Leadership strategies for inclusive education systematic review: how school principals support special needs students

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

This article examines the leadership strategies used by school principals to manage inclusive education for students with special educational needs. Based on a systematic review of 25 articles from top academic journals (2021-2025), the research highlights the key role principals play in promoting inclusivity in schools. Findings show that effective leadership practices, such as transformational leadership, community involvement, and resource allocation, significantly enhance the success of inclusive education. Principals who foster a culture of support and high expectations for teachers contribute to better educational outcomes for special educational needs students. The study also emphasizes the importance of collaboration between teachers, parents, and external organizations in supporting inclusive practices. However, the research identifies challenges that principals face, such as limited resources and managing diverse learning needs. Professional development and ongoing training for educators are crucial for overcoming these barriers. The article concludes that while character-driven leadership centered on integrity, empathy, and ethical decision-making plays a positive role in building an inclusive school environment, it must be balanced with practical strategies to address operational challenges. Effective leadership is essential for creating a sustainable, inclusive educational environment that meets the diverse needs of all students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4, highlight the need for education that is inclusive and fair, particularly for students with disabilities [1]. Inclusive education is an approach that focuses on providing quality education to all students, no matter their differences or disabilities, within regular school environments [2]. In 1994, The Salamanca Statement was a milestone in global education, promoting inclusive education for all children, regardless of background or ability [3], [4]. This declaration led to significant policy changes and greater awareness of inclusion worldwide [5] Since then, efforts to include students with disabilities in regular classrooms have continued to develop until today.

Moreover, the effectiveness of inclusive education largely depends on school leadership. The principals need to play their role in ensuring the success of schools, especially when dealing with diverse student groups. Their key role is to make sure to foster an inclusive school culture and ensure positive learning outcomes for all students [6], [7]. Earlier studies explore that leaders who show integrity, empathy,

and make ethical decisions can create positive learning environments [8]. Its outcome of effective leadership that shows when teachers work together and develop professionally, it also benefits students. This leads to better collaboration and higher engagement among both teachers and students [7]–[11]. Research has identified four key leadership actions that contribute to effective school operation: building a vision, developing staff capacity, restructuring the organization, and managing teaching and learning [12], [13].

Nonetheless, despite inclusive education being well-known, it still challenges to school leaders to run inclusive schools effectively. Research shows that many principals do not have enough training, resources, or authority to make inclusive education work well. Some common challenges include a shortage of special education teachers, insufficient teacher training, poor infrastructure, and a lack of standardized management methods [14]. Research on leadership in inclusive education is crucial for shaping policies and strategies that promote inclusivity at school and national levels [6]–[13], [15]. While earlier studies have explored challenges yet, there is no strategy that school leaders could follow in facing the challenges from various stakeholders. This research aims to explore the various strategies that have been used among school leaders in managing all the challenges in managing inclusive school education around the world [14], [15].

2. METHOD

A detailed systematic literature review (SLR) of scholarly articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals facilitated the development of a comprehensive dataset. This research began with an extensive search using Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar, specifically targeting publicly available articles and limiting the search to the top 2021-2025 years of results. The literature search began with the identification of the leading English-language journals that are highly regarded as key sources for research on inclusive education and leadership in special educational needs [16]–[18]. The journals taken are coming from Q1 and Q2 journal indexes only since they are going to have a good impact on this research especially since the journal collected is widely from around the world so we can see the change that has been faced by the school leader in managing the school management. A systematic search of these journals was conducted using a combination of keywords relevant to inclusive education and leadership. The Table 1 show the search string to find a suitable article for this research.

Table 1. The search string in Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar

Database	Search string
Scopus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY (inclusive AND education) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (school) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (school AND leader) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (special AND need))
ScienceDirect	"Inclusive education" AND "leadership" AND "special needs" AND "school leader" AND "principal" AND "school"
Google Scholar	"principal" AND "inclusive education" AND "school" AND "disabilities"

The articles retrieved from this search were subjected to an inclusion and exclusion process. The inclusion criteria for the selection of articles were: i) empirical studies, review articles, and commentary pieces, as these contribute to the maturity of the knowledge base in the field [16], ii) publications within the timeframe from December 2021 to January 2025, and iii) studies specifically focusing on inclusive leadership or principals' roles and strategy in special educational needs. The exclusion criteria were aligned with the approach suggested by Dixon-Woods *et al.* [19] or out-of-date articles, or those not published in one of the selected journals, were excluded. The titles and abstracts of the selected articles were compiled into a file for further analysis.

Moreover, the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) has been use through a Delphi survey process. This extension helps make search strategies clearer and easier to replicate [20]. Figure 1 shows the PRISMA flowchart of how the data have been collected.

This search and selection process resulted in the identification of 25 articles and these articles are summarized in Table 2, [21], [22]–[45]. For each article, essential details such as the authors, year of publication, methodology, key findings of strategy, and conclusions were extracted into a coded spreadsheet. The findings were systematically categorized based on recurring themes identified in the framework of inclusive education leadership discussed in the next section. Given the manageable number of articles, software was not necessary for coding or analyzing the findings. Instead, the analysis followed the thematic approach outlined by Dixon-Woods *et al.* [19], Holzner and Gaunt [21] which involves identifying patterns, developing a critique, and generating themes. Finally, data synthesis was performed based on judgments regarding the credibility and contribution of each study [19].
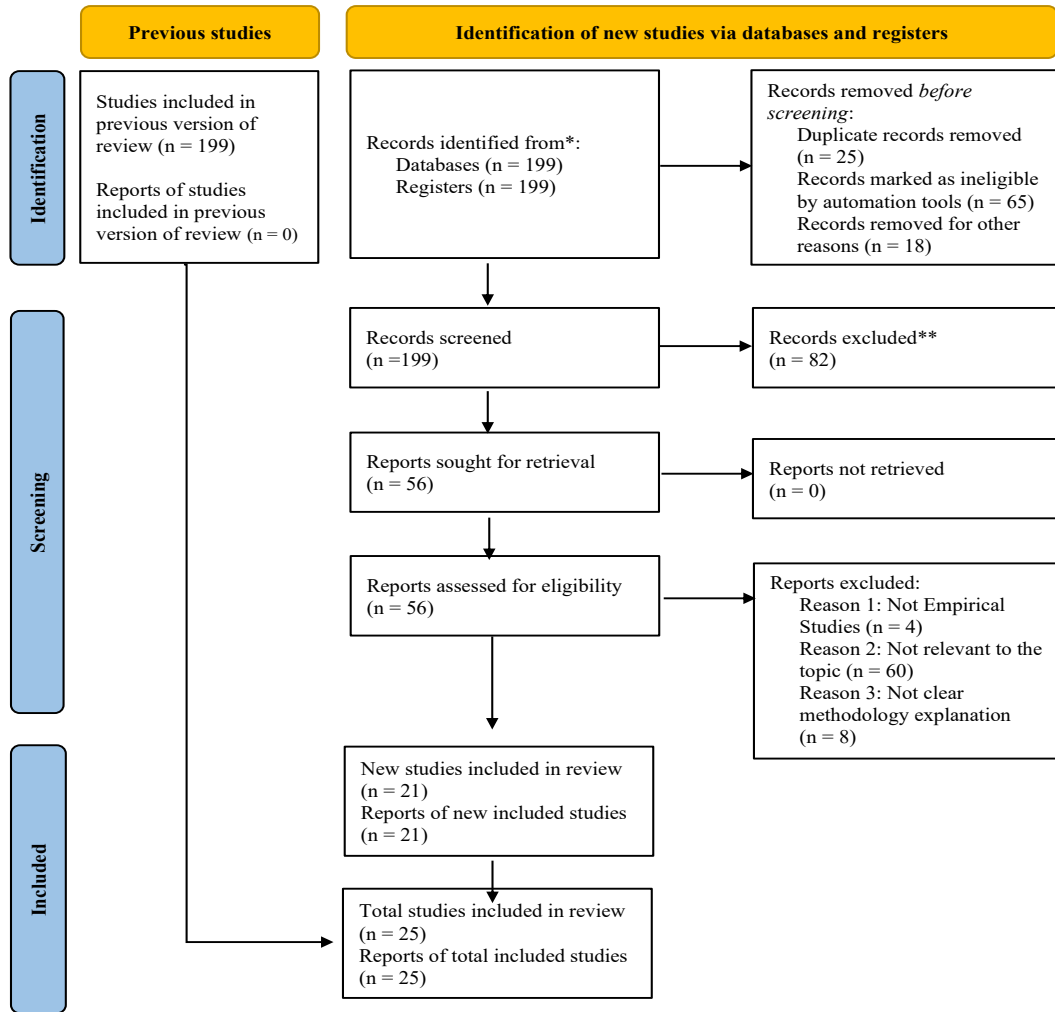
Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart

Table 2. Article journal used in the process of review

No	Name of journal	Authors	Year	Country
1.	Education Sciences	Pai [22]	2025	USA
2.	International Journal of Early Childhood	Alnuaimi *et al.* [23]	2025	United Arab Emirates
3.	Sustainability	Massouti *et al.* [24]	2024	United Arab Emirates
4.	Education Sciences	Hyassat *et al.* [25]	2024	Jordan
5.	International Journal of Educational Narratives	Rivana [26]	2024	Indonesia
6.	International Journal of Inclusive Education	Vorlíček and Kollerová [27]	2024	Slovakia
7.	International Journal of Inclusive Education	Gallagher *et al.* [28]	2024	Canada
8.	Societies	Dennehy *et al.* [29]	2024	Ireland
9.	Behavioral Sciences	Wang *et al.* [30]	2024	China
10.	Sustainability	Massouti *et al.* [31]	2023	United Arab Emirates
11.	Educational Administration Quarterly	Castro [32]	2023	United States
12.	International Journal of Inclusive Education	Pedaste *et al.* [33]	2023	Estonia
13.	Management in Education	Heffernan *et al.* [34]	2023	Australia
14.	Sage Open	Majoko [35]	2023	Zimbabwe
15.	Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research	Fasting and Breilid [36]	2023	Norway
16.	Frontiers in Education	Staden-Payne and Nel [37]	2023	South Africa
17.	Frontiers in Psychology	Kivirand *et al.* [38]	2022	Estonia
18.	International Journal of Leadership in Education	Ketikidou and Saiti [10]	2022	Greece
19.	Asia Pacific Journal of Education	Dorji *et al.* [39]	2022	Bhutan
20.	Educational Management, Administration & Leadership	Wanjiru [40]	2021	Kenya
21.	REACH: Journal of Inclusive Education in Ireland	Raftery and Brennan [41]	2021	Ireland
22.	Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs	Sider *et al.* [42]	2021	Canada
23.	European Journal of Education	Scheer [43]	2021	Germany
24.	Management in Education	Even and BenDavid-Hadar [44]	2021	Israel
25.	Education Sciences	Fitzgerald *et al.* [45]	2021	Ireland

Figure 2 illustrates the identified research gap related to leadership strategies in special education. As shown in the Figure 2, recent studies have emphasized the importance of systematically reviewing leadership practices that promote inclusive learning, [14], [21], [46], [47]. While previous research has explored certain dimensions of inclusive leadership and special education teacher leadership [48], [49] there remains a lack of comprehensive frameworks to guide school leaders in fostering inclusive learning environments. This conceptual gap underscores the need for further investigation into leadership approaches that support equity, diversity, and inclusion in special education settings [14], [47]. Previous studies highlight that teacher leadership is important for fostering inclusive practices; however, the influence of school leaders, especially principals, has received less attention [50]. Further research is needed to understand how leadership approaches can support special education and promote an inclusive school environment.

The literature search for this study shows that the development of school leadership research across the world, particularly from 2020 to 2025, has steadily grown, with contributions from scholars spanning different regions. This type of leadership emphasizes traits such as integrity, empathy, and ethical decision-making, which have been shown to foster positive school cultures and enhance both teacher and student outcomes [18]. Research conducted across diverse regions such as the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific has been collected and it is proof of how effective leadership models positively impact school environments, particularly when focused on character-driven values.
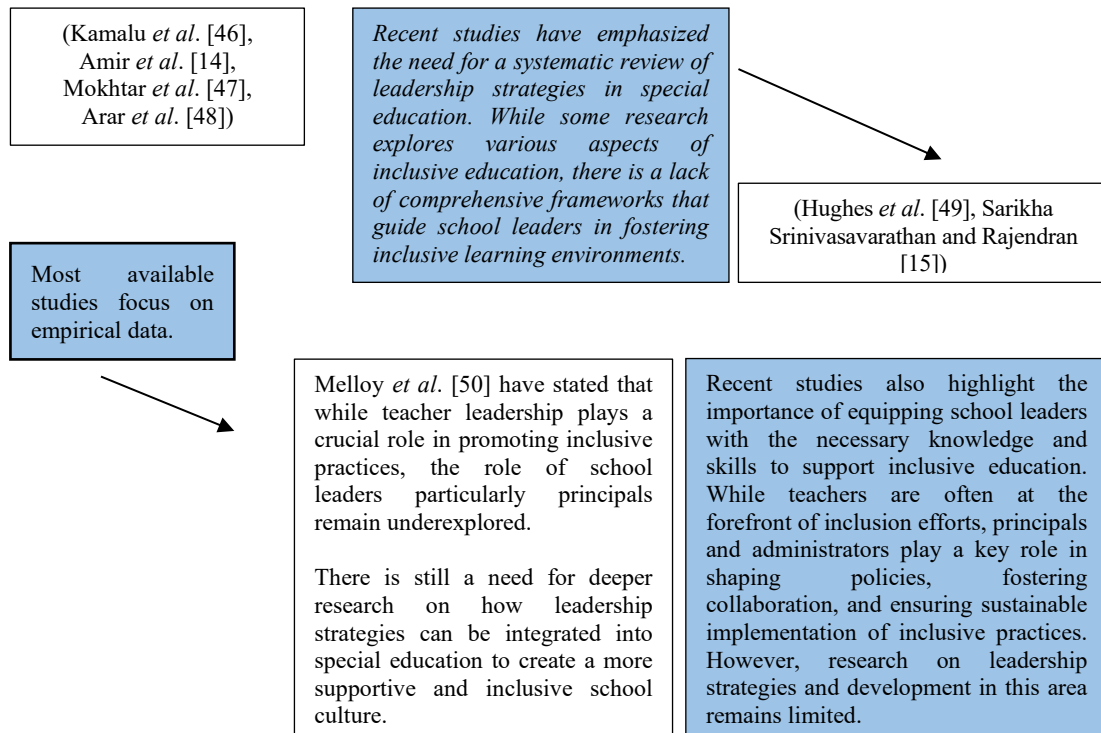

Figure 2. Research gap

This Figure 3 illustrates the pathway of influence starting from the school leader, whose character-driven leadership traits, such as integrity and empathy, directly affect the teacher through supportive leadership practices. This influence is further passed on from the teacher to the student via classroom practices and supportive interactions. The scheme highlights the critical role of direct leadership influence between the school leader and the teacher, while also emphasizing the significance of classroom practice and support from the teacher to the student.

In contexts where school leaders emphasize ethical values and strong character, this leadership influence fosters a positive school culture, enhances teacher morale, and improves student outcomes. However, as noted in prior research, the impact of character leadership is heavily shaped by the situational context, such as available resources and community support. This scheme captures the cascading effect of character leadership, suggesting that when ethical leadership is emphasized, the benefits trickle down throughout the school environment, from administrators to teachers and ultimately to students.
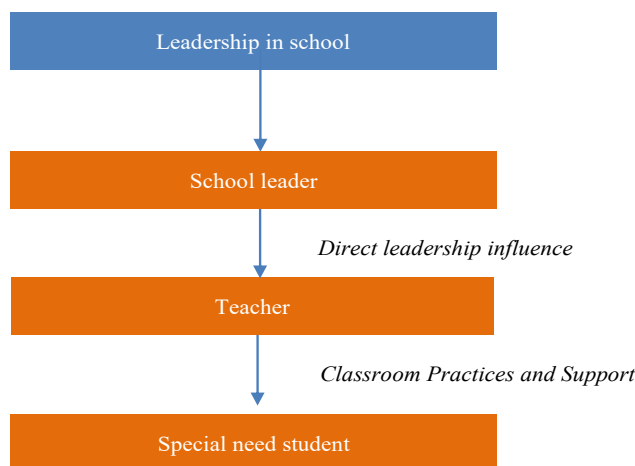
Figure 3. The schema of character leadership of school leader in school

3.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
3.1. Results

The reviewed literature on strategies in inclusive education provides important insights from different countries and research areas. As shown in Table 3 (see in Appendix), various strategies adopted by school principals, as synthesized from the reviewed literature [21], [22]–[45] are categorized thematically. The review reveals a wide range of strategies in inclusive education, underscoring the importance of factors such as leadership, community involvement, resource allocation, and professional development. Out of the 25 papers reviewed, 75% show the importance of building an inclusive culture within educational institutions. These findings suggest that it is essential to create an environment that supports the well-being of both staff and students.

To provide a clear understanding of the findings analysis studies 1 to 25. These studies show that exploring inclusive education reveals a complex approach that depends on strong leadership and community participation. The first study suggests that transformational leadership is key to creating an inclusive culture in schools. This type of leadership promotes creativity and encourages educators to embrace inclusive goals, leading to higher expectations for teaching practices. This leadership style has also been connected to positive outcomes in staff wellbeing, implying that school leaders who actively support inclusive programs can improve the overall quality of the school.

The results also show the importance of community and parent involvement in successfully implementing inclusive education practices. When families are actively involved in their children's education, it not only leads to better academic outcomes for students with special educational needs but also encourages greater community participation in the educational process [51], [52]. Furthermore, forming partnerships with local organizations has been shown to offer additional resources for special educational needs students, underscoring the need for collaboration in promoting educational equality [53]–[55].

Additionally, research emphasizes the role of advocacy and policy development in creating inclusive educational environments. Raising awareness about the needs of special educational needs students among school stakeholders is crucial for building an inclusive mindset within the educational community [56], [57] Importantly, policies that focus on reducing teacher workloads and addressing the challenges faced by educators are key to creating a more supportive environment for inclusive practices [58].

Resource allocation is crucial for ensuring the sustainability of inclusive education practices. Properly allocating enough resources to special education programs, such as intervention and tutoring services, is essential to meet the diverse needs of students with special educational needs [59]. In addition, providing extra learning opportunities for disadvantaged students helps close educational gaps, ensuring that all students have equal access to quality education [60].

Ongoing professional development for teachers is also key. This helps educators develop the skills necessary to meet the varied needs of their students. Training focused on inclusive teaching methods enables teachers to create effective strategies for supporting special educational needs students in their classrooms [60], [61]. Collaboration and problem-solving within teaching teams are equally important. It encourages a culture of shared responsibility and continuous improvement in inclusive education [62]. These strategies involve continuous training, teamwork, and long-term planning to create supportive learning environments.

By the time, the school leaders must constantly adjust their strategies to ensure all students receive the necessary support to succeed.

3.2. Discussion

The impact on school culture and student outcomes is significant, per the academic discussion on the topic of character leadership in education. The significance of character leadership, or the positive qualities such as integrity, empathy, and ethical decision-making that school leaders possess, has become all the more crucial to establishing a productive and positive educational climate. Prior research has consistently connected the leadership of strong character to teacher morale, student engagement, and overall school effectiveness. Leaders who possess these characteristics develop trust and collaboration among staff, which leads to improving organizational performance and student success.

Educational psychology also describes how character leadership corresponds with Bandura's social learning theory, such that modeling ethical behavior impacts the attitudes and practices of teachers as well as students. Through moral integrity and empathy, leaders serve as role models from whom subordinates learn through vicarious learning to be prosocial. In addition, these types of leadership practices are also helpful for creating a climate where teachers feel self-efficacious, which according to Bandura's concept of efficacy beliefs, means that positive leadership inspires confidence and motivation to attain instructional goals. Finally, character leadership promotes psychological safety in the learning environment by minimizing anxiety and by fostering autonomy, an important motivator linked to intrinsic motivation according to Deci and Ryan [63] who discover the self-determination theory. Character-driven leadership, while doing so, takes care of the psychological needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy to raise up the levels of engagement and performance.

But the extent to which character leadership works is likely influenced by a range of contextual factors. For example, in areas dealing with high levels of adversity, such as socioeconomic struggles or low community involvement, having this type of character leadership can buffer some of the negative effects and help both staff and students rise above the challenges they face. Being resilient is a central component of educational psychology, and supportive leadership is a key factor in building that resilience. Leaders who build trust and emotional sustainability help students and teachers see adversity as an opportunity for growth, fostering optimism and persistence. By contrast, an emphasis on character in well-resourced places with those who are responsible to not much other than themselves allows for more creative and flexible teaching methods that coincide with constructivist learning approaches. Teachers who dwell in psychologically sound environments tend to be more adventurous with novel move that involve their students in higher-order thinking and reflection.

Even though there is a largely positive consensus on the nature of character leadership, some studies note potential drawbacks to the concept. For example, to the extent a brand focuses too much on character, they may under-emphasize the execution of transactional tasks necessary for effective management, leading to operational inefficiencies. The leaders who become character-focused may not be ready for prioritizing principals that are hard or unpopular, which can cause discontent in the school. However, character leadership is context-sensitive, which means its effectiveness depends on the time, place and culture in which it is applied.

Overall, the results of this study aligned with findings in the prevailing literature, as previous literature on character leadership emphasizes the positive impacts of character leadership on the school (students, teachers, and the administration). However, it also demonstrates the importance of contextual factors, echoing existing literature that recognizes the complexities of educational leadership. Additionally, this research engenders a dialogue about the potential challenges of character leadership, and enriches an understanding of the intricate balance between character leadership and other variable influences in an educational setting.

3.3. The role of school principals in creating an inclusive culture

Inclusive education is more than just integrating students with special educational needs into regular classrooms but it is also about creating a school environment where every student, regardless of ability, feels valued, and supported from everyone in their surroundings. One of the most important roles of school principals is to create a culture that prioritizes inclusion and student well-being. Schools that actively support students with special educational needs tend to have a more positive learning environment for all. Previous research has explored the significant relationship between leadership and attitudes of school principals in supporting school culture [64] When principals prioritize inclusive education and actively support students with disabilities, they help create an environment where all students feel valued and included. However, there are still many school leaders who lack knowledge and training in special education laws and effective inclusive strategies [65].

Leadership is at the heart of inclusive education. Encouraging creativity in teaching methods helps address the unique needs of students, ensuring no one is left behind [66]. Past researcher found that by fostering creativity in inclusive settings can enhance educational outcomes. Creative thinking skills are considered key

competencies for the 21st century, enabling flexibility and adaptability in a complex world [67]. Implementing inclusive education requires teachers to adopt diverse strategies and approaches [66] meanwhile by receiving the feedback and recognition in workplace. Teachers who feel acknowledged for their work in inclusion are more likely to stay motivated. School principals can implement simple yet effective systems, such as highlighting success stories in staff meetings or providing awards for innovative teaching strategies. This research has been done to prove that it was work well to encouraging development for innovative teachers and facilitating hands-on experiential learning [68]. By combining bottom-up and top-down approaches, principals can transition from hierarchical structures to shared interactive models that foster innovation [69].

Moreover, inclusive education is not just a school effort but it requires strong partnerships with families and the wider community. Transparent communication with parents ensures they are actively involved in their child's education. Past research had shown that the parental involvement can positively influence skill development and learning outcomes [70]. In today's digital age, technology is another powerful tool. Many schools now use social media and online platforms to keep parents informed and engaged. This not only improves communication but also fosters a sense of shared responsibility in supporting students with special educational needs. Existing research mention that technology can support students with special educational needs by helping them access the curriculum and participate in inclusive school settings [71].

Raising awareness about inclusive education within schools is essential. Many principals are taking proactive steps to educate teachers, students, and staff about the importance of inclusion. However, awareness alone is not enough, strong policies and resource allocation are needed to make a real impact.

Advocacy efforts should focus on reducing teacher workload and ensuring they receive adequate support. Schools that integrate inclusive education into their development plans by allocating resources for teacher training, specialized staff, and learning aids are more successful in achieving long-term inclusion goals. Effective teacher education programs focused on inclusive practice are needed to provide high-quality education for diverse learners in inclusive school settings [72].

A well-trained teacher is the backbone of an inclusive classroom. Professional development opportunities focusing on inclusive education equip teachers with the skills to adapt their teaching methods. Schools that promote collaboration among teachers also see better results, as educators can share ideas and find solutions together. Strategic teacher assignments further enhance inclusivity. Assigning teachers based on their expertise ensures that students with special educational needs receive proper guidance. Existing research has been done to see the competencies of special guidance teachers in Malang, Indonesia, finding their pedagogical and professional competencies need improvement to properly support students with special educational needs. Special guidance teachers, who have training in special education or related fields, are placed in inclusive schools to support students with disabilities [73]. These teachers often have strong interpersonal skills and positive attitudes, but they may need further development in teaching methods and professional expertise [73]. To improve the quality of education for students with disabilities, continuous training and stronger policy support are essential. This will help create a more inclusive and supportive school environment [73]. Additionally, holding regular meetings with special education staff allows schools to address challenges on time.

3.4. Future research and implications

This study highlights the important role of school leaders in inclusive education. However, there is still much to explore, particularly regarding the long-term impact of leadership strategies on student success and how these practices can be applied in different educational settings. Future research should focus on:

- Long-term student outcomes: most studies focus on short-term benefits, but there is little research on how inclusive education affects students' careers, social integration, and quality of life in the long run. Future studies should track students beyond school to understand the true impact of inclusive practices.
- Scalability across different education systems: while certain leadership strategies work well in some schools, they may not be effective in others due to cultural, policy, or resource differences. Research should examine how inclusive leadership can be adapted across different regions, especially in under-resourced schools.
- Addressing leadership challenges: many school leaders lack special education training, and challenges such as teacher shortages and resistance to change persist. Future research should explore how professional development, mentorship, and policy changes can help principals become better advocates for inclusion.
- Role of technology in inclusive leadership: technology is increasingly being used to support special education students, but its effectiveness depends on leadership support and accessibility. Studies should investigate how school leaders can use technology to bridge learning gaps and enhance inclusion.

- Leadership in Islamic and culturally diverse schools: leadership styles vary based on cultural and religious influences. Future research can explore how school leaders in Islamic and multicultural settings balance ethical values, inclusivity, and innovation in education.
- Managing leadership conflicts: school leaders often face conflicts among staff, especially when implementing new policies. Research should examine effective conflict resolution strategies that promote teamwork and shared goals in inclusive education.
- Mix research methodology: by combining SLR and bibliometric analysis to obtain robust analysis about the trend and future directions in the context of school leadership in inclusive education.

By addressing these gaps, future studies can help create stronger, more inclusive education systems where every student, regardless of ability and could thrive.

4.   CONCLUSION

In conclusion, character leadership, defined by qualities like integrity, empathy, and ethical decision-making, is essential in influencing educational environments and results. This study highlights that the impact of character leadership is largely positive, enhancing teacher morale, student engagement, and overall school effectiveness. However, its success is contingent upon contextual factors, including the specific challenges faced by schools and the dynamics of the staff involved.

School leaders must be aware of the possible challenges linked to its implementation. Placing too much emphasis on character can result in operational inefficiencies or hesitance to make tough decisions, highlighting the need for a balanced strategy. Consequently, the strategic application of character leadership is crucial, enabling leaders to adjust their approach according to the specific requirements of their educational environment. Ultimately, understanding when and how to apply character leadership effectively can maximize its benefits, fostering a positive and productive learning environment that supports both educators and students alike.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

This journal uses the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to recognize individual author contributions, reduce authorship disputes, and facilitate collaboration.

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Mohd Nazdri Ishak	✓					✓	✓			✓	✓			
Siti Suriati Khairon		✓	✓		✓				✓		✓		✓	

C : **C**onceptualization	I : **I**nvestigation	Vi : **Vi**sualization
M : **M**ethodology	R : **R**esources	Su : **Su**pervision
So : **So**ftware	D : **D**ata Curation	P : **P**roject administration
Va : **Va**lidation	O : Writing - **O**riginal Draft	Fu : **Fu**nding acquisition
Fo : **Fo**rmal analysis	E : Writing - Review & **E**diting	

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article and its supplementary materials. The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, [NA], upon reasonable request.

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APPENDIX

Table 3. Strategies adopted by school principals toward inclusive education

Themes	Strategies	Authors
Supporting and improving wellbeing	Building a supportive environment: create a school culture that values support and inclusion for all students, especially those with special educational needs.	Raftery and Brennan [41], Dorji *et al.* [39], Alnuaimi *et al.* [23], Sider *et al.* [42], Massouti *et al.* [31], Even and BenDavid-Hadar [44], Castro [32], Fitzgerald *et al.* [45], Hyassat *et al.* [25], Vorlíček and Kollerová [27], Pedaste *et al.* [33].
	Support systems: set up mentorship programs and peer groups to help school leaders promote inclusivity.	Dorji *et al.* [39], Alnuaimi *et al.* [23], Heffernan *et al.* [34], Hyassat *et al.* [25], Dennehy *et al.* [29], Staden-Payne and Nel [37].
	High expectations: motivate teachers to embrace inclusive education and set high expectations for their teaching.	Wanjiru [40], Wang *et al.* [30], Rivana *et al.* [26].
Leadership and innovation	Encouraging new ideas: promote creative teaching methods that meet the needs of all students.	Even and BenDavid-Hadar [44], Majoko [35], Fitzgerald *et al.* [45], Vorlíček and Kollerová [27].
	Recognizing efforts: create a system to appreciate teachers' contributions to inclusive education.	Alnuaimi *et al.* [23], Wanjiru [40], Wang *et al.* [30], Fasting and Breilid [36], Staden-Payne and Nel [37], Pedaste *et al.* [33].
Engaging families and communities	Involving families: keep parents actively engaged in their children's education through open communication.	Sider *et al.* [42], Ketikidou and Saiti [10], Even and BenDavid-Hadar [44], Castro [32], Heffernan *et al.* [34], Majoko [35], Hyassat *et al.* [25], Fasting and Breilid [36], Massouti *et al.* [31].
	Community support: work with organizations to offer extra help for special educational needs students.	Sider *et al.* [42], Even and BenDavid-Hadar [44], Majoko [35], Hyassat *et al.* [25], Dennehy *et al.* [29], Wang *et al.* [30].
	Using technology: use technology and social media to improve communication between schools and parents for better inclusion.	Hyassat *et al.* [25].
Raising awareness and improving policies	Spreading awareness: educate the school community about the importance of inclusion, especially for special educational needs students.	Raftery and Brennan [41], Even and BenDavid-Hadar [44], Hyassat *et al.* [25], Dennehy *et al.* [29].
	Supporting teachers: push for policies that reduce teachers' workload and provide better support.	Dorji *et al.* [39], Heffernan *et al.* [34], Staden-Payne and Nel [37].
	Ensuring inclusion: make sure school plans include resources for inclusive education.	Dorji *et al.* [39], Fitzgerald *et al.* [45], Hyassat *et al.* [25], Fasting and Breilid [36].

Table 3. Strategies adopted by school principals toward inclusive education (continue)

Themes	Strategies	Authors
Raising awareness and improving policies	Spreading awareness: educate the school community about the importance of inclusion, especially for special educational needs students.	Raftery and Brennan [41], Even and BenDavid-Hadar [44], Hyassat et al. [25], Dennehy et al. [29].
	Supporting teachers: push for policies that reduce teachers' workload and provide better support.	Dorji et al. [39], Heffernan et al. [34], Staden-Payne and Nel [37].
	Ensuring inclusion: make sure school plans include resources for inclusive education.	Dorji et al. [39], Fitzgerald et al. [45], Hyassat et al. [25], Fasting and Breilid [36].
Resource allocation	Additional support services: provide services like therapy and tutoring for special educational needs students.	Kivirand et al. [38], Even and BenDavid-Hadar [44], Castro [32], Majoko [35], Dennehy et al. [29], Massouti et al. [31], Staden-Payne and Nel [37].
	More learning opportunities: offer tutoring and extra study time for students who need help catching up.	Even and BenDavid-Hadar [44], Rivana et al. [26].
Teacher development and assignments	Teacher training: provide training on inclusive education practices.	Sider et al. [42], Gallagher et al. [28], Even and BenDavid-Hadar [44], Castro [32], Heffernan et al. [34], Majoko [35], Scheer [43], Hyassat et al. [25], Vorlíček and Kollerován [27], Dennehy et al. [29], Wang et al. [30], Massouti et al. [31], Staden-Payne and Nel [37].
	Collaboration: encourage teachers to work together to solve inclusion challenges.	Raftery and Brennan [41], Dorji et al. [39], Alnuaimi et al. [23], Sider et al. [42], Gallagher et al. [28], Kivirand et al. [38], Even and BenDavid-Hadar [44], Castro [32], Heffernan et al. [34], Majoko [35], Hyassat et al. [25], Wang et al. [30], Staden-Payne and Nel [37], Pedaste et al. [33].
	Teacher placement: assign teachers carefully to ensure special educational needs students get proper support.	Sider et al. [42], Castro [32], Vorlíček and Kollerová [27], Massouti et al. [24].
	Helping with transitions: plan strategies to make school transitions easier for special educational needs students.	Raftery and Brennan [41], Alnuaimi et al. [23], Sider et al. [42], Scheer [43], Vorlíček and Kollerová [27], Wang et al. [30].
	Regular meetings: hold meetings with special education staff to discuss challenges and share solutions.	Dorji et al. [39], Fitzgerald et al. [45], Hyassat et al. [25].
	Practice teaching: give teachers opportunities to practice and observe different teaching strategies.	Gallagher et al. [28], Fasting and Breilid [36].
	Sharing knowledge: encourage staff to share their experience and ideas to improve inclusive education together.	Raftery and Brennan [41], Dorji et al. [39], Fasting and Breilid [36].

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