relationships may vary across contexts (Dreer, 2023).

These findings are consistent with research showing that principal leadership styles are associated with teacher performance, work motivation, and the implementation of school responsibilities. Participatory and supportive leadership enables teachers to understand school goals, contribute to decisions, and coordinate their activities more effectively. However, leadership that depends exclusively on the principal's personal influence may become



vulnerable when leadership changes occur. Effective practices therefore need to be embedded in school procedures, collaborative teams, and organizational routines (R. F. Cann et al., 2021; Parveen et al., 2022).

These differences suggest that school effectiveness cannot be achieved through one dominant dimension of *Tri Hita Karana*. Strong *Parhyangan* without fair organizational practices may become symbolic, strong *Pawongan* without clear structures may create dependence on informal relationships, and strong *Palemahan* without teacher participation may prioritize physical appearance over professional needs. Sustainable school effectiveness requires a balance among ethical direction, relational support, environmental responsibility, and organizational consistency.

The primary theoretical meaning of the findings is that *Tri Hita Karana*-based school leadership can be understood as an integrated leadership system. *Parhyangan* provides moral direction and meaning, *Pawongan* regulates interpersonal and professional relationships, while *Palemahan* guides responsibility for the physical and ecological environment. The three dimensions are interconnected because ethical leadership influences relationships, relationships influence collective responsibility, and the working environment affects the well-being and performance of school members.

This interpretation extends previous studies that have predominantly positioned *Tri Hita Karana* as a foundation for student character education, ecological awareness, or cultural school activities. The present findings indicate that the philosophy is also relevant to the professional experiences of teachers and the organizational functioning of schools. It can guide decisions concerning communication, workload, professional recognition, participation, conflict resolution, facilities, and community relationships. In this sense, *Tri Hita Karana* is not only an educational value transmitted to students but also a leadership framework experienced by teachers (Aresta et al., 2025; Betliani, 2024; Subhaktiyasa et al., 2024).

The practical implication is that principals need to integrate *Tri Hita Karana* into both formal and informal leadership practices. Formal integration may include school policies, program planning, workload distribution, supervision, evaluation, and environmental management. Informal integration may include daily communication, conflict resolution, personal support, ethical role modelling, and recognition of teacher contributions. The combination of these practices is more likely to produce sustainable changes than isolated activities directed only at individual teacher coping. Reviews of educator well-being interventions likewise emphasize the importance of comprehensive and organizational approaches rather than relying solely on individual-level interventions (R. Cann et al., 2024).

Finally, the relationship among *Tri Hita Karana*-based leadership, teacher well-being, and school effectiveness is contextual rather than causal. The study highlights how culturally grounded leadership may support school functioning through ethical consistency, relational trust, teacher participation, fair responsibility, collegial support, and physical comfort (Dreer, 2023; Ozturk et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This study concludes that *Tri Hita Karana*-based leadership supports teacher well-being and school effectiveness when *Parhyangan*, *Pawongan*, and *Palemahan* are implemented in an integrated manner. *Parhyangan* strengthens ethical conduct and professional meaning, *Pawongan* supports trust, participation, and psychological safety, while *Palemahan* promotes a supportive working environment. Among these dimensions, *Pawongan* was most directly



related to teachers' daily well-being. Overall, Tri Hita Karana becomes most meaningful when its values are consistently reflected in leadership practices, fair task distribution, teacher participation, and environmental responsibility.

Recommendation

School principals are recommended to integrate Tri Hita Karana into both school policies and daily leadership practices through fair workload distribution, teacher participation, constructive feedback, professional recognition, and shared environmental responsibility. Spiritual and environmental programs should be supported by practical measures so that they do not remain symbolic or create additional burdens. Future research should involve broader school contexts and combine interviews with observation and document analysis. Because this study involved only four elementary schools and relied mainly on interview data, the findings should be interpreted as context-specific rather than broadly generalizable.

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